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Coming Up in April 2006

- "50 Ways to Open Your Heart" — From our round table of readers, writers, and editors, here are fabulous practices to leap into spring.
- "The Chemistry of Joy" — Overcoming depression doesn't happen just by taking a pill. Like unclogging your heart, maintaining happiness requires creating a happy lifestyle.
- "How to Pray" — Most think that addressing the big man/woman/being/source upstairs requires a formal touch. In fact, the language of yore shows a very personal approach.
- "Invoking Your Natural Sensuality" — Imagine your way into more sensual feelings with these simple Eidetic Imagery exercises.
- "Heart Sense" — Our most powerful organ of perception is not the mind or the brain, but the heart, says renowned herbalist and author Stephen Buhner. Practice seeing and hearing, using the unique perceptions of your heart.

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Paula Tursi, yoga therapist, New York City
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From the Publisher: Marking the Milestone

This issue marks a milestone for the magazine as we make the transition from under the wing of our founding mentor, Trinity Church Wall Street, into the mainstream magazine world with our new private owners. We make this move with gratitude for the support that Trinity Church provided spiritually, intellectually, and financially by nurturing *Spirituality & Health* from an inspired idea, to birth, through adolescence, and finally to adulthood as an established publication with a solid base of advertisers, connecting with 200,000 readers six times a year.

Our new owners share the vision of the editorial team for a magazine that can help our readers integrate spiritual principles into their daily lives by bringing inspiration, everyday wisdom, and accessible spiritual practices from the world's great traditions, illuminated by the latest science to help us understand what we innately believe.

Beyond the welcome recognition of awards and professional endorsements, perhaps the greatest gift on the journey so far has been the embrace of our subscribers who have joyfully spread the word by donating gift subscriptions and inviting friends and colleagues into the conversation. This has created a momentum for which we are profoundly thankful. It is our deepest wish to continue the outward journey and perhaps play our small part in bringing more light into the world.

Peter Wild, Publisher

From the Editor: Expanding the Round Table

When I was a boy, my father constructed our family dining table. He carefully copied the design from a table in an apartment we rented in Rome, and when we got home to the States, he had a blacksmith forge the iron base. My father created the table's brass feet on a lathe in the garage. Then he found a round slab of travertine marble for the tabletop, and he rented a truck large enough to carry it flat to our home. Somehow my parents rolled the heavy stone into the house and set it on the iron base with the brass feet. It was beautiful. But what fascinates me now is the effort my dad made to create a dining table that had no head. My parents sat side by side, and we all swapped stories, learning from each other.

I became editor-in-chief when Bob Scott moved on to run the Trinity Institute, a high level theological think tank. At the same time Trinity Church decided it was time for the magazine to fly on its own. That's when I realized that I'd learned from my dad just what needed to be done. The secret of our success is that we have intentionally and carefully rounded off the corners between us — our family of editors and designers and other staff. We have connected more deeply. We have created a round table. It's what we've been writing about for eight years — and it works!

Around the table that created this issue, we gratefully include our readers, especially Mandi Caruso, who wrote our lead story, "Alive with Passion" (page 38). Her tale of guts and joy has the power of a huge wave — the kind you'll want to ride again and again. We also bring you a gentle reminder of the necessity of rest ("Solitude in the Faith Traditions" and "The Joy of Solitude," page 44). No spiritual venture can sustain itself without that deepest refreshment: stillness.

One great thing about being in the magazine business is that we are able to support other worthwhile ventures. Look for editor Louise Palmer's "The Seal of Good Earth-Keeping" (page 51), announcing a seal of approval that will appear on products from companies that look after the health of the environment as well as their balance sheets. We're also happy to share our resources with another worthwhile new company, *The Caregiver's Home Companion* newsletter. We hope you enjoy their sample pages. And we hope you'll continue to share us with your friends and loved ones, inviting them to our ever-expanding round table.

Stephen Kiesling, Editor-in-Chief
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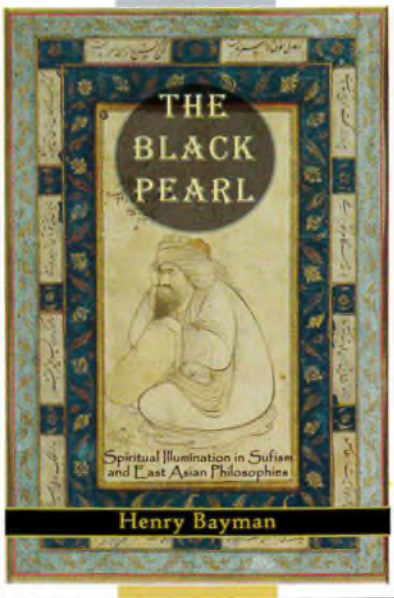
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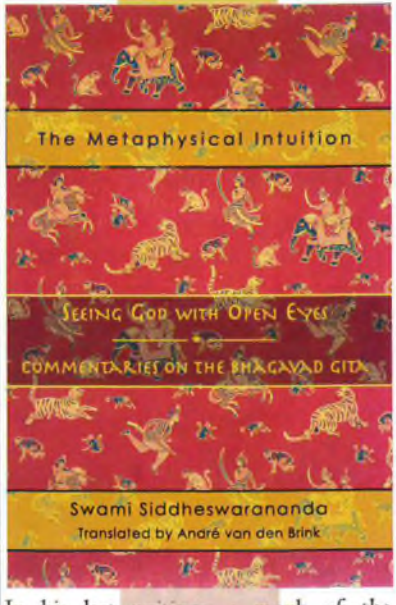
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Peace & War

Beverly Donofrio's "A Walk of Awakening" (October 2005, page 48) was powerful for its truth. In her willingness to talk with her father about the violence she suffered at his hands, I saw the kind of courage many of us forget we have. When her father admitted that he really didn't care that he had hurt her, she didn't retreat; neither did she demonize her tormentor. Rather, she became a witness for peace and will lead a pilgrimage against domestic violence in January. What a wonderful reminder that we always have the choice not to wallow in self-pity, but to honor our survival and our strength!

SUSAN MCGREAVY PIMENTAL
Tiverton, Rhode Island

In "Calling the Power of Women" (October 2005, page 34), Joan Chittister writes that "the traditional code of conduct in war — and honor itself — is dead." There is no honor in war, and code of conduct usually meant raping all the women, killing the old and sick, and keeping only the strongest as a price to use as slaves. Women and girls since Bible times have been more than abused, starting with the 12 tribes of Abraham. Why women follow men into war I cannot fathom. Is it because women are as guilty of such madness as you mention?

GERARDO MARTINEZ
Casas Yucatán, México

About Those Hidden Messages

Regarding "Messages in Water?" (October 2005, page 33), if something nice cannot be said, why say it? What was the intent (not point, since this is a spirituality magazine) in printing that Masaru Emoto's credentials didn't come from a time-honored school and he didn't himself or have others conduct double-blind studies to prove his findings? I subscribed to your magazine because it isn't mainstream thinking, allowing and challenging readers to expand their independent thinking. Trust that your readers can do just that!

SUSAN ECHENRODE
Prescott, Arizona

Emoto's photos of water are lovely. So is his message on the power of consciousness. That said, he has published at least one paper as an M.D., which he is not. He has published the bulk of his work as Dr. Emoto, a title that he earned by paying a small sum to an unaccredited institution. Scientific work should be readily reproducible. But Emoto's hasn't been. Why not? To me, the issue is honesty. As much as I might want to believe the message of the photos, Jill Neimark's fine reporting makes me not trust them. I do trust our readers to make their own decisions.

STEPHEN KIESLING, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Psychic Hotlines

I am an intuitive counselor. Once In a while I get a client like author Karen Gaskell (December 2005, page 80) and I work to extricate myself. Ethical psychics don't want to be the emotional support that others lean on. We are not infallible and people who come to us often should seek counsel from a psychologist or a pastor or other professional. Actually it is wearing on the psychic, if she or he really is an empath, to have to prop up the client and to have the client constantly calling and pouring out suffering and pain.

MARY HOLLAND-WATSON
Austin, Texas

Correction: October 2005, page 23, "Labyrinth" article website for reference is labyrinthsociety.org/html/in_schools.html.

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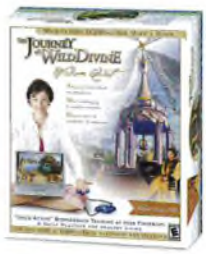
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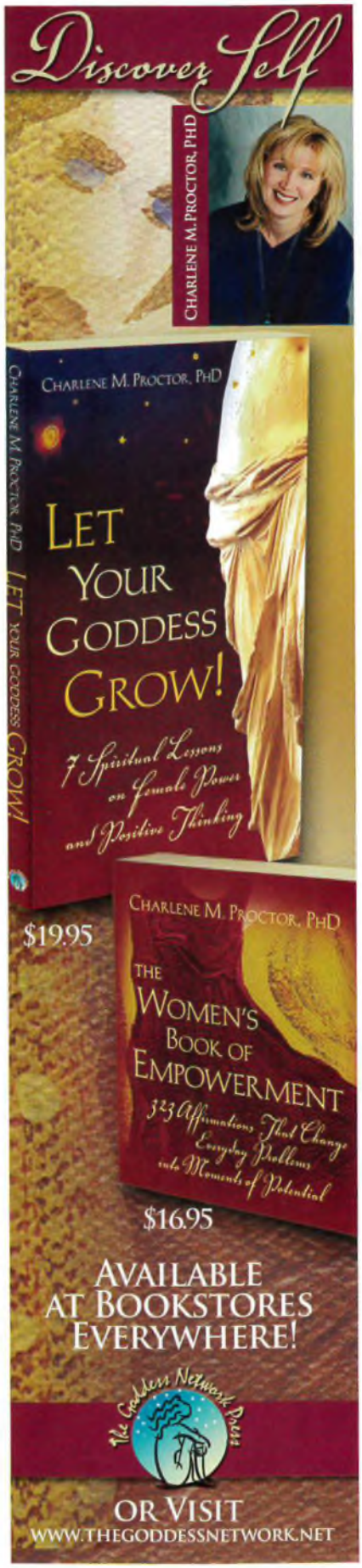
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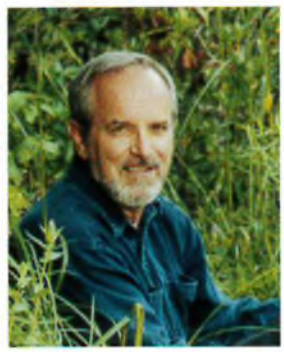
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By Thomas Moore



Theology and Ecology

At the very heart of the spiritual life lies the dynamic by which you transcend yourself. You move gradually beyond your own needs to your family, your children, your neighborhood, your region and country, your world, and then the invisible and the mysterious. You are making progress toward life as a mystic, which I believe is everyone's calling.

In this process, a relationship with the natural world is essential, for the mysterious life is your matrix and represents the world beyond you. Here, you learn about life outside your ego, and through identification and profound empathy you find what it means to transcend the self.

Every time I visit Ireland and see the monasteries positioned precariously on cliffs overlooking the windy, rainy sea, I'm reminded of the important spiritual insight of these pioneer monks: nature teaches us how to find our place in a world of mystery and power.

Yet today, religious institutions and spiritual communities are often either unconcerned about nature or positively against any efforts to protect and sustain it.

In my home state of New Hampshire, known for its natural beauty, I see commercial development gone crazy, replacing sacred groves of trees with an unnecessary multiplication of chain stores. Near me, two numinous forests have been cut down, one for a gas station on a half-mile strip that already has three gas stations, and the other for a huge, oversized supermarket across from an older market that serves the community.

I worry about these developments on two levels. Psychologically, our children become objects of commerce. Profit-mad companies seem to have no concern about the effect of runaway commercialism on our tender youth. Spiritually, we no longer have access to the sacred groves and holy rivers and inspiring lakes that help us move beyond the narcissism of a consumer age.

Everywhere I go, people tell me that they are hungry for spirituality. They are looking for new churches, new teachings, and new practices. Meanwhile, a potential major source for their spiritual sensibility is disappearing before their eyes, and they don't see it. Nature is not indispensable, whether for our physical welfare or our spiritual inspiration.

When people of the past honored a grove of trees as the domain of a spirit or goddess, they weren't being superstitious. They recognized that the natural world is a source of transcendence, an essential teacher. Today, we look at a grove of trees and fail to sense any sacred expression there. I'm not saying that we should never cut down trees for habitation and commerce, but we could understand that every community needs special sacred forms of nature and that certain natural formations have special spiritual power.

Focused on intellectual belief and moral anxieties, religions and spiritual groups have been taken in by the modern, anxiety-based enthronement of the self in philosophy, art, politics, and business. They agree with secularism that human beings are the stewards of nature, which is often interpreted to mean its boss and owner. Attention to nature is seen as pagan, heathen, and unholy!

Even deeper in the bias against the natural world lies considerable anger and fear. Why are secularist religious people so vehemently

To an imagination steeped in sacredness, there is no separation of spirituality and physicality.

against environmentalism? Because religious institutions have supported a narrow notion of self through an emphasis on personal moral scruples and self-control. The churches are often more worried about a sexual affair than about a polluted river or an oil spill. People are also angry at nature because it doesn't conform to their will and serves up disturbing passions and desires. Our morality seems to be based more in anxiety than in a sense of community and mutual responsibility.

A forest, a mountain, the sea — they are still the haunts of healing, humanizing spirits. Why else do people flock to Cape Cod and the Rockies and the red mesas of New Mexico? These spirits are not supernatural, science fiction, or superstitious beings of belief. They are felt presences emanating sensually and spiritually from specific forms of nature itself. To an imagination steeped in sacredness, there is no separation of spirituality and physicality.

We need access to clean rivers to remember that our lives continually flow on. We need a virgin forest to remember that in a deep place our souls are untouched and untutored. We need a beautiful lake to remember that the spirit thrives in nature's beauty. If we continue to interfere with nature's job to teach us how to be spiritual, all of our labyrinths and zendos and yoga studios and Bible classes will become hollow and ungrounded. We will be going to church in a strip mall wondering why the psalms say:

"In his hands are the low areas of the earth,
and the mountain peaks, too, belong to him.
The sea is his: He made it;
and his fingers sculpted the dry land."
(Psalm 95) ❖

Thomas Moore's latest book is *Dark Nights of the Soul: A Guide to Finding Your Way Through Life's Ordeals*. He is the author of *Care of the Soul* (careofthesoul.net).

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Open Mind Open Heart

By Mimi Guarneri and Rauni King



Learning from Those I Wanted to Serve

It has been 10 years since I, Mimi Guarneri, began my journey as a cardiologist. What started out as a passion to cure the physical heart through the latest in technology, surgery, and medicine has transformed into a deeper realization that the human heart is much more than a mechanical pump. It was not in medical school, but through my patients, that I learned about the complexity of this seemingly straightforward organ. Behind each story of coronary artery blockage, bypass surgery, and stenting is a human being with a history and life that contribute profoundly to the diagnosis that we call coronary artery disease. Over time, I began to recognize that the hearts of my patients were as "broken" by loss, grief, depression, and stress as they were by high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol.

Lydia thought that she would never complete the blanket because of pain. But the more she worked, the less pain she had. When the blanket was completed her arthritis was gone.

But I didn't start out thinking this way. Like so many young physicians, I attended medical school wanting to help others. I believed in the noble art of medicine, the privilege to assist someone in a vulnerable state, to act as a teacher. My training, however, pointed me in another direction. I was taught to be a bright, sharp clinical diagnostician. I was graded not for my bedside manner, but for my knowledge of esoteric diseases. I came to believe that the human body worked like a machine that had parts, which could be cut out, repaired, or replaced. For every ailment listed in the textbook of medicine, I was keenly aware of the treatment. But over time I came to realize that people are not diseases in textbooks. I learned the true lessons of medicine from the very people I wanted to serve: my patients.

It was Jim who taught me that you can live even when the textbooks say you should die, and Esther who taught me that you can die from simply losing your will to live. Through these and other people I learned about the power, strength, and frailty of the human spirit. I was taught the lessons of loneliness and the impact of social isolation. I learned the important lessons of compassion and forgiveness. Finally, from Lydia I learned the most important lesson of all, Love.

In her late sixties, Lydia was a strong, loving mother, dedicated to her children and

grandchildren. She became my patient after having a heart attack. "It's nothing Dr. Mimi," she would insist, a mere inconvenience. "As long as I am serving others and caring for my family I will be fine."

Late evenings would find Lydia at our Integrative Center serving her latest recipe of fat-free dumplings or passing out her newest batch of homemade jam. When a medical student appeared from Germany with no housing, it was Lydia who responded to my call and found him a place to live.

Last Christmas Lydia appeared in my office with a beautifully wrapped gift. Inside the wrapping was a delicately knitted blanket, as blue as the ocean. "I made this for you, Dr. Mimi," she announced as I opened the box. "As I watched you walk across the parking lot late one evening, you looked so tired. I felt as if you were my daughter and I wanted to do something for you, so I made the blanket."

The remarkable part of this story is that Lydia was suffering from severe arthritis. She went on to explain that as she began to knit she thought that she would never complete the blanket because of pain. But the more she worked, the less pain she had. When the blanket was completed her arthritis was gone.

"This blanket is made with love," she told me.

While Lydia's intention was set on healing me, in creating her warm gift of love she also healed herself.

I can't help being reminded that it is in giving that we receive; that when we set our intention from the heart, miracles can happen. This was certainly true for Lydia. Now when I listen to the heart and wait for the "lub dub" that helps me formulate a diagnosis, I send wishes for healing, love, and compassion. It is wonderful to know that I am also being healed in the process.

It took me 10 years to realize that the heart and mind that needed to be open were my own. ❖

Mimi Guarneri, M.D., and Rauni King, R.N., are co-directors of the Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine in La Jolla, California. Guarneri is the author of *The Heart Speaks: A Cardiologist Reveals the Secret Language of Healing* (Touchstone, February 2006).

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Edited by Kathleen Norris

LOUISIANA WETLANDS

Photographer and naturalist C. C. Lockwood wants to save these vanishing marshes. He hopes his photos will inspire you to help.

Long before hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the surrounding Gulf Coast, a lot of people who lived in the area understood the importance of the wetlands. C. C. Lockwood was one of them. He'd been photographing in South Louisiana since 1973. Thirty years later, in November 2003, he and his wife, Sue, spent a year living on a houseboat, circling the coastal waterways from the Louisiana–Texas border to Mississippi. Their goal was to bring public awareness to the critical land-loss problem in Louisiana — C. C. through his photographs, and Sue through an online classroom for schoolchildren.

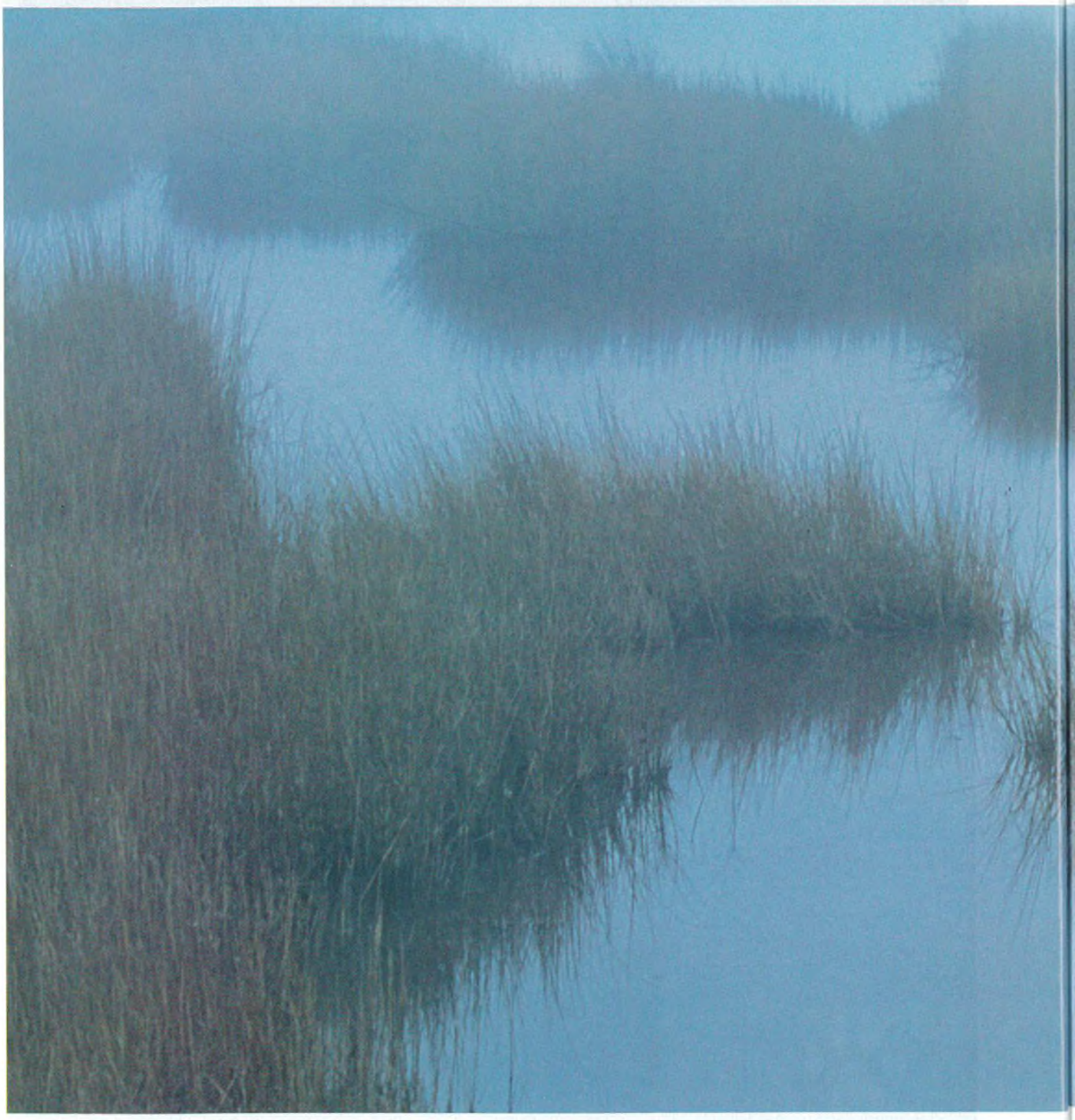
They called their boat the *Wetland Wanderer*. It provided transportation and shelter from the rain, but also kept the Lockwoods close to the pulse of the wetlands, the sights, sounds, and smells, the dramatic changes in light and weather.

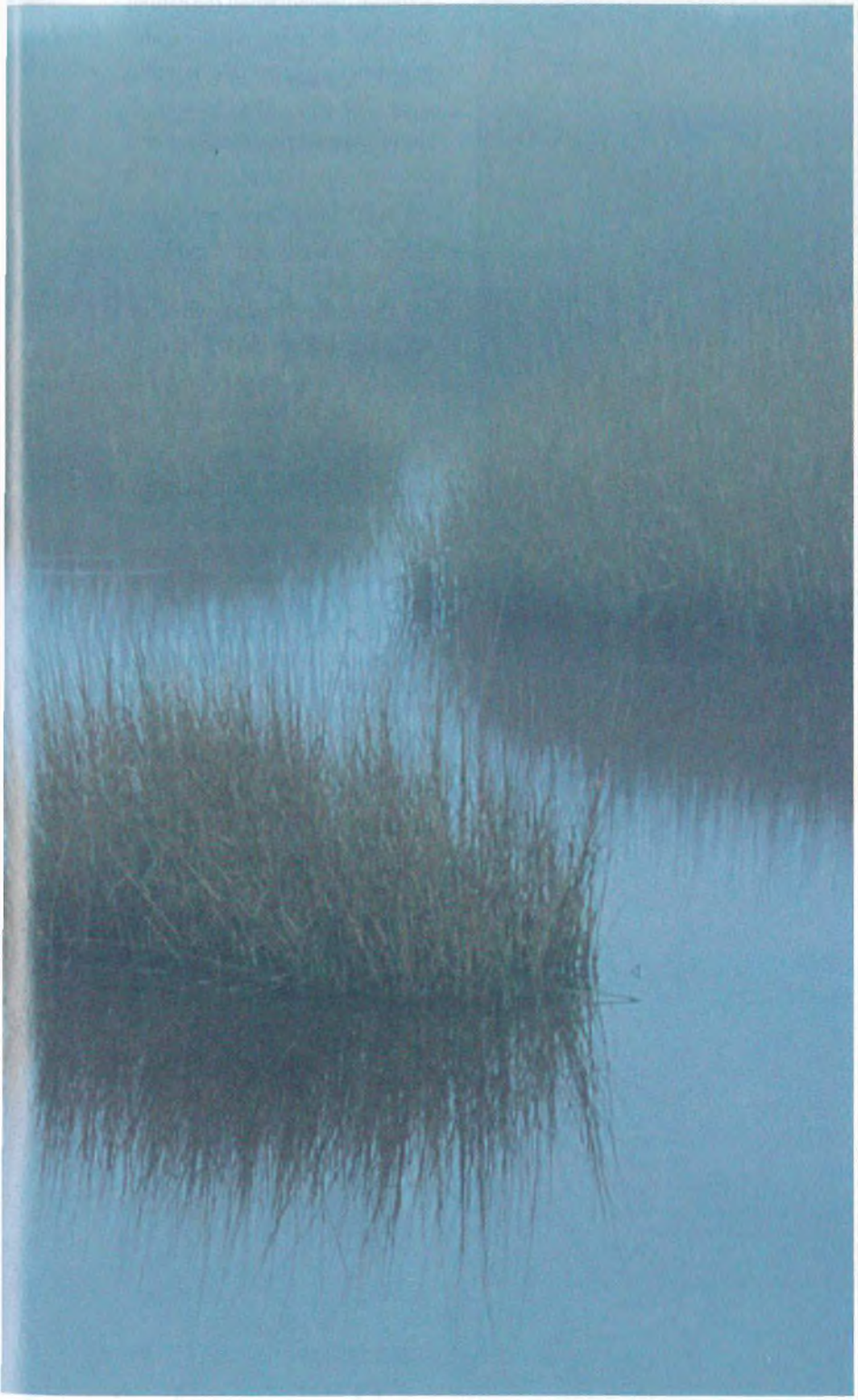


Moss-covered bald cypress trees on a foggy morning at the edge of a marsh in Terrebonne Parish

C. C. Lockwood's photographs will be on exhibit at the LSU Museum of Art in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, through February 19, 2006. For exhibit dates after that time, see marshmission.com. Lockwood's book, Marsh Mission, *is also available from the website.*

The soft, wet light of a winter fog dresses this patch of marsh grass in an eerie but lovely way. The fog also hides the nearby open water that once was also marsh, a reminder that Louisiana wetlands disappear at the rate of 24 square miles a year — a football field every 38 minutes.





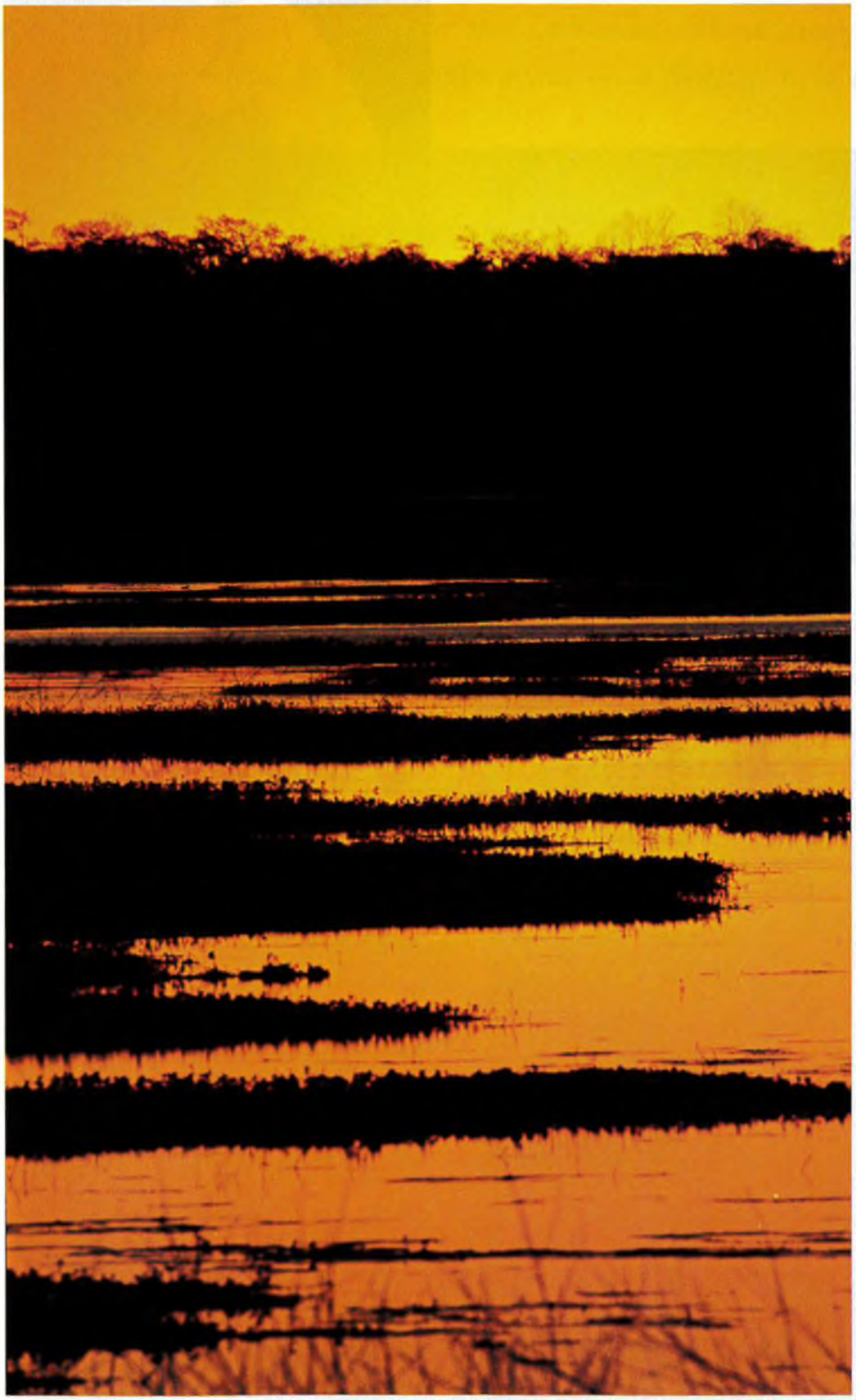


Above: Lost Marsh, Lafourche Parish; Top: Great Egrets, Atchafalaya Basin

As it happened, Lockwood's book, *Marsh Mission* (in collaboration with painter Rhea Gary) was published in August, just weeks before Katrina exposed the social and environmental crisis in Louisiana. The plea for action that inspired the book was now national news.

The wetlands are disappearing for many reasons. One is gravity: the land is simply sinking. Another culprit is the network of canals between the oil and gas rigs in the Gulf and the ports; the canals improve navigation but also allow salt water from the Gulf to seep into freshwater marshes, killing off stands of cypress trees and small plants that hold the fragile land together. And ironically, the levees built in the 1930s to protect the area have also prevented the river from depositing silt to build up the marsh.

Reflecting on his year-long journey, Lockwood put it this way: "No matter how far out we go into the marsh, we hear, see, and feel the active presence of man; and no matter how close we get to a community, lock, shipyard, or tug pushing a six-pack of barges, we see and hear wildlife. What I have learned most this year is that we ▶



Sunrise over a winter marsh, Terrebonne Parish

are all tangled up in a maze of pipelines, industry, commerce, recreation, and tourism. All the while, this hodgepodge of human activities depends upon the natural elements, the minerals, flora, and fauna that make up this beautiful coast. The difficulty of putting all those ingredients in a pot and cooking up a gumbo that will make everyone happy continues to be one of the most complex problems facing Louisiana. Yet we share these riches with the rest of America, and we need all Americans' help to save them."

— *Ronnie Shushan*

Make a Difference

Katrina revealed how important the Louisiana wetlands are to the entire nation — to protect the coast from hurricanes, to protect the oil and gas produced in and shipped from the region, to protect the fisheries that produce more seafood than any state other than Alaska. Successful efforts to restore wetlands in the Atchafalaya Basin prove that action makes a difference. You can:

1. Tell your representatives that we must restore the marshes as well as the levees in Louisiana.
2. Support conservation groups that protect and restore wetlands.
3. Don't buy bald cypress mulch for your garden.
4. For more information see:
   marshmission.com
   americaswetland.com

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Chuckle Channel

This Hospital Has a Laugh Track

The corridors of Queen's Medical Center in Honolulu echo with laughter, and Hob Osterlund, palliative care nurse and comedian, hasn't been the only one to notice. Laughter tells Osterlund that her patients are not only having fun, they may even be getting well.

Although numerous studies point to the health benefits of humor, laughter is conspicuously absent from most hospital hallways and prescription pads. But Osterlund has found a way for patients to medicate themselves safely by tuning in to the new comedy channel on the hospital's in-house television. The channel, the first of its kind in the nation, airs clips of routines donated by local comics, including Osterlund, whose "Ivy Push" character delivers a poignant and pointed nurse's view of hospital life. Osterlund came up with the idea of an in-hospital comedy channel to give patients an upbeat alternative to news, drama, and action-adventure programs, all of which can reinforce anxiety and fear. Laughter seems to have the opposite effect.

Osterlund's review of the scientific literature convinced her that laughter can work near-miracles without side effects. Well, there are a few. Osterlund and her colleagues have noticed that patients, visitors, and staff are watching the comedy channel and laughing as a community. Patients also report less discomfort and request less pain medication. And when patients are comfortable and happy, they're less demanding and a lot less irritable.

Nurses and other attendants at Queen's report that their own morale has improved. "It's incredibly bonding to share laughter with a patient," says Osterlund. Little is more gratifying than a grinning patient delivering lines from the Ivy Push routine. The beneficial effects of the Queen's Medical Center comedy channel are so visible that Osterlund is seeking a corporate grant to help hospitals across the country start "chuckle channels."

—*Joan Conrow*

Not to take the fun out of laughter, but did you know that a good belly laugh triggers: an increased number and activity of natural killer cells that attack viruses and some types of cancer and tumor cells; an increase in activated T-cells; an increase in the antibody IgA, which fights upper respiratory tract insults and infections; an increase in gamma interferon, which tells the immune system to go into action; and a decrease in stress hormones?



"As you can see, we've transferred your husband from intensive to casual care."

GAHAN WILSON/CARTOONBANK

Genetic Generosity

Why Giving Feels So Good



Why help a stranger who stumbles in the street? Why send money to faraway victims of tsunamis? Why volunteer for soup kitchens or offer a caring word to a neighbor? For evolutionary scientists, altruism is one of the great mysteries: it feels good, is linked to better mental and physical health, and is intrinsic to who we are, yet no one can quite explain how it evolved. Some have suggested that when we protect our kin we protect our own genetic legacy; that when we give, others give back to us, and that generosity enhances our reputation. Even so, at the heart of altruism is a big question mark. Why *does* giving feel so good?

Now a new study suggests that altruism may be partly guided by genes that regulate the neurotransmitter dopamine — the one linked to craving, pleasure, and reward. Subsets of dopamine genes vary in the general population, and the study finds that a specific, common subtype is highly linked to altruistic behavior. The research, conducted at Hebrew University and other centers, was published in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry* in 2005. Psychologists and geneticists looked at 354 families with more than one child, measuring the individuals' tendencies to ignore their own needs and serve the needs of others, as well as their tendencies toward attention deficit hyperactivity disorder — a trait associated with antisocial behavior that is also thought to be regulated by variations in dopamine genes. They then analyzed the individuals' dopamine receptors for well-known variations, or genotypes.

Their fascinating findings: the most common genetic subtype — known as the D4.4 — was significantly linked to altruistic behavior, regardless of whether the receiver was a relative. Another variation — D4.7 — is known to be linked to novelty-seeking, aggressive, more anti-social behavior. The researchers conclude that variations in these genes reward a range of behaviors in humans, so that as a species we have novelty-seekers as well as givers. But in general, say the scientists, this gives us the first hard evidence that many of us are indeed "hardwired" for giving. It may be that generosity feels good because it is rewarded by spikes in dopamine. The scientists even speculate that further research could reveal variations in dopamine genes that favor generosity to kin, and others that favor giving to all. Next time you hold the door open for a stranger struggling to balance a bunch of packages, think of those innumerable little dopamine-loving neurons lighting up your brain with bliss.

—Jill Neimark

Pronouns of Improvement

To Better *Your* Future, Reflect on What *She* Did Last Year

"There are times when the greatest change needed is a change of my viewpoint," wrote Diderot. If you're struggling to change — your body, your relationship, your routine — a study co-authored by Ohio State University assistant professor of psychology Lisa Libby finds that viewing your past in the third person, as if you were a stranger watching a movie of your life, can help you acknowledge the positive changes you've made, which, says Libby, "may help to motivate you to keep on trying."

The study, published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, asked college students in psychotherapy to rate their changes since their first appointments. Third-person viewers perceived more change (an average score of 7.18 versus 5.64 for first person). First-person recollections, says Libby, cause people "to get more caught up in the details of a past event," whereas third-person focus finds broader meaning.

In a related study, college students who said they were socially awkward in high school were told to recall an awkward event from that time. Those who viewed the experience from a third-person perspective were more likely to say that they had changed since then and were now more socially at ease. Left alone with someone they thought was another student (actually a research assistant), they were then more likely to begin a conversation and score higher sociability ratings, suggesting that, as Libby puts it, "feeling like you've overcome a problem in your past can give you the resources to behave differently in the present." Libby stresses that change is possible, but not always easy. "Therefore it is important to focus on any progress you are able to make."

—Ann Stapleton

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> "The light you see at the end of the tunnel ... is a mirror."
>
> – Neal Rogin, presenter at the World Business Academy's 2005 Global MindChange Forum

Why a Rose Is Not Necessarily a Rose to Your Nose

What would your favorite perfume smell like if it came in a plastic bottle labeled bug spray? Probably not as sweet, says a team of researchers from the Department of Experimental Psychology at Oxford University, U.K.

When volunteers were asked to describe a cheddar cheese odor identified to them as cheddar, the verdict was positive. However, when the same odor was labeled as body odor, the volunteers' reactions were much less favorable.



Can cognitive influences, such as words, alter our sensory perception and therefore our experience? Professor Edmund Rolls, who led the research, says yes. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging, the Oxford researchers measured the volunteers' brain activity during the tests and found that how we label foods indeed influences the way we perceive them — positively or negatively. The study shows that cognitive input,, such as labeling, can reach a level of the brain that deals with reward and emotion, consequently changing the way we experience reality.

The research findings appeared in the journal *Neuron* and a BBC news report.

—Monika Rice

Typoglycemia: Believe It or Not, You Can Read This

I cdnuol't blveiee taht I cluod aulaclty uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The pheonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid. Aoccdrnig to a rsceearch taem at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are; the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteers be in the rghit pclaes. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Such a cdonition is cllaed typoglycemia.

Amzanig, huh? Yaeh, and yuo awlyas thought slpeling was so ipmoratnt, dndit yuo?

Alternative Pharmacy

Herbs for Joint & Muscle Pain

We asked our favorite pharmacist, James Mattioda, Ph.D., owner of the Arcana Pharmacy at the Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine, to provide some alternatives to drugs like Vioxx. He says that many age-old herbs have now been scientifically blended to challenge even the best prescription pain relievers.

The products he has listed are specialty formulas sold by pharmacies rather than grocery stores. You can buy them without a prescription. Nevertheless, you should consult your physician before taking any supplements or herbs; inform anyone recommending alternative products of any other drugs you are taking; and learn the interactions medications, herbs, and supplements may have with each other.

Kaprex from Metagenics is a clinically tested, long-term, anti-inflammatory joint-relief formula. It combines a proprietary blend of oleanolic acid and rosemary leaf components that influence the formation of PGE2, which is associated with minor pain of large joints or the back.

Boswellia Complex from MediHerb combines boswellic resin (triterpene acid, celery seed, ginger (gingerols), and turmeric (curcumioids). Use this instead of ibuprofen for more acute joint or muscle pain; it's also helpful for rheumatoid conditions. Not recommended for long-term use.

Joint Synergy from MRM relieves inflammation and lubricates the synovial fluid for better mobility. It combines medium chain triglycerides (CMO) with sea cucumber extract (mucopolysaccharides and holothurians), Panax ginseng (Noto-Gin Rb1, Rg1, Rg2), and chondroitin and glucosamine sulfates.

CORvalenM from Valen Labs is a powdered combination of magnesium gluconate and D-Ribose with malic acid. This product helps with muscle fatigue and stiffness, myalgia, and slow recovery from workouts.

Bush Flower Essence is a homeopathic stress-relieving formula that can be taken both internally and externally for aches and pains related to frustration and stress. Bush Flower Essence comprises more than 15 compounds from indigenous Australian plants that focus on emergencies, and not stressing over them; confidence and not fearing its absence; and abundance without breaking your back to get it.

—James Mattioda, Ph.D.
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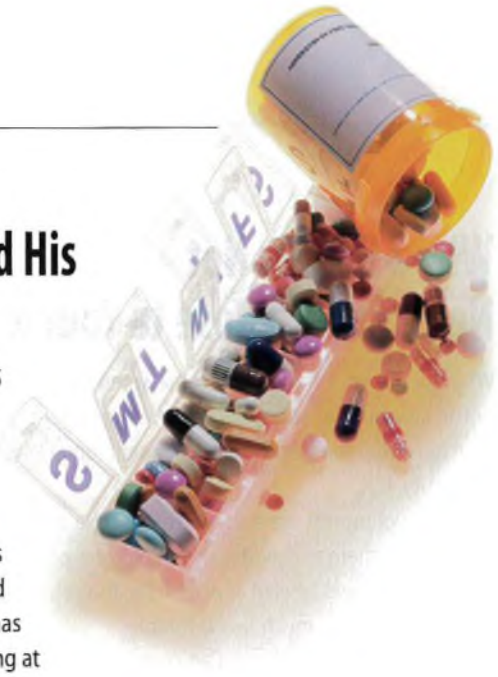
CRYSTAL STAR

Don't Like Anesthesia? Add Music to Your Operation

Whether you're a fan of early Beatles or Mozart, listening to music can lessen your need for sedatives during an operation, suggests a new study published in the medical journal *Anesthesia & Analgesia*. Thirty-six patients at Yale-New Haven Hospital and 54 at the American University of Beirut Medical Center undergoing procedures using anesthesia were randomly assigned to wear headphones and hear music they liked or white noise, or to wear no headphones and be exposed to operating room noise. O.R. noise can be jarring— up to 80 decibels of sound. LOUD. Researchers found playing music reduced the need for sedatives during surgery, but white noise, which blocked out O.R. sounds, did not. The study suggests that culture plays a role also: the Lebanese patients used less of the sedating drug than the American patients, regardless of whether they heard music, white noise, or operating room sounds.

—Sheldon Lewis

How Grandpa Donated His Body to Science



My grandpa is 83. I'm sorry — 83 years, 5 months (he's back to counting in halves). That is four years past the life expectancy of American males. I know so because he tells me every time I visit.

For Grandpa, death isn't a concern; it's a lifestyle. He schedules his week around dates with Dr. Mioto, whose BMW he has personally financed. It starts every morning at six, when Grandpa hits the obituaries.

"See there," he points. "80 years old, heart failure. Right on schedule."

To stay out of the paper, my grandpa takes pills. By the truckload. He totes them around in an alabaster box and swigs 'em before every meal, sometimes during grace. One pill helps his blood pressure but causes trembling; another stops the trembling but causes cramping. When I once asked whether my grandpa wanted the blue pill or the red pill, my grandpa took both.

"Got to keep the old body ticking."

And that's the point: my grandpa has turned himself in. He has given his body to science instead of owning his part in the miracle. He's got pills to make his hair grow and heart beat and lungs breathe — stuff that has been happening without his help for 83 and a half years! My fear is that the old fart is going to die of medication overdose.

I've tried to pull my grandpa from his bender, but he can't hear me. He's beaten the odds by four years and owes it all to his alabaster box. And so long as we pill-popping junkies keep thinking that way, our gods will keep driving BMWs.

—Jason Love



The Greening of Therapy

What do we do when the stresses of life become too much? We go for a walk, sit in the garden, or escape to the sea. In August 2005, the British news publication the *Independent* reported a trend — a green approach to therapy that recognizes our innate craving for nature. Ecopsychology is putting the earth back in mental healing practices. "The primary idea is that one's relationship with nature is as important as one's relationship with other humans," says Linda Buzzell-Saltzman, M.A., M.F.T., founder of the International Association for Ecotherapy (IAE). Buzzell-Saltzman has been a psychotherapist in private practice for more than 25 years, but the healing aspects of practicing green therapy were something that she had to experience herself. "It was not until I became a serious gardener that I was able to make the connection between mental health and the ground (literally) of our being," she admits. "As I worked with the earth, the earth began to 'work' me." Ecopsychologists apply therapeutic tools ranging from wilderness therapy to horticultural or animal therapy to natural lifestyle counseling. The International Community for Ecopsychology provides a free international directory of practitioners. For more information see ecopsychology.org and http://thoughtoffering.blogs.com/ecotherapy.

—Monika Rice

THIS PAGE: TOP: BRAND X PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM: DOUG MENUEZ/GETTY IMAGES;
OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP: MITCH HRDICKA/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM: GEORGE BOOTH/CARTOONBANK

Havdalah

A Sabbath Practice with Sacred Scents

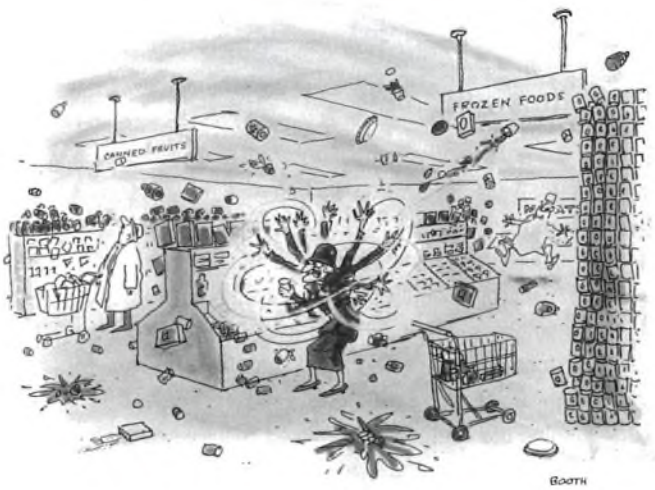


At dusk, after a Saturday of resting, thinking, reading, or playing — just being rather than doing — the Jewish Sabbath ends when three stars can be seen in the sky. This is celebrated with a blessing called havdalah, or separation, which calls for a cup of wine, a candle, and a box of spices (Besamin).

"May the coming week overflow with goodness like the wine in the cup," says the head of the household, holding the brimming kiddush cup. Then a candle, made of twisted strands that symbolize the many kinds of light God created — of the sun, moon, and stars, and Jewish law — is lit. Next, replacing the incense of ancient times, the box of spices is opened, releasing the scent of cloves, nutmeg, and bay leaves, to remind those present to seek sweetness and peace during the workweek to come. Such symbolism has its roots in the *neshama yeterah*, the second, "extra" soul Jews are believed to acquire during Shabbat, which rejoices in tranquility and contentment.

When Shabbat draws to a close, tradition holds that the extra soul withdraws. Because it's believed that aromas from the material world are the only part of Shabbat that the "everyday," remaining soul can enjoy throughout the week, inhaling the sacred aromatics signifies more than the moment of transition from the spiritual to the material world as the Sabbath ends; it fills our being with the spicy-sweetness of each moment. As these sacred scents capture the senses and provide a mindful pause, we are empowered to hold on to the peaceful, meaningful memory of the Sabbath — until next Friday at sunset.

—Deborah Kesten's latest book is The Healing Secrets of Food: A Practical Guide for Nourishing Body, Mind and Soul.



"Artificial coloring, artificial flavoring, artificial glop, artificial slop, artificial this, artificial that..."

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LANGUAGE
of the SOUL



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Pop Quiz

Would You Prefer "Natural" or "Free-Range" Chicken? (Guess Again.)



ROB HOWARD/CORBIS

Editor's note: As recently as the 1970s, products such as milk were dated for freshness, but the dates were in code which consumers could not read. Since then, there have been enormous strides toward honest, open labeling of the food we buy. But there is still a great deal of work to be done. Here's the latest on the sometime Orwellian language of food labels.

Natural For meat or poultry, natural means the product doesn't contain artificial flavorings, colors, chemical preservatives, or artificial or synthetic ingredients. It guarantees that it's been minimally processed — that is, it hasn't undergone anything that fundamentally altered the raw product. On other types of products, there is no standard definition.

Freshly Cooked/Prepared/Baked Check the date the food was actually prepared; this may not mean anything as far as the quality of the food.

Fresh Frozen Translation: frozen while still fresh, e.g., peas that were frozen immediately after harvest.

Fresh Squeezed Such drinks should not be made from juice concentrates nor have been pasteurized. Such juices should be displayed in refrigerated cases with a warning label about possible harmful bacteria. Beverages that have been pasteurized should be labeled as such; pasteurization reduces vitamin C content.

Nondairy This doesn't mean milk-free. Nondairy creamer can be made from the milk protein "caseinate," which will appear in the ingredients list. If you're allergic, read the fine print.

Free-Range This doesn't mean free, grazing, having a great time. It means the USDA requires that the animals have outdoor access available for "an undetermined period each day"... which means the coop or stall could be opened for just five minutes a day and if an animal doesn't see the open door and dart outside, it is still labeled free-range.

No Hormones Administered The USDA prohibits the use of hormones in hogs and birds within the U.S., so the claim doesn't mean anything extra. Cattle, however, are regularly administered hormones, so for beef, this is a plus. A "hormone-free" label for meat products (pot pies, etc.) is unapprovable since there is no organization independently certifying this claim.

From *What Are You Really Eating?: How to Become Label Savvy* by Amanda Ursell, (© Amanda Ursell, November 2005, HayHouse.com).

Back to the Future

Ancient Plains Indian Beans Had 10 Times More Antioxidants than Today's

That's what food researcher Paul Red Elk discovered when beans he grew from ancient seeds were tested for their nutritional value. Limas, pintos, kidneys, and five other beans had 8 to 10 times the levels of antioxidants, which fight cancer and heart disease, than conventional grocery store varieties.

Red Elk wanted to reduce the incidence of diabetes and obesity among his tribal relatives through better nutrition, so he planted seeds that are 100 to 2,000 years old collected from farmers, Indians, and an archeologist. His success growing nutritious crops is spawning research that could increase antioxidant levels in future generations of food.

But genetic tinkering might have reduced the antioxidant power in the first place. Antioxidants and other phytonutrients that protect health weren't considered when today's varieties were being developed, says Craig Hassel, a food science and nutrition expert at the University of Minnesota: "Breeding for high yield, appearance, and essential vitamins, minerals, and amino acids was all we paid attention to."

While it may be years before Red Elk's potent beans show up in grocery stores, there is good news for shoppers who rely on fresh foods as a source of antioxidants. Cranberries contain more antioxidant compounds than 19 other common fruits. Organic peaches, pears, strawberries, and sweet corn are richer in antioxidants than their non-organic counterparts. Color, too, signals the presence of antioxidants — look for the darkest greens and reds when selecting leafy vegetables, and the brightest multicolored beans when choosing dried legumes. For more information, visit cranberryinstitute.org/cranfacts/gaq.htm, cancer.med.umich.edu/learn/nutrvariety.htm, and ars.usda.gov/is/AR/archive/dec99/stage1299.htm.

—Jennifer Pedalty, M.N.

"For all that has been: Thanks!
For all that shall be: Yes!"

– Dag Hammarskjöld in *The Five Things We Cannot Change* by David Richo

Entertainment for National Eating Disorders Awareness Week ... Really

Cosy Sheridan has been called "a Buddhist monk in a 12-step program, trapped in the body of a singer-songwriter" (*Albuquerque Journal*). Maybe it's because this 40-year-old — with a style that ranges from Judy Collins folk to Dory Previn literary soul to shades of Bob Dylan — is so honest and nonjudgmental about her struggles with eating disorders, body image, and just about every other twenty-first-century malady of our privileged American culture. In her one-woman performance piece, *The Pomegranate Seed (An Exploration of Appetite, Body-Image and Myth in Modern Culture)*, which started in 2002 as a project for a psychology degree, she uses the myth of Persephone's descent and return from the underworld to chronicle everything from her horror at her image in a dressing-room mirror as she tries on a bathing suit to writing a scathing letter to the Mattel toy company with a list of ways to make Barbie more realistic — how about "a body that succumbs to gravity," water retention, and a bit of facial hair? "You built Barbie a front end that's really quite impressive," she sings in a voice that's seductively sweet, "but it's hard to think of nursing with something that's so aggressive." Filled with rage, poetry, and whimsy, Sheridan hopes her show will help others find their way home from the hell of distorted body expectations with new-found appreciation for the journey. She'll be performing *The Pomegranate Seed* extensively in February, leading up to National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, February 26–March 4. Check for locations at cosysheridan.com.

—Betsy Robinson



TR RITCHIE

National award-winner, Cosy Sheridan.

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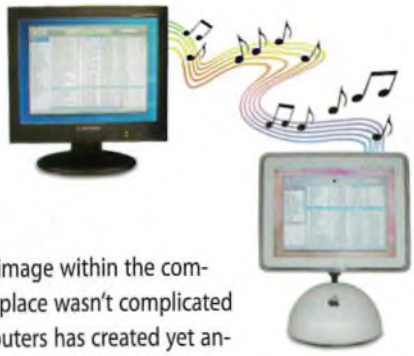
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Playlistism

Are You What You Listen To?



As if managing your image within the community and the workplace wasn't complicated enough, Apple Computers has created yet another way for our peers to judge us.

At Georgia Tech, researchers in the field of human-computer interaction studied coworkers who were sharing digital music in the office, using iTunes® software. Their interest stemmed from college newspaper reports of a campus phenomenon dubbed "playlistism" — social discrimination waged against individuals based on their taste (or lack of taste) in music. iTunes allows for a kind of musical voyeurism, as people on the same local area network can browse each other's music.

The researchers found that the workers formed impressions of others based on the contents of their musical libraries. Most employees also consciously edited their own collections to portray themselves in a certain light to coworkers, some of whom they barely knew. Before making his music library public, one user remembered, "I just went through it to see if there was stuff... that I would not like people to know I had."

Others worried what people would think about music they had purchased for a spouse or child and edited these selections out of shared playlists. And while one participant took pride in his national music featuring German bands, another felt just the opposite about expressing his ethnicity: "I have a lot of Hindi music that ... I don't expect other people to relate to. I don't want to bother sharing all [these] clips."

For the most part, the coworkers felt the shared playlists served to reinforce existing impressions of others. Others admitted forming new opinions, including one person who made a discovery about a colleague "... which I suppose lowers my estimation of him, but not by too much." What intrigued the researchers the most, however, was the demonstration that groups with disparate musical taste can form strong group identities and a sense of community. This became obvious when certain music sharers logged off the network, making their playlists unavailable to other users, who sometimes reported frustration at the loss.

—Hilda J. Brucker

How We Reach Out

1 billion ..... cell phone calls made every day

10 billion ..... emails sent every day

TOP: CRYSTAL STAR; BOTTOM: LWA/DANN TARDIF/CORBIS

Birds of a Feather

How Our Friendships Reflect Us

Research on choosing our romantic partners has shown that we learn our attachment styles from our parents. In other words, we become accustomed to the ways of relating that we learn at home and then repeat them in our intimate relationships. Now psychologists report that the same is true of our friendships.

In the first study of its kind, psychologists Daniel Robinson and Brent Mallinckrodt observed and surveyed 57 undergraduate college students in six classes where the students had the opportunity to get to know one another. In the survey, the students described themselves as well as the individuals they wanted to pursue as friends. At the end of the semester, the researchers determined the students' "attachment style" and correlated it to the forging of friendships.

As it turned out, the students chose friends who reflect their own attachment style. Fearful people — who expect the worst from others and can be aloof or avoiding — picked fearful friendship partners, and secure people — those who have positive expectations in relationships and behave accordingly — picked friends with a secure attachment style. In other words, our relationships reflect us, as much as they reveal the other.



Real Support for Virtual Workers

After the towers fell on 9/11, Amy Zuckerman, a self-employed single mother, knew that things were about to get tougher: her strategic marketing firm would probably lose half its business. But she was grateful to get out of New York unscathed, and as she drove away from Manhattan, she became determined to help others like herself: women who were self-employed "virtual workers" with home businesses. The organization she started, Hidden-Tech, now has members all over the world who connect with each other to provide support, comfort, strategic help, and tips on how to beat isolation and break the glass ceiling from home. For information, see hidden-tec.net.

"The meaning of life is to see!"

– Hui Neng quoted in *A Zen Book of Hours* by Frederick Franck

Silver Linings

If Your Parents Divorced, You May Be Better at Choosing a Partner

When psychologists Melissa Taylor and Chris Segrin of the Department of Communication at the University of Arizona, Tucson, looked at how 111 young married couples dealt with conflict, they found that the children of divorced parents were less likely to have a rosy view of marriage.

No surprise there. The good news is that the communication skills of children of divorced parents are as good as those whose parents remained married. In fact, their skill in assessing their partners' ability to relate to another was better than those whose parents remained married.

Why We Need a More Natural Definition of Beautiful

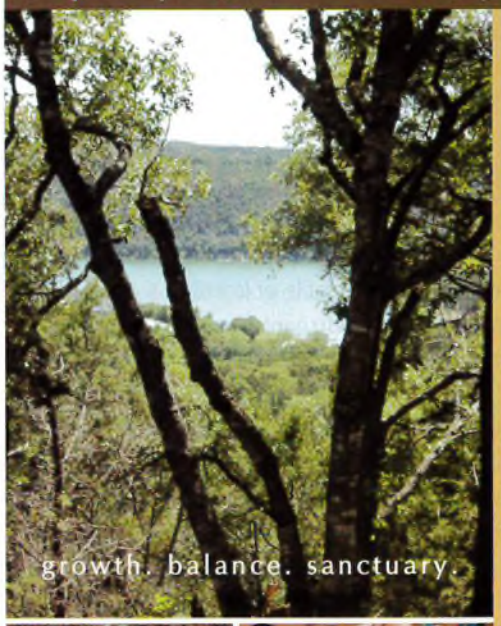
How Today's Women Describe Their Looks

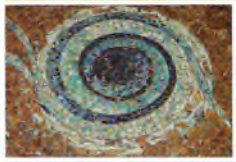
natural	31%
average	29%
attractive	9%
feminine	8%
good-looking	7%
cute	7%
BEAUTIFUL	2%

This lack of identification with "beautiful" holds across all age groups, with only 4 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds choosing "beautiful" as a word to describe their looks.

Source: *The Real Truth about Beauty* by StrategyOne with Dr. Nancy Etcoff of Harvard University and Dr. Susie Orbach of the London School of Economics. The study consisted of a 3,200-respondent telephone survey, conducted among women aged 18 to 64 in 10 countries.

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Stay or Go?

In Search of a Sacred Subtext @ Work

When asked what I do, I reply, "I work in Human Resources at a regional multi-specialty health-care system." If pressed, I add, "My focus is in leadership and organizational development." The real answer: "I translate for others the impact of their work — not only *what* they do, but in *how* they do it and for what end." Leading in health care requires brains, heart, and soul. My job is to help physicians, nurses, and administrative leaders integrate all three. After 12 years in the field, I believe this is the sacred subtext of my work.

I have cycled through periods of profound connection to my work and times of doubt about my place within an increasing high-tech medical setting. During a recent dry spell, I went through the motions of my work, feeling my energy siphoned off by the presence of illness, back-to-back meetings, and a sea of email. Do I stay and make this work, stay and be miserable, or leave?

I had spent years helping health-care leaders to discover and refine their unique qualities and define what keeps them going in an environment of shrinking reimbursements, tighter operating margins, and increased regulation. Now it was my turn to step back from work and ask some important questions.

What started as a few lines in my journal about what I do at work, why, and how allowed me to see the privilege and paradox of working in health care, where the intersections of life and death are often close. I saw that my workplace is more than just a job. It is where my son was born on a quiet night on the fifth floor of the hospital. It is where my friends work. It is where the nurses created a campsite in a dying patient's room so that he could go camping one last time. It is where I saw my mother, frail and sick, waving to me from the sixth floor window as I walked in to work one day. It is where CCU and ICU nurse leaders thanked me for facilitating a retreat that reconnected them to their work. It is where I learned that every employee fills an important role, some with subtle effect and some with grand scope. It is where life's miracles and stories are lived out.

My story is becoming clearer. It's about staying. It's about connection to place. It's about seeing the subtle and sometimes sacred impact of my work. It's about living deeply in the life that surrounds me.

—Nancy Noelke

ILLUSTRATION: DON WRIGHT

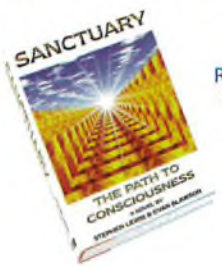
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- **Dr. Wayne Dyer,** Best selling author of "The Power of Intention"



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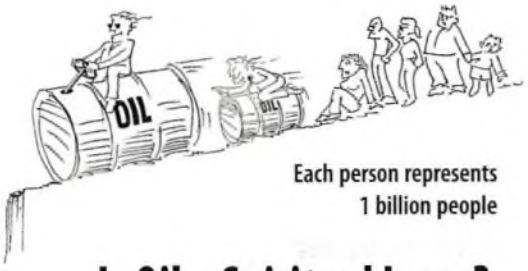
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Is Oil a Spiritual Issue?

At the World Business Academy's 2005 Global MindChange Forum in Santa Barbara, California, oil topped the agenda. Why? Check these stats:

There are 6.4 billion people in the world; 1 billion use more than 85 percent of the oil; 1 billion use the remaining 15 percent; 4.5 billion people on the planet have little or no access to energy; poverty and access to energy are directly related. *

For a detailed blueprint on how the U.S. can become oil-free in the next decade and boost domestic economic growth at the same time, see Worldwatch Institute's report *Winning the Oil Endgame*, at rmi.org. The report, partly funded by the Pentagon, is getting notice in the Capitol.

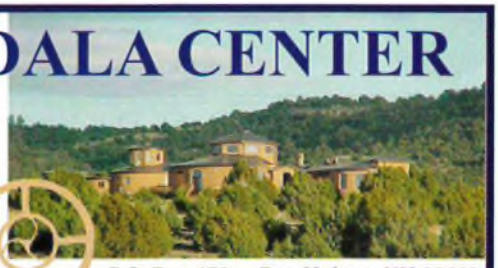
*Sources: *CIA Factbook* and Worldwatch Institute's *State of the World Report 2005*, presented by James A. Cusumano, Ph.D., director of World Business Academy Energy Task Force, and former director of research and development at Exxon.

The Best Way to Restore Your Reputation

Martha Stewart, accounting firm KPMG, insurance broker Marsh & McLennan, and Merck are among the most recent examples of companies that face the challenge of restoring damaged reputations. How can they best do that? According to top United States business school professors, companies that acknowledge they have problems and launch communication programs to repair tarnished reputations stand the best chance of rehabilitation. And what's the worst way? Hide the problem, lie, or appeal only to special interest constituencies.

From David Batstone's *WAG*, a weekly business newsletter found at rightreality.com/wag.

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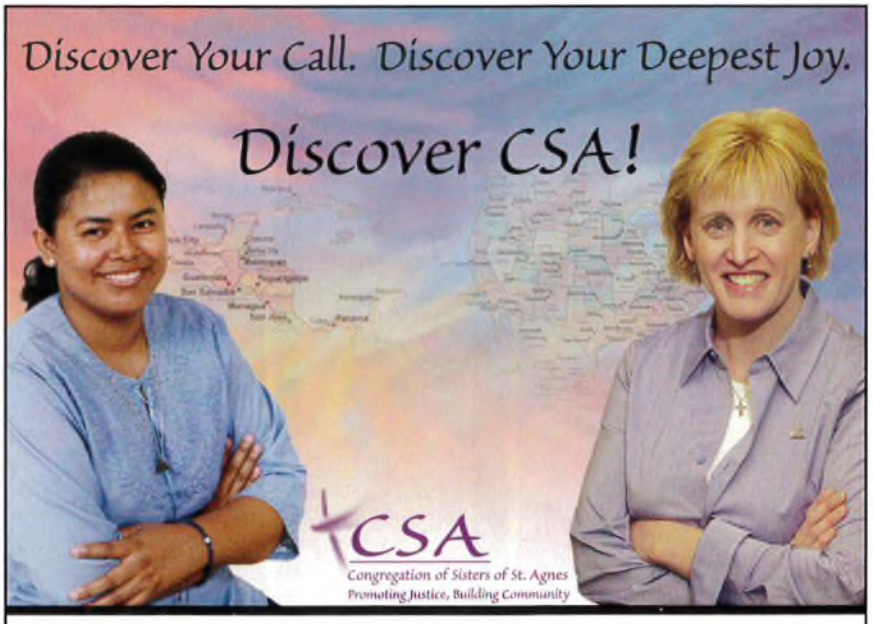
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Making Your Creativity Count: Become the Writer You've Always Wanted to Be. Friday-Sunday, April 28-30. Learn to transform your ideas into lively, effective writing with award winning New Mexico author, journalist and photographer, **Sharon Niederman**. Whatever your experience as a writer, you'll benefit from sessions on making writing a priority, packaging your ideas, recording your dreams, experiences and stories, and developing your unique, irresistible voice. Sharon is the author of six non-fiction books and a recent novel, *Return to Abo*. Fee: $350.

Exploring with Photography. Thursday-Sunday, May 4-7. Explore the beautiful Hi-Lo country of northeastern New Mexico with *New Mexico Magazine* photo and travel editor **Steve Larese**. Climb volcanoes, explore out of the way places, and enjoy beautiful sunsets and starry nights as you hone your photography skills with your film or digital camera. In addition to travel photography, we'll focus on photographing people, art, architecture, food and other objects. Open to all skill levels. Fee: $350. Includes supplies.

Creativity Week I. Sunday-Saturday, May 21-27. Jicarilla Apache artist and potter **Shelden Nunez-Velarde** will lead participants through the process of making micaceous clay pottery, from preparing the clay to shaping pots and vessels to firing them in the traditional way. This workshop is open to adults and young people, twelve and older. Fee: $500.

Fees include tuition, double occupancy room and meals.



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The Way of the Jet-Set Napper



NATHAN SAYERS FOR METRONAPS

New York entrepreneurs Arshad Chowdhury and Christopher Lindholst may have latched onto the one thing we didn't think was for sale — a good rest. Fourteen dollars buys you a private, 20-minute nap or meditation break (complete with sound-blocking headphones, personally controlled lighting, and soothing wake-up) in cocoon-shaped recliners in the Empire State Building and Vancouver International Airport. A study released from the National Institute of Industrial Health in Japan found that people who napped for 15 minutes after lunch felt more alert than those who didn't nap. "That brief rest has a very positive impact on mood, alertness levels, your ability to be creative and to learn and remember things," Lindholst says. Want to try out Jetsons-style napping? Look for MetroNaps in train stations, hospitals, spas, and airports in late 2006, or visit metronaps.com.

—Julia Rosien

Big Steps for Big Blue

IBM Adds Fairness into Its Worldwide Supply Chain

In a sign that some things really are changing for the better, IBM recently developed and published a set of Supplier Conduct Principles. The 13 provisions for which IBM is holding its suppliers accountable include: forced or involuntary labor; child labor wages and benefits; working hours; nondiscrimination, respect, and dignity; freedom of association; health and safety; protection of the environment; legal compliance; ethical dealings; communications; and monitoring/record keeping. To download the detailed list, simply google "IBM Supplier Conduct Principles." Pass it on.



How Many Americans Actually Attend Worship Each Week?

Conservative/Evangelicals: 22,233,944 worshippers in 178,672 congregations, with an average attendance of 124, or 25.4 percent of their constituency over five years old.

Roman Catholics: 16,680,804 worshippers in 19,544 congregations, with average attendance of 854, or 25.4 percent of the constituency.

Mainline Protestants: 9,023,693 worshippers in 82,183 congregations, averaging 110, or 19.4 percent of their constituency.

Other Christians: 3,568,455 worshippers in 36,450 congregations, averaging 98, or 25.2 percent of their constituency.

Non-Christians: 1,625,564 worshippers in 11,720 congregations, averaging 139, or 18.2 percent of the constituency.

Orthodox and Other Catholics: 471,128 worshippers in 2,431 churches, averaging 193, or 35.9 percent of their constituency.

Total Worshippers: 53,603,588 worshippers in 331,000 congregations, averaging 162 people in attendance, or 20.4 percent of Americans.

C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler's "An Alternative Approach to Measurement" (*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, September 2005). http://las.alfred.edu/~soc/SSSR/jssr.html.

A Message from God?

My wife had been hit by a series of illnesses. No sooner had she gotten one under control when another would crop up in another area — her heart, breast, colon, etc.

One afternoon when we were returning from a visit to a doctor's office, we came to this corner. Dancing about in the breeze was a gas-filled balloon. It was standing there all by itself. It was the kind of balloon that people send to their friends in the hospital.

We stopped the car at the corner, and the balloon drifted to my wife's window. I suggested it might be God's message to get well.

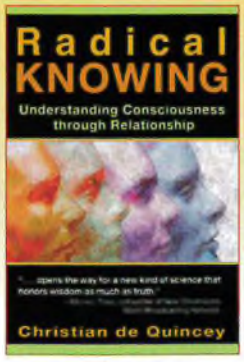
She reached out the window and retrieved the balloon and was convinced that it was a message from God until she took a close look at the message it bore:

"We're going to miss you."

The healing part of this experience was that we could not stop laughing.

Who says God has no sense of humor?

—Bill Gorgus



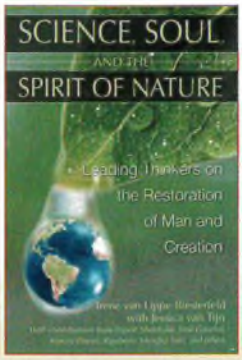
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Christian de Quincey

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Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld with Jessica van Tijn

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Graves are marked by rocks from the preserve.

A visit to nature preserve Ramsey Creek is, quite literally, a walk in the woods. Wildflowers come and go with the seasons, and the native fauna finds a safe haven in this old-growth forest in Westminster, South Carolina. But here's the surprise: Ramsey Creek is also a cemetery, the final resting place for ecology-minded souls who have used their passing to help preserve wilderness for future generations. Opened in 1996, Ramsey Creek is operated by physician Billy Campbell, who says his primary motivation was to preserve natural land by leveraging laws that protect cemeteries from development. "Through death, we're helping to heal a piece of property," he says. While modern cemeteries bulldoze and destroy the natural landscape, Ramsey Creek is rich in biodiversity, with more than 200 native species of plants thriving there. Since no trees are removed to make room for burials, gravesites number only between 30 and 50 per acre (traditional cemeteries average about 1,000 per acre). Unembalmed bodies can be buried in boxes made of cardboard or untreated lumber — or no boxes at all. "We've done shroud burials and simply buried people in their street clothes," says Campbell. Even the natural stone markers used at Ramsey Creek have an ecological purpose in Campbell's eyes, creating homes and hidey-holes for reptiles and insects. Those who have laid loved ones to rest in this setting have found comfort in knowing the body will return to the earth as the circle of life continues. "We're interested in reuniting human and natural communities," Campbell explains. "The funeral industry is out of kilter with natural processes. It only reinforces the alienated relationship between people and nature." For more information, call (864) 647-7798 or visit ramseycreekpreserve.com.

—Hilda J. Brucker

Survivor, Fear Factor, and now... *The Monastery!*

When we received a casting notice for a new reality TV show called *The Monastery,* where participants will live in religious seclusion for 40 days and 40 nights as they "search for meaning and understanding in their lives," we wondered what viewers would see? Mindful dishwashing?

But apparently a BBC Two version attracted more than 2.5 million viewers per episode — enough to sell the series to the Learning Channel. The U.S. version will feature six episodes starting in February, and promises to show how five men and five women, when given the time, support, and a locale for an inner quest, can find insight. "The producers won't have any role in the process," says casting director Mary Ann Black. "There will only be one cameraman and he will not interact with the participants. Certainly they will know they are being filmed, but we are hopeful that after a while they won't realize it's on." Stay tuned...

PHOTO COURTESY OF RAMSEY CREEK

Institute of Noetic Sciences

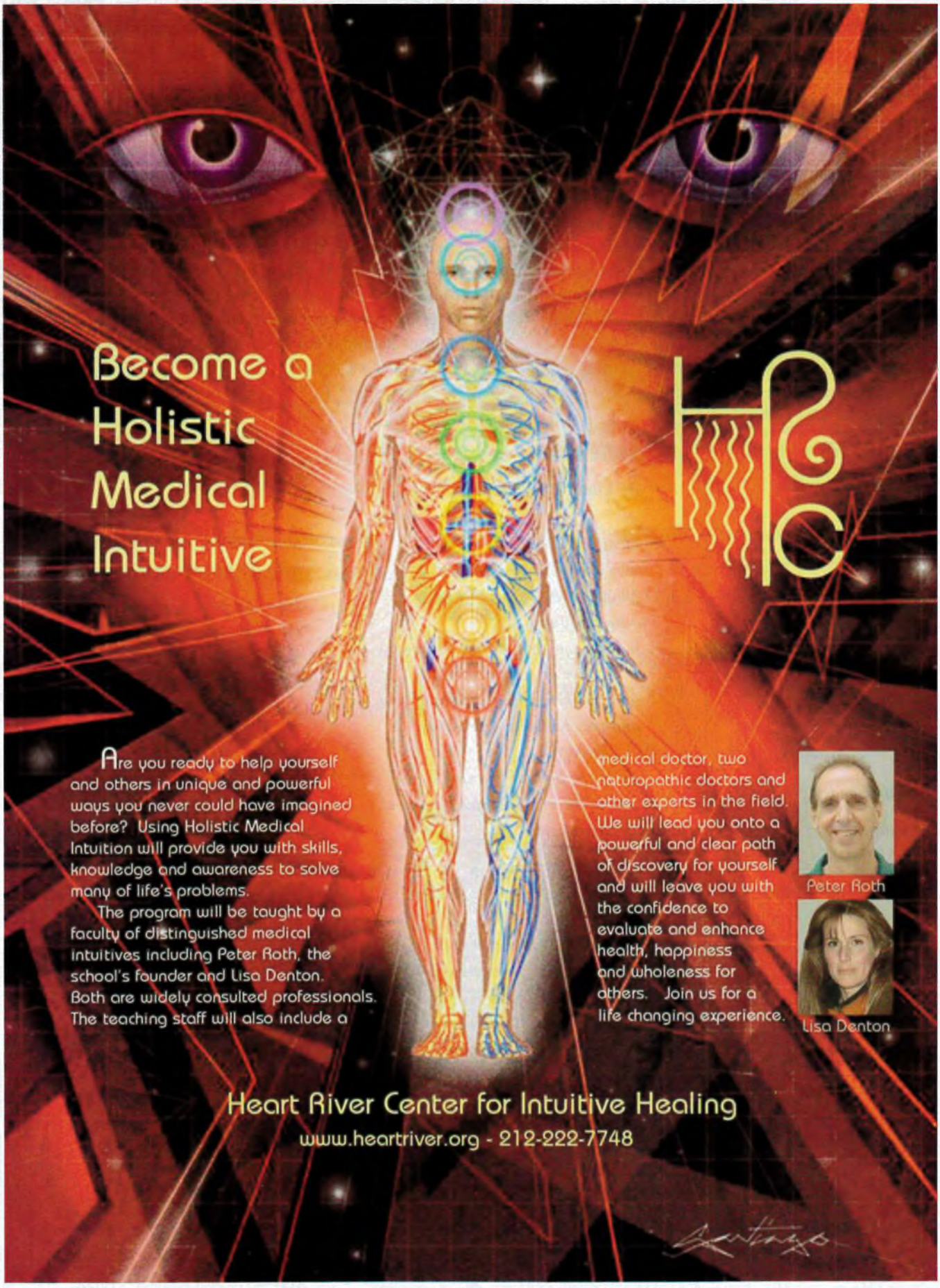
Transformations and Health: Take the Survey

As cures are found for many infectious diseases, the overwhelming causes of suffering — such as addictions, violence, intolerance, inequality in distribution of resources, and damage to the environment — are the maladaptive ways that humans view and interact with our world. On a more positive note, the fundamental building blocks for improving the quality of life can be found in the kinds of capacities and experiences that result from spiritual transformation — love, compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, emotional balance, physical health — overall thriving. Learning to foster this change is an urgent priority.

In Phase I of our Transformational Practices Project, a team of social scientists from the Institute of Noetic Sciences met with 40 well-known spiritual and transformative teachers and began to identify appropriate questions to ask about the nature of personal change and transformation. They conducted in-depth interviews looking for common themes and elements that precede or predict transformation and result from transformation. (See *S&H* Open Mind/Open Heart, April 2004.)

In Phase II, the researchers tested a survey instrument on transformational practices on 500 people. They also formed a collaboration with Adam Cohen, Ph.D., at Philadelphia University and Dacher Keltner, Ph.D., at the University of California at Berkeley, who have been studying the emotional, cognitive, and physiological aspects of spiritually transformative experiences. Now the scientists are ready to test the survey on a larger audience, and they need your help. We hope you'll take a few minutes to go to transformationsurvey.com and complete the survey. We'll let you know the results in a future issue.

—Marilyn Schlitz, Ph.D., is research director of the Institute for Noetic Sciences.


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I Dare You to Come Have a Good Time!

Years ago some friends and I adopted "Poetry Is for Sissies and Cowboys" as the title of a reading series to be held in a Rapid City, South Dakota, saloon. A cowboy friend posed for a poster, his stance seeming to say, "I dare you to come and have a good time." Some of us were inspired to take poetry elsewhere in cowboy country, reading it at Farmers Union conventions or grain cooperative meetings. I once read Gary Snyder's "Hay for the Horses" at the opening of a bull sale, and can testify that it was warmly received.

Poetry has little value in America, because it isn't trying to convince the reader to buy something or adopt a particular point of view. In an increasingly commercial and polarized society, poetry may be useless, but it is also indispensable. It comes from needs that reside deep within the soul. Poetry was a part of human experience when we first made tools and weapons, and when we first began to farm in order to feed ourselves. I am grateful that *Spirituality & Health* will continue to print poetry, and I intend to present more poems that will give readers a chance to seize a moment of quiet time, take a breath, read, and savor. No strings attached. A good poem is hospitable to everyone, even sissies. Just come and enjoy.

—Kathleen Norris, poetry editor

Trying to Pray

By Margaret Gibson

The light is such
that now

the beech leaves
anchor

midair gold

against the farther hollows
and afternoon

shadows
beyond the pond

The branches
rise and fall

like swans' wings
soaring

against tether
then, easy

sinking back —

as once, within brief-lit
radiance

someone I
had thought to be

fell impeccably
silent

Dimensions

By Linda Hogan

How is it decided
who among us has hands,
gill slits, who will gather up
a small thing
waiting too far from the ocean
to be alive or return
with the kelp and its blurbs of gold,
and the creature we see almost
through,
see in the light of morning
among the many baleful closures of
the ocean.

How is it decided
who will gather up the small thing
seemingly lifeless
and return it to water as its grave
only to watch it slowly open;
jellyfish like a pulse,
a robe of orange splendor
in the finery of ocean creation.

I see the wave, with a curve of light,
the force of it, one after another,
not wondering if it is the ocean.
I see the infinite pastures of the water
some with the newly born, some
with the just as newly gone.

Here is a place of sliding worlds,
the birthplace of Chief Seattle
whose people he said would always be
among those with bodies.
and how is it decided who
has dominion
of the flesh
to pass through unseen
or on its way to being
spirit,
forgetting the brief distances of time

I don't know who lives here,
if they are happy
in that slide of cells
that created and birthed them
or who is it that decided who
has hands,
who can speak
who is light?

Kathleen Norris is the award-winning poet, writer, and author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *The Cloister Walk*, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*, and *The Virgin of Bennington*.

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ALIVE WITH

Faced with a diagnosis of terminal illness, this former "white coat" medical professional chucked the statistics and went surfing.



I am an anecdote. In the language of modern medicine, this means I don't count. Medical statistics disregard me because, in 2001, statistically given three to six months to live, I disregarded both the statistics and the recommendations for chemo and radiation therapy. This morning, instead of lying in the predicted hospital bed or grave, I went surfing. Afterward, I cared for five dying patients whose cancers were less advanced than mine had been — all of whom had been given a better chance of survival than I had.

Why am I still alive and surfing and volunteering at hospice with greater joy than ever before in my ▶

PASSION

STORY BY MANDI CARUSO PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK DOYLE





Night after long, sleepless night, I listened to people as all their definitions of themselves — job, home, family, possessions — were ruthlessly stripped away by their fear of death. From these, the dying, I learned that fear of death rules our lives far more than passion for living.

life, when so many other cancer patients with far better prognoses are suffering and dying?

I believe the answer can be found in two words: fear and passion.

Before my own diagnosis, I spent most of my working life in intensive care and emergency rooms, at the bedsides of critically ill and dying people. Decade after decade, I watched as men and women crumpled in fear as they realized that they were truly going to cease to exist in their bodies. Night after long, sleepless night, I listened to people as all their definitions of themselves — job, home, family, possessions — were ruthlessly stripped away by their fear of death. Some nights I heard whole corridors of agonized people screaming, "Why me?"

From these, the dying, I learned that fear of death rules our lives far more than passion for living. In *The Balance Within*, Esther Sternberg, M.D., cites many scientific studies demonstrating the hormonal and neurochemical damage to bodies stressed by constant fear. Night after night, year after year, I watched fearful minds kill ailing bodies faster than any drug or disease.

Almost everything in modern culture creates fear of death. Almost everything that is bought and sold is marketed as a ticket to eternal youth; if only we spend enough money, buy the right treatment or drug, we will never age, never die. Death is the enemy, the villain, the gray-cloaked, grinning skull — the symbol of our destruction. When we buy into this manipulation, we prime ourselves to become our own worst enemies when we're sick.

When we deny the unavoidable normality of illness, ageing, pain, and death, the amygdala, the fear center of our brain, sends out stress hormones and neurochemicals that over time undermine and weaken the already stressed body. We literally create our very own, highly personalized, physical and mental hells. What tools can we use to counteract such a juggernaut as our death-denying culture?

Passion

Thanks to my teachers — the dying — my knowledge of the passionate tango of life and death is so "to the bone" that, in 2001 when I stood before the lighted X-ray display panel and looked at the very large, very obvious cancer tumor that had arisen over only six weeks and was extending its crab claws through most of my left breast, and reaching straight down to strangle my heart in a matter of weeks, I was very calm. My thought was, "My turn up at bat."

It is possible that what has kept me alive is to be found in that calm moment. Here is what I knew and felt:

1. I knew I was going to die.
2. I was not afraid.
3. I did not cry.
4. I needed a little time to set my life in order and prepare my daughter.
5. I wasn't going to use chemotherapy or radiation, even if that meant I died within days.

No waiting in doctors' offices. No listening to someone else's opinions about what my body was doing or when it would stop doing it. Nothing was going to interfere with the fun I was going to have with my 13-year-old daughter. I had to get all the junk out of my head right now and LIVE, really live and savor each physical, sensual moment left to me.

"You are going to have that cut out, aren't you?" asked the wide-eyed mammogram technician.

"Oh, yeah, sister. And after the surgery I will surf until I can't stand up — and then I'll bodysurf. From now on, I'm going for ecstasy in everything."

"I wish I knew how to surf."

"After the surgery, I'll teach you," I promised.

"Uh-huh," said the tech.

I am a child of Mother Ocean. My blood streamed with salt water as well as tumor cells. I knew the sea would never fail me. And that moment, looking right at my death, was my first, spontaneous, flippant, but deeply passionate affirmation of my life and my death: it was okay that I had cancer; it was okay to die; it was not okay to suffer because of fear of dying, because … I'm not afraid.

Has working with death for so many years made me insensitive, numbed me into stupidity? No. My lack of fear stems from two things:

1. I've looked at death almost every day. I know death is normal. I know death is not evil.

2. Every time I step on the beach and look out at the infinite blue horizon, I'm looking right into God. Every day I see God. And, as a surfer, most days I dance with God and death. Any wave can kill me. I don't take it personally; I just enjoy the Zen ecstasy, the joy of being one with the sea and gliding into the beauty of the shining light — even when it's raining. This is passion. This is love. This joy originates in a completely different part of the brain, the nucleus accumbens, and the chemicals released, I believe, heal.

The Second Affirmation

Instead of my white lab coat and identification badge, I wore my best red board shorts, black tank top with a beer logo, and rubber slippers to my appointment at the cancer center.

"Your best bet is a mastectomy," said the surgeon as she slammed the mammogram the radiologist had called "grave" onto the lighted display panel.

"Take one, take 'em both," I said.

The surgeon exhaled and gave me a hard look. I looked at her. She dropped her gaze first.

"I'm only 90 percent certain it's cancer and you want me to take both your breasts?"

"I've worked in medicine since I was 13 years old and now I'm 49. I'm 100 percent certain it's cancer. That is one big, classic crab tumor in my chest. And one month ago both my breasts were swollen and excruciatingly painful. That, by your definition, is inflammatory breast cancer. Could it be something else? Maybe a fat necrosis secondary to a surf contusion?"

The surgeon pursed her lips, trying to swallow a smile. "Probably not."

"Okay, then. You can do anything except cut muscle or tendon, because I am going to surf again."

"What about reconstructive surgery, chemotherapy, radiation? I can recommend an oncologist."

"No. You, and you alone, get one crack at this in one surgical session. And then I'm back in the water. No other hospitals, no other doctor visits. I'll surf until it's time for hospice."

When I stood before the lighted X-ray display panel and looked at the very large, very obvious cancer tumor that had arisen and was extending its crab claws through most of my left breast, and reaching straight down to strangle my heart in a matter of weeks, I was very calm. My thought was, "My turn up at bat."

"You're only 49," she said.

"And I have had a grand life," I answered. "The point is to live fully until it's time to die, and to do both without fear. The ocean washes away fear. Hospitals are all about fear. You know about this fear as well as I do."

She looked down at her feet and then at me. I knew she wanted to tell me I was nuttier than a fruitcake, that what I proposed to do was suicide according to current medical theory. Perhaps she thought I would change my mind. To her credit, she said only, "My nurse will schedule the surgery and call you."

The Third Affirmation

The night before the double mastectomy I threw a "boob wake." If I was going down and my life was to be destroyed, then I would celebrate that destruction.

I've always thrown good parties and this one was no exception. Even if people did walk in the door with a tenuous look on their faces, after a few beers or glasses of wine they figured I was solid, so they enjoyed themselves as usual. One bosomy friend gave me a tremendous gift. After a few beers, she asked, "Are you going to get implants?"

"No. I've taken hits on my chest during surf wipeouts that would explode them. Besides, if I live 600 more years, I'll recover the cost of the surgery in bras I don't buy. I think of it as my sole victory over Mr. G. — gravity. Maybe when no one is around I'll body-surf topless. I'm afraid the scars will scare people."

"Some women get their chests tattooed after the surgery," she said. "It would be like you were always wearing a top. Then you could surf topless no matter who was around."

I felt a singing in my soul. Not only was I going to surf again, but I would have my daughter draw my love of the sea and have that picture — a sacred prayer — tattooed on my chest. Then I would fly across the wave and walk to the nose of the board — topless.

The morning of the surgery, I was scheduled to be at the hospital at 7:30. I rose at 5:30 and went body-surfing. I wanted the blessing of salt water on my body. Again, unconsciously, I chose passion and acceptance over fear of the inevitable.

My breasts looked beautiful in the sunlit, diamond-patterned water. I savored the coolness of the water flowing over the delicate skin of my breasts and nipples for the last time. I offered my breasts to the great nurturing mother, Lady Sea. I didn't cry. I simply said aloud, "I will be in this beauty again. I will."

Around 6 a.m. the next day, the surgical resident came into my room. I was standing by the window, watching dawn paint the clouds gold over the green mountains. "I need to see your chest," she said.

For the first time, although I had walked into the mirrored bathroom during the night to relieve myself, I opened the hospital gown and looked down at my chest. It was a black, blue, and purple-brown bloody mess. Gone were the perky pink nipples. In their place was old, oozing hamburger unfit for a meat market display. I did not cry.

"You are too thin to have this surgery," said the resident.

I looked at her. "Little late now, don't you think? How soon can I get my chest tattooed?"

She looked at me as though I were from another planet. "Didn't you hear me? You have no body fat on your chest at all. There is nothing protecting your heart but skin and ribs. The membrane covering your pectoral muscle attachments, the fascia, has been cut and stripped off. The nerve endings have been cut. They must be screaming. It will be two weeks before the incisions even heal. The blood will be draining into those drainage tubes for at least as long. Why did you refuse reconstruction?"

"I want to surf topless. How soon can I get a tattoo?"

The resident walked out of the room. I looked back at the light on the mountains.

Another Kind of Affirmation

The second day after surgery, although I was forbidden to enter the water because of the draining incisions and I couldn't even lift my hands to

"What about reconstructive surgery, chemotherapy, radiation? I can recommend an oncologist." "No," I said, "You, and you alone, get one crack at this in one surgical session. And then I'm back in the water. No other hospitals, no other doctor visits. I'll surf until it's time for hospice."



my face, I went down to my home surf break. I knelt and faced the sunlit waves, inching my fingers forward on the worn slabs of rock. Tears streaming, I visualized myself stroking for the wave. Inch by finger-crawling inch, I fought for passion, for joy.

The worst moment did not involve physical pain. It came after the incisions had healed enough for me to go back into the water. I could only manage a pathetic dog-paddle and a weak breaststroke. How could I surf?

All who love the ocean know never to fight the water. When swimmers and surfers are in the grip of currents that could sweep them seaward to their deaths, they use the current to work their way to safe harbor. I was determined not to fight or resent my limitations, but to flow with them. My weakness would teach me how to let the ocean — and life — do more for me.

Using the ironically named breaststroke and the currents, I taught myself to tow my littlest surfboard into position. Then, as the wave peaked, I could jump onto it and dance into the light wherein "I" ceased to be.

This is the great teaching that cancer carved into my body, mind, and soul: the realization that strength and life are all around me, passionately embracing me, holding me, and loving me all the time. To tap into that joyful energy and flow with it, all I have to do is to let go of "me": my fears, my expectations. Just let go and float on the ocean of Now. Ocean/God will hold me up. The love of the sensual universe — the ground I walk on, the air I breathe, the sea I play in — has all been freely given. And it is all Love.

This is how I, a former "white coat" medical person, define healing: to be at one with life and death, to be whole no matter what is happening to my body.

Joseph Campbell said, "Are you the light, or the lightbulb?"

Sometimes, it is hard to remember how to be the light. There were moments when I held my daughter in my arms and knew that one day I would not be able to smell the fragrance of her hair and comfort her. Then tears of grief fell like rain. After the storm we would go together to the sea. In the ever-shifting patterns of waves, I saw that I could either grieve for an imagined tomorrow or rejoice with my daughter NOW.

From mindset to molecule, the body locked in fear is far different from the body living in joy. Passion, laughter, and tears liberate the body; fear and dread imprison and destroy it. However, medical science still relegates the self-healing of passionate engagement with life — which includes death — to the realm of anecdote because science can't devise the definitive, replicable experiment.

Strength and life are all around me, passionately embracing me, holding and loving me all the time. To tap into that joyful energy and flow with it, all I have to do is let go of "me": my fears, my expectations. Let go and float on the ocean of Now.

No such experiment can be devised, because people are so wildly individual, so diverse in their passions and their means to self-healing. For me, surfing unlocked the door to healing. For Norman Cousins, laughter and funny movies healed his heart.

I didn't set out to be a statistical anecdote. But I enjoy it. I enjoy reading a book such as *Remarkable Recovery*, by Hirshberg and Barasch, and learning that there are thousands like me. Across the religious spectrum, including atheists and agnostics, across the intellectual spectrum of I.Q.'s of 60 to 160, people who didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of surviving live, with passion and joy. They accepted that they were slated to die, but were too busy living to accept someone else's decree of when.

Imagine you have two years left. What do you do? Two months? Two weeks? Two days? Two hours? If you honestly write down what you would do — and do it — you will discover your true passions, discover what — not "who" — you are, and change your life. Which will you choose: passion or fear?

I am grateful that medical statistics took away my future. I tend to live only in the last two hours, as if each breath, each wave, each kiss, each opportunity to say, "I love you," were my last. ❖

Mandi Caruso is a passionate hospice volunteer, surfer, and author. This article is excerpted from her unpublished book *Doors to Heaven*. In addition to teaching her mammogram tech how to surf three months after her own surgery, she has taught other cancer patients how to surf.

THE HOMELAND OF THE SOUL

SOLITUDE IN THE FAITH TRADITIONS...

BECAUSE NO GREAT RELIGION WAS FOUNDED BY COMMITTEE.

BY CLAIR McPHERSON







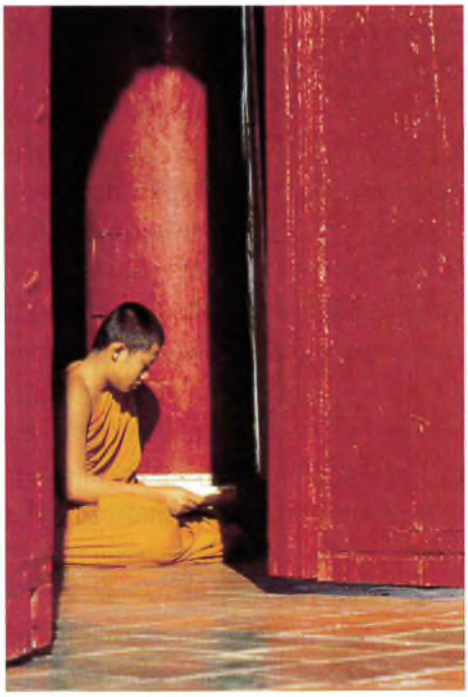
In his classic study of ecumenical spirituality, the Irish Jesuit William Johnston tells this little story: After studying Zen with all its rigor in a traditional Japanese monastery, he eagerly reports his findings to a group of traditional Christian nuns, telling them of a meditation technique involving sitting in stillness and silence, alone, facing a blank wall.

"Oh, that," their Superior replies. "We already do that all the time."

At first, Johnston was deflated. He had thought he was bringing them something new and exotic. But he soon realized that he had made a profound discovery. Here were two utterly separate and contrasting sets of spiritual seekers — male, Japanese, Zen monks and Christian, Benedictine, Irish sisters — who discover the same thing: the value of stillness in solitude. ▶

PHOTO CREDITS ON PAGE 46







Solitude is, in fact, a condition of the spirit that is recognized, honored, and practiced by adherents of virtually every major faith. The founders, exemplars, and followers of every religion have discovered it, practiced it, and handed it down.

The rigorous men Johnston knelt with in Kyoto and Tokyo were almost lineal descendants of their founder, Siddhartha Gautama, who became known as the Buddha, and who, after years of wandering and spiritual practice, found enlightenment beneath the bodhi tree in the forest near Benares — in solitude. Those gentle women Johnston visited bearing the gift of contemplation were likewise lineal descendants, through a 2,000-year heritage of Christian contemplation, of their founder, Jesus of Nazareth, who prepared for his earthly ministry with a 40-day sojourn in desert solitude, and who frequently sought out lonely places for solitary prayer and contemplation.

SOLITARY STATES ARE THE CONDITION — INDEED THE REQUIREMENT — FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION AND CLARIFICATION.

These complementary approaches to the truth we call the great religions all involve solitude as a foundational principle. Like Buddha and Jesus, Mohammed found his vocation in solitude, in his case, in the cave near Mecca, where he met the Angel Gabriel and received the holy Qu'ran. Moses received the Torah after 40 days alone on Mount Sinai, and before him, the patriarchs of the Jews, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, had apprehended God in solitary places. Earlier still, sages known as the rishis recorded the Upanishads, prose poems of the spirit upon which much of Hinduism is based, after dwelling in seclusion in the caves and mountains of northern India. In every case, solitary states are the condition — indeed the requirement — for spiritual communion and clarification. No real religion has been founded by committee. Every one originates in solitude.

There is a reason for this: In every major faith, solitude is indispensable to the spiritual exploration we call mystical experience. The great prophets of the Old Testament, the early Christian desert mothers and fathers, the first Zen adepts in mainland China, the medieval Jewish mystics, and the Sufis in the tradition of Islam — all practiced solitude.

"Go into your cell, and your cell will teach you everything," said Abbot Anthony. The Dhammapada, a fully charged condensation of Buddhism, recommends "the solitude of the forest, where worldly people do not dwell; a good place for the passionless" — echoing the words Gautama spoke in the deer park after his own sojourn under the bodhi tree. The great religious philosopher Plotinus called such prayer, or meditation, the "flight of the alone to the alone," the private moment between God and human being that recalls the solitary walks God took with Eve and Adam in Paradise.

Solitude, however, is not only for those who want to move to other states of consciousness and religious or spiritual experience. In every faith tradition, solitude is a key requisite for devotion and growth. Ordinary practitioners are encouraged to practice some measure of solitude, no matter how communal their callings.

One of the pillars of Islam — the practices that define the Muslim — is personal prayer, five times a day, every day. It can be done in a group setting, and often is, but by design it cannot always be practiced with others. Muslims must spend quality time with Allah, often alone on their prayer carpets. Observant Jews pray twice a day, sometimes in a quorum

PHOTOS ON PRECEDING PAGES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: FIRST THREE IMAGES: ASAP, LTD./INDEXSTOCK; IMAGESTATE/ALAMY; MICHAEL S. LEWIS/CORBIS

or among family, sometimes alone, whispered to themselves. And for 2,000 years, ordinary disciples of Christ have heeded the advice of Jesus when he said, "Go to your room, shut the door, and pray" (my updated translation of Matthew 6:6).

So, while no religion has been founded by committee, every religion has been processed, tested, and developed in community. Indeed, every religion balances the experience of solitude with the experience of community. The Prophet Elijah listened to the still, almost silent voice of Yahweh on Mount Horeb, but he lived in community with his disciples and publicly challenged his king, at great risk. Buddha found satori alone beneath the tree, but he attracted scores of followers in spite of himself, who followed him, hungry for that enlightenment, for the rest of his life. Mohammed gathered disciples and inspired them with his zeal; so did Jesus, who knew that the Father with whom he spoke in solitude was the same Creator who said, "It is not good for man to be alone."

The nuns who practice solitary meditation celebrate the Eucharist as a community and also run schools and hospitals for the larger human family. The Muslim observes the holy month of Ramadan, tithes, and makes a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in community. The observant Jew who daily prays in private gathers with his or her family and community for the Shabbat and other forms of service and worship.

Why should solitude, the deliberate and intentional practice of being alone, loom so large in the great historical religions? To answer fully would take volumes, but there are two primary reasons. First, all religions involve understanding the self, and solitude is the ideal context for an encounter with the authentic self. Second, each major religion originates in a central concern or question, and its theology and practice are an attempt at an answer. In Judaism, it is the oneness and the moral character of God, or what students of comparative religion call ethical monotheism. For Buddhism, it is the determination to uncover a reality or truth that transcends the cycle of uncontrollable pleasure and pain of life in this world. For Christianity, it is reconciliation with God, and for Islam, it is God's ineluctable and absolute transcendence. For Hinduism, it is the sanctity, the divine participation of all reality, all being, including the created world. Just as solitude clarifies the self, it clarifies the questions and answers posed by the faith. Solitude elucidates, enhances, and underscores the character of religion.

ALL RELIGIONS INVOLVE UNDERSTANDING THE SELF, AND SOLITUDE IS THE IDEAL CONTEXT FOR AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE AUTHENTIC SELF.

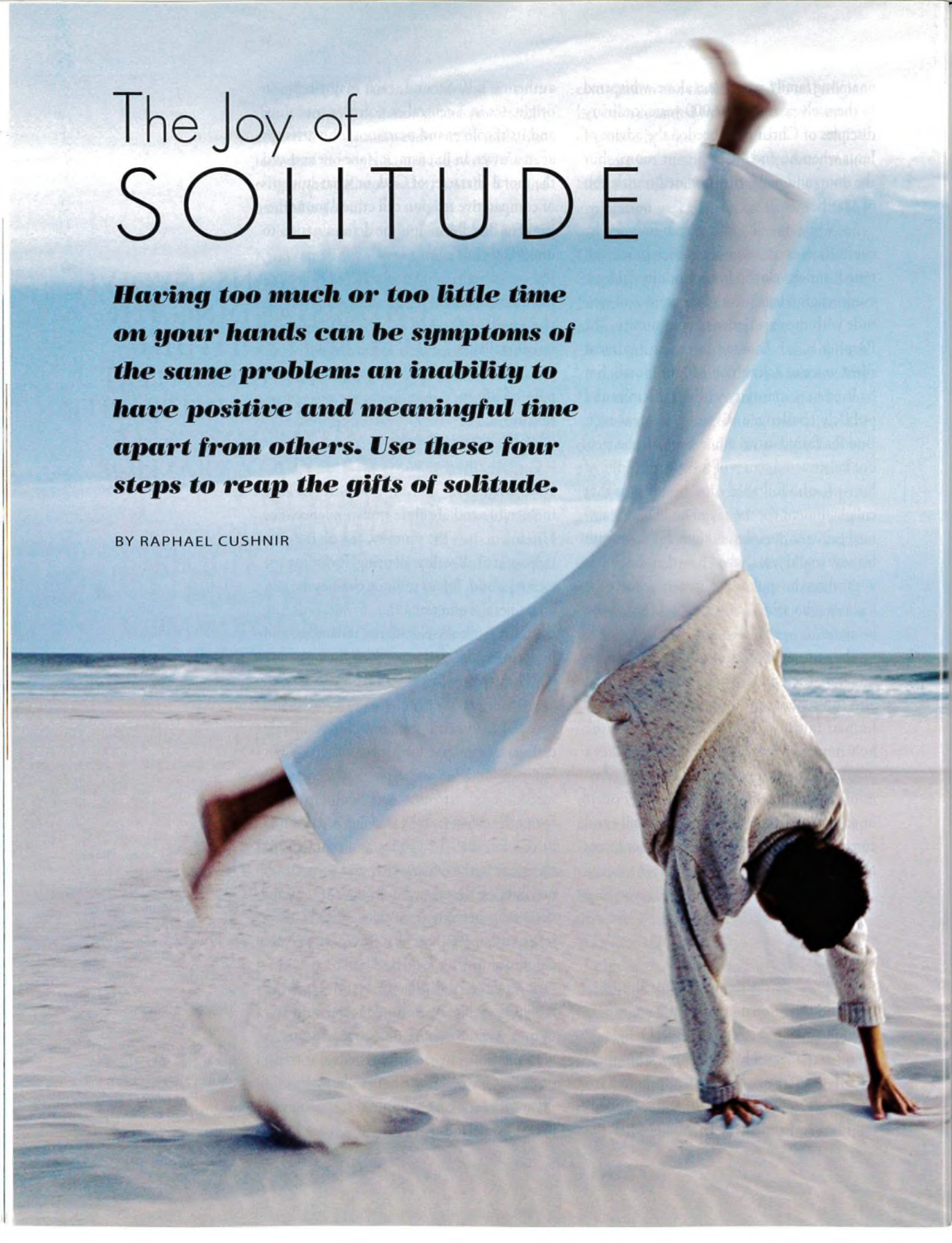
What we see is that communal as well as private experiences of prayer, worship, contemplation, and meditation look utterly different from one faith to another. When William Johnston participated in Zen group meditations, he found a radical departure from the Mass celebrated by his friends in the convent. The styles and practices of the great faiths display rich and sometimes bewildering diversity. So do their teachings, their scriptures, their moral standards, their imperatives. But it is in solitude, in private communion with God and personal exploration of the soul, that they show striking family resemblance. Solitude is the only way to introspection, communion, revelation. As Plotinus, who stood outside the major traditions, put it, God is the natural homeland of the soul, and it is in solitude that we sojourn in that homeland. ❖

Rev. Clair McPherson, Ph.D., has been an educator, writer, spiritual director, and priest for more than three decades. For the past 16 years, he served as Rector of Trinity-St. Paul's parish in New Rochelle, New York. He is the author of *Understanding Faith*, *Grace at This Time*, and *Keeping Silence*. He currently teaches at the General Seminary in New York and at New York University, and writes reviews, poetry, and articles for a range of publications. He can be contacted at cwmcp@optonline.net.

The Joy of SOLITUDE

Having too much or too little time on your hands can be symptoms of the same problem: an inability to have positive and meaningful time apart from others. Use these four steps to reap the gifts of solitude.

BY RAPHAEL CUSHNIR



I'm a slave to my pager," says Sarah, a 38-year-old public defender in San Jose. "My workdays are scheduled at 15-minute intervals and my weekends aren't much better." She laughs, twirling her hair around a finger till it is noose-tight. "I have a great job, great husband, great kids. I feel guilty complaining about any of it, but sometimes I just want to crawl into a cave and never speak to another human being for as long as I live."

Jennifer runs a one-woman eBay business out of her apartment in Dallas. Also 38, and divorced since her early twenties, she goes many days without an in-person conversation. "Truth is," she tells me, "I've got way too much time on my hands and I'm getting pretty sick of how lonely I am."

On the surface, it seems like Sarah and Jennifer are facing opposite dilemmas. But actually, their problems are virtually the same: neither knows how to be alone.

To be alone, as I'm defining it here, refers to positive and meaningful time apart from others. It's more about quality than quantity. And the quality of our aloneness depends on how we treat ourselves when alone, moment by moment as well as over the course of our lives.

Why is this so important? In one sense, we are always alone. As we travel through life, nobody else shares the exact same thoughts, feelings, sensations, and experiences — ever. In another sense, we are never alone. No matter what happens, we're the one person who's always there, our own companion for better or worse. Luckily, it's with this relationship that we have the greatest influence. What nurtures it best is the practice of skillful solitude.

Assess the State of Your Solitude

When alone, are you as compassionate with your own flaws and vulnerabilities as with those of your closest friends? Do you know how to create the kind of inner environment that allows for the greatest possible support, growth, and self-discovery?

If you answered yes to both questions, your relationship with yourself is thriving. If not, don't be surprised. Rarely are these skills taught at school or home. Actually, when it comes to self-intimacy, most of us are just beginners.

NORBERT SCHAEFER/CORBIS

Sarah, for example, followed the advice of her husband and scheduled a week at a top-flight spa. "It was hopeless," she laments. "I got a great facial, but the whole time the mask was drying I kept thinking up to-do lists." She attempted meditation but was too distracted. She gave yoga a try and actually liked it, but then got depressed by comparing herself with everyone else in the class.

At the weekend workshop where Sarah tells me this story, I ask her what the worst part of her attempt at restoration was. Without a doubt, she tells me, it was the way her thoughts just wouldn't shut up, how they "seemed to have a mind of their own."

She feels totally powerless over this onslaught, and sees it as her own failing. I suggest that she state the failing more clearly. She pauses, blushes, and says, "Well, I've always known I was a Type-A personality, but now I guess I have ADD as well."

I invite her to let go of her labels momentarily and take a more neutral view. Her assignment for that evening is to do nothing more than hang out with all those thoughts, to follow them with curiosity wherever they lead.

The next morning she comes back astonished. "Of course, I beat myself up a few hundred times," she jokes, "but after a while things calmed down. And my thoughts began to change. I started remembering ..."

At this point she becomes softer, and a little teary. She tells the group about studying law originally to please her parents. Along the way, she shelved an interest in painting, and this is what resurfaced the night before.

"Do you love to paint?" I ask her.

She blushes again. "I don't know if I'm any good."

"But do you love it?" Getting the distinction, she nods and heaves a big sigh. The gift of just one night's solitude reacquainted Sarah with this vital and long-lost aspect of herself. It was a blessing, for sure, but also left a number of questions.

"I don't have time to paint," she protests. "What am I supposed to do — quit my job? I'm the main breadwinner. And what about my kids? I can't just hang out in a studio and let them fend for themselves."

What if, I propose to Sarah, she lets those questions go temporarily unanswered? What if, instead, she lets solitude lead the way? ▶

Four Steps to Fine-Tune Your Aloneness

Whenever we grant ourselves enough time and self-acceptance, all the answers eventually come. And we have great confidence in them because they're ours, cultivated within, free of undue pressure from family, friends, or society. Then, whatever choices we make come more naturally and without any backlash.

1 Lay the Blame If you consistently avoid or dislike solitude, there's usually a reason. You may be tormented by thoughts, like Sarah. You may be challenged by loneliness, like Jennifer. You may be overcome with boredom, unaccustomed to a slower, quieter state than the frenzy we've come to accept as normal.

Solitude doesn't really count, by the way, if you fill it up with eating, shopping, TV, the Internet, or other distractions. So set aside some distraction-free alone time, pay close attention to your experience, and identify precisely what makes it intolerable.

2 Repeal the Verdict Whatever you can't stand about being alone is almost always accompanied by a harsh judgment. If you're unpartnered, for example, you may be ashamed about the amount of solitude in your life and judge yourself as a loser. If you have trouble letting go of your distractions, and need to keep repeating step one, you may judge yourself as incompetent. Often, in addition, your judgment may be about solitude itself. You may condemn it as selfish or a waste of time.

To benefit from what aloneness has to offer, you need to counter the will-sapping effect of such judgments. But that doesn't mean you have to give them up completely. The only thing required is a willingness to reconsider, to suspend your judgments long enough for solitude to take full effect. In other words, agree to make your final assessment only after you've gathered a little more evidence.

3 Welcome the Stranger If you've made it this far, your experience of solitude is bound to change. The usual stumbling blocks, if they still appear, will soon subside. At this point, solitude can reveal its true splendor. And that splendor is you, though quite a different version of you than you are used to. That's because solitude creates the necessary space for you to untangle, stretch out, and meet your self anew.

Sometimes this allows the reemergence of something lost or suppressed, as with Sarah's passion for painting. But more often it leads to the unknown, to dormant parts of you that only now can blossom. These could be personality traits, such as the appearance of playfulness, compassion, or sexuality. They could also be interests, perhaps in nature, travel, or activism.

As each new petal of this blossoming unfurls, you grow fuller, richer, and more vibrant. But like any growth spurt, this type can be disconcerting. "Why do I suddenly need to dance so much?" you may wonder. Or, "How did hours of total silence become such a treat?" Welcoming the stranger requires you to become comfortable with an ever-expanding identity, even when it's temporarily confusing or contradictory. "I am large," said the poet Walt Whitman. "I contain multitudes." So do you.

4 Increase the Peace It's true that the quality of your solitude is essential, but quantity matters, too. In order to get the most from solitude, you need to invest in it consistently. This can happen in big doses or little, during periodic vacations or for just a few minutes every day. Rather than following a formula, let the experience of solitude unfold in the way that's best for you. But whenever you feel stuck, or less than fully alive, carve out more alone time as soon as possible. It will likely provide the insight you need, or at least point you in the right direction.

It's always better to err on the side of more solitude, rather than less, because we are not socialized to experience being alone and our cultural norms skew our sense of what's appropriate. The views of others will matter less, over time, as the gifts of solitude permeate every aspect of your life.

Harvest the Gifts

For Sarah, one of solitude's greatest gifts came about six months after the workshop. In a career shift that blended law and painting, she left the public defender's office and became the staff attorney for a citywide arts organization. She even negotiated for watercolor lessons in her contract. None of this would have been possible if Sarah hadn't learned how to be alone.

For Jennifer, the main gift of solitude has been internal. As she stopped berating herself for being so lonely, her loneliness began to transform. Now it stings less, both in frequency and degree. In its place, Jennifer has started to feel more connected, not only to herself but also to everyone and everything. In solitude, much to her surprise, she's finding wholeness for the very first time. ❖

Raphael Cushnir is the author of *Setting Your Heart on Fire, Unconditional Bliss,* and *How Now: 100 Ways to Celebrate the Present Moment.* For more information, visit hownow100.com.

The Seal of Good Earth-Keeping

Like free trade and organic food stamps, the new Seal of Sustainability will encourage businesses to meet the "triple bottom line" — taking into account people, planet, and profits. The goal is to award good corporate citizenship with more consumers who care.

BY LOUISE DANIELLE PALMER

Conventional wisdom in business holds that the hyper-competitive global economy makes caring for the environment or the welfare of workers an unaffordable luxury. The nonprofit, nonpartisan Sustainable Business Institute (SBI, sustainablebusiness.org) was created to promote a different story: conventional wisdom is something that businesses can no longer afford. SBI's goal is a sea change in business practices — at all levels — recognizing that caring about the planet has become a key to profitability and competitiveness. Even more remarkable is that SBI represents a major effort by corporate America to promote sustainability. The organization counts among its participants GM, Intel, British Petroleum, Hewlett-Packard, and DuPont, as well as a host of smaller businesses, nongovernmental organizations (i.e., nonprofit advocacy groups), and financial groups. SBI helps businesses find ways for companies to enhance quality of life and ensure smarter use of resources so they are available for future economic growth.

Now, after years of research and development, SBI is unveiling its most important initiative: a "Seal of Sustainability" to honor companies throughout the world that distinguish themselves by implementing sustainable business practices. The purpose of the seal is to increase awareness of sustainable products and technologies, and to give leaders the tools and guidance they need to implement those products and technologies into their everyday operations.

The seal is meant to be a catalyst for change. Through SBI's resources, it provides the road map for that change to mom-and-pop operations, large corporations, and everything in between. It also was developed to make "smart buying" easy for consumers who are concerned about safety, health, and protecting the planet. The hope is that the seal will also put an end to "green-washing" hype by setting a professional standard for teaching and practicing sustainability.

"The purpose of the seal is to get thousands of companies on board that might not traditionally come to the table by giving them the market as an incentive and tools to make it easy to change," explains Jessica H. Fullmer, SBI's founder and CEO, who presented the seal at the World Business Academy's 2005 Global

Hot Lips Pizza, Portland, Oregon

- Lowered CO_2 emissions by using modified electric golf carts and bikes to deliver pizza
- Supports the local economy by using local farm products like organic wheat and veggies
- Makes soda from fruits
- Developed technology to reduce heating costs by using their ovens as a source of energy



"I'm a profitable company. I have a much higher caliber of employee — they're more conscientious. I know my customers are more loyal. I know by putting so much attention to it, my product is the best in town. I want to go to work every day. I love my job. What could be better than that?"

—David Yudkin, CEO

MindChange Forum in Santa Barbara, California. "The second reason we created the seal is to get the message to millions of Americans that they can vote with their dollars and make a strong contribution to the direction our country takes. They can drive the sustainability movement — we don't need the government. They can turn the tide and show the world we really do care about our future."

SBI's review team comprises experts from the corporate, nonprofit, and academic worlds with diverse backgrounds in quality measurement from financial, environmental, and sustainability perspectives. Their standards are high. To earn the seal a company must demonstrate:

- Commitment to implementing sustainable business practices, specifically at the operations or board levels
- Success in achieving sustainability goals while maintaining and enhancing profitability
- Actions that go "above and beyond" the minimum requirements of applicable laws and regulations
- Setting a new "best practice" standard or baseline within an industry or business sector
- Actions in production, manufacturing, or elsewhere that set a "sustainable" example for the recipient's industry
- Intent to raise public/consumer awareness of new sustainable products and technologies

SBI awards the seal for three years, during which each company must verify its continued improvement to sustainable practices. In addition to the award, SBI performs outreach to corporate leaders and provides peer-to-peer mentoring and other resources for greening companies.

The SBI seal will be launched in 2006, with nationwide concerts and appearances by celebrities and artists such as Santana and Dave Matthews, and CEO panels where business leaders on the cutting edge of sustainable practices share their wisdom with others who want to go green. Can sustainability become sexy? We think so. Check out Hot Lips Pizza and other companies that already are putting these principles into action. ❖

Louise Danielle Palmer is editor of *Spirituality & Health*.

White Dog Cafe, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



- Created local supply network of organic products and cruelty-free meats, then made the network available to competitors and increased its business in the process
- Established "Table Talks" for local patrons to gather and plan ways to take action on sustainability issues
- Provides restaurant tours and job opportunities for inner-city youths
- Pays living wages and encourages competitors to do the same

STMicroelectronics, 36 countries

- Voluntarily set and met strict reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, and chemical waste
- In 2000, ST was the only international semiconductor company based in North America to be awarded an AAA ranking for eco-efficiency by Innovest Strategic Value Advisors
- First company worldwide to have all manufacturing sites certified by international stock exchange benchmarks for sustainability
- After applying sustainability principles to its business operations, STMicroelectronics determined it had saved $100 million in 2003, using 1994 as a baseline



Palo Alto Hardware, Palo Alto, California

- Added nontoxic garden products to regular inventory and increased their sales by 11 percent
- Installed a photovoltaic roofing system above the store
- The success of the roofing system spawned their solar division, making them the largest retailer of photovoltaic systems in California
- Promoting sustainability issues is one of the CEO's job responsibilities

"Sustainability is just our philosophy. I have an above-average rate of employee retention, and it's a fun place to work."

— Larry Hassett, owner



Puroast Coffee, Woodland, California

- Developed processing technology that makes air coming out of coffee machines cleaner than the air that goes in
- Processing technology creates coffee that is less acidic — and therefore healthier for the body — than conventional roasts
- Invented a process for using biomass fuel made of sawdust pellets that costs one-sixteenth the cost of conventional energy resources

"If we didn't have access to renewable fuels, we wouldn't be able to produce this low-acid coffee at an affordable price. I believe sustainability works best when it's focused on the quality of the consumer product."

—Kerry Sachs, CEO

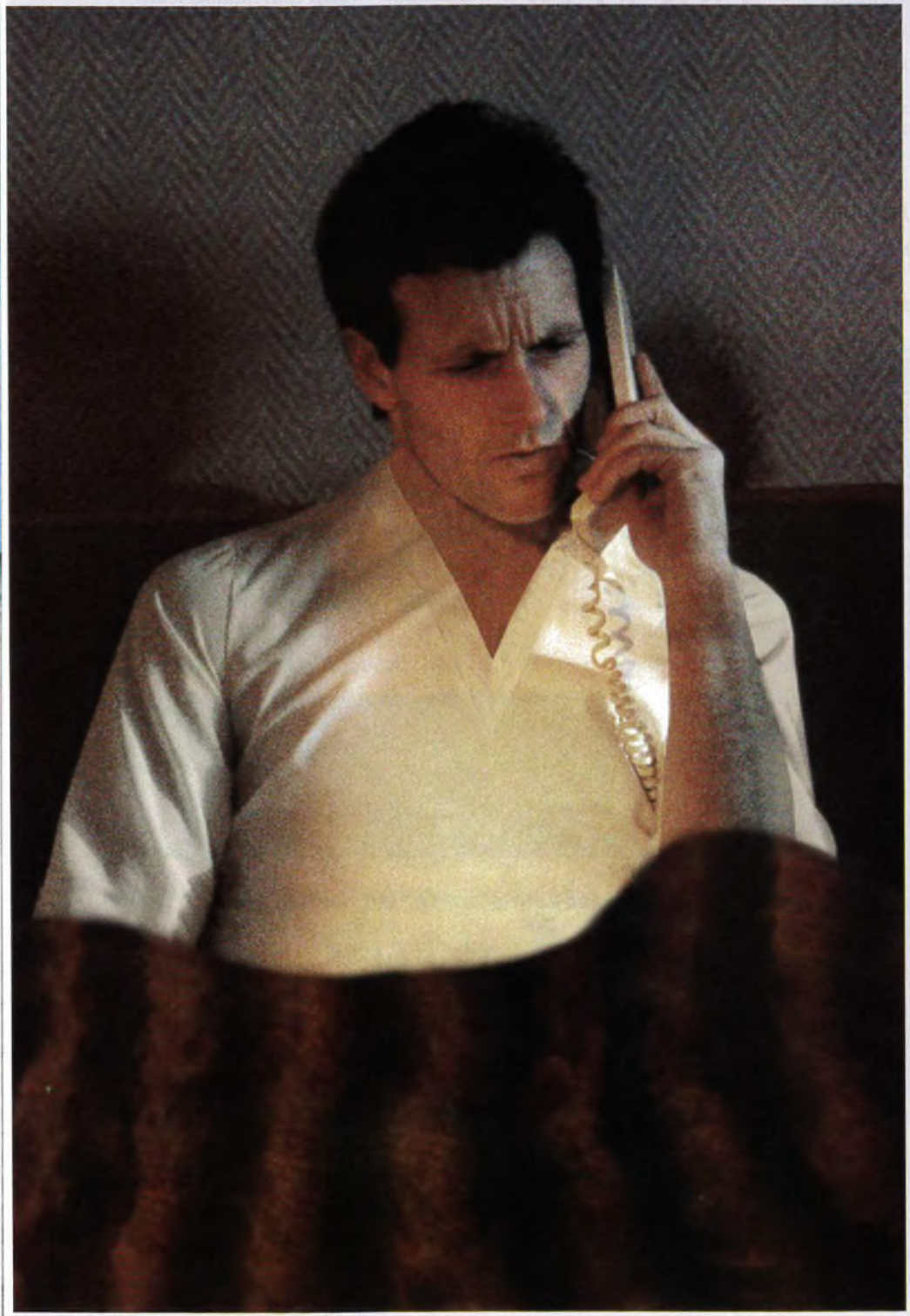


Beijing Glorious Land Agricultural Co., Ltd., Beijing, China

- Developed a leading green agricultural model in China to minimize pesticide use and land and water contamination
- Teaches culturally appropriate techniques, using natural materials, to the poorest farmers
- Allows small farms to survive and be profitable by sharing simple technologies and materials and helping to deliver their produce to markets
- Developed "Quarter Circle" solar greenhouse technology and advanced hydroponic growth media to produce high-quality fruits and vegetables

Awakening through Caregiving

The call in the night



TIM BROWN/GETTY IMAGES

Almost overnight, natural disasters have turned us into a nation of caregivers. Across the country we see people pitching in to help. It happened with Katrina and Rita and Wilma, and before that with the tsunami in Asia and Africa.

But what many of us do not know is that there are silent disasters across America each day, affecting 9,000 new families, for a total of one in four American households. These private events — a broken hip, a heart attack, a diagnosis of cancer — strike without warning and can turn entire families' lives upside down as decisively as any earthquake. Most of us are totally unprepared for the stressful and demanding new role of caregiving. Yet, looking back, some say it turned out to be a moment of awakening. Rising to the challenge turned their lives in a new direction, for which they are deeply grateful.

What follows are three stories of awakenings as well as a sample of a new newsletter to support caregivers. We hope that this package will provide some help or guidance before the phone rings for you.

—The Editors

— It's Mom, she's fallen!

Janet Aschkenasy

AWAKENING WITH YOGA

When my 87-year-old grandmother suffered a hip fracture in 1999, I was the busy editor of a monthly pensions magazine. I struggled to supervise her care and handle my editorial duties simultaneously. I recall one day in the office, talking on the phone to my grandmother's helper. As I learned that the homecare aide was giving Grandma the wrong medication, my editor stood at my desk, reminding me that I was due for an on-camera interview. I pushed through and did my best to hide my panic. Five months later, my grandmother lost her battle with pneumonia, and within a month, my grandfather was buried alongside her. That was when the real burden hit: I was left to care for my mother, who suffers from a personality disorder.

"You need to do something life changing," one of my supervisors told me as he watched me falling apart. He recommended a Catskill Mountains health spa. Several months later, in the midst of a particularly black mood, I found myself there, in a yoga pose that held my thighs and pelvis rock solid as my chest glided toward the sky. The next moment a powerful bolt of ecstatic energy moved like a shot from my heart to my heels.

I was taken completely by surprise. I was barely perspiring. How could such a simple way of moving the body engender such a remarkable change in mood? "You need to do this when you go back to New York City," was my teacher's response.

That's when I began to practice yoga religiously. Things began to crystallize when I completed rasa yoga's five-month teacher training and started volunteering at a project catering to people living with AIDS and HIV.

Here was something entirely new. I had never volunteered before, had never been available to anyone but friends and family without thinking of what I was getting in return. Moreover, teaching at the AIDS project was not even remotely glamorous. Clients of the program were extremely poor, and yoga was a foreign concept. I'd run around the shabbily carpeted room with a teeny broom and dustpan to make it possible for my class of two or three people to get down on the floor.

Around this time, I also began a regimen of sweeping and vacuuming our yoga studio on a regular basis. This began as a bartering with my teacher for private classes, but took on a life of its own. I didn't want to stop when the classes did. I loved the kind of tired I felt when I was finished cleaning. Performing rigorous, meaningful work on behalf of someone beside myself made me feel alive like nothing I'd ever done for money.

Now, when I am wholeheartedly caring for Mom, focusing on her and forgetting about me, I feel a similar sense of aliveness and connection. I still have difficulty handling the enormous responsibility of taking care of my mother and enduring her confusing mind states while earning my own living. Yet I continue to respect the rivers of *prana* (the life force) that surge through me each and every time I embrace Mom and all of her so-called craziness. They remind me to keep opening myself to her idiosyncrasies, and to replace anger with acceptance.

Mom's spiritual heart is also clearer to me now. Almost overnight, she learned to recite all of my favorite Vedic prayers and has flawlessly memorized the translations. She often sings along with me as I chant and practice postures. Her favorite dictionaries today include several Sanskrit editions, and I feel blessed to be her daughter.

— Janet Aschkenasy

Terry Donner
AGING MATTERS, LLC

Sometimes Terry Donner, 44, gets to thinking about the money she would be making if she were still at the big law firm rather than caring for her parents and working from home at her small legal practice and geriatric care company, Aging Matters, LLC. Then "BANG!" Donner says, "something will be put in my path that stops me." It might be a new idea on how to make it possible for an elderly customer to live at home and still afford quality caregivers. Or maybe one of her clients will send a simple thank-you note for making the last few months with their parents a peaceful, loving time. Whatever it is, it always pops up just in time — and brings her back to the satisfying path she has chosen.

Five years ago, when her mother began battling asthma and congestive heart failure, Donner, who also trained as a nurse, decided it was time to stop flying around the country and working 80-hour weeks. "It was an easy decision; Mom trumped the corporate legal career," says Donner. While caring for her mother, she gained new perspective on the challenges facing elders who are coping with chronic illness.

She began to wonder: What would it really take for someone to stay safely in their own home alone given the limitations of a serious medical condition? What benefit programs were available to help pay for care? What facilities actually render quality care and fit the older person's needs? "A lawyer is not able to handle many of these specialized issues alone," Donner realized.

Nowadays, the first thing Donner will do with a new client is to inventory the situation and document all of the resources at her client's disposal. Help can come from places like the U.S. Administration on Aging's Family Caregiver Support Program (aoa.gov/prof/aoaprog/caregiver/caregiver.asp), which provides respite for family caregivers nationwide.

Sometimes, Donner says, someone just needs a little time out to recover from surgery, for instance, or simply "to rejuvenate their energy to provide care to a parent or spouse."

"I've had people just cry," says Donner, when she helps put the pieces together. "That's grace."

— Janet Aschkenasy

Chris Pederson
CAREGIVER'S HOME COMPANION

After more than two decades facing down deadlines as a reporter and editor and later an executive at The Associated Press, Chris Pederson considered himself pretty good at handling pressure. Then he got the call that his wife's mother had tripped and broken her ankle. For the next six weeks, his mother-in-law moved into their ground-floor bedroom.

"She couldn't walk up stairs and had difficulty getting out of bed. Because she wasn't mobile, she required a lot of hands-on care and attention — it was almost more than we could handle."

That's when Pederson started wondering how others in that situation managed to cope. It didn't take much research into the field of caregiving for him to find that most other people were having just as hard a time as he was. "Then it dawned on me: this must be going on all over America," he recalls.

"I saw firsthand how harrowing it can be," Pederson says. "You're thrown into this — an accident happens — you have no advance planning. You react. Your own kids feel it, your career suffers, your health suffers, too." The problem, he decided, was caregivers were isolated, doing it all alone — they weren't talking to each other and sharing what they'd learned. And worse, they didn't know who to turn to for help.

That's when his next career path became clear.

He would reach these caregivers tucked away in homes across America and provide the information they needed — and encourage them to start sharing their experiences with one another. He launched an eight-page monthly newsletter with practical advice on caring for an elderly relative: *Caregiver's Home Companion* (a shortened version is included on the following page). Then he set up a website, caregivershome.com, and soon after came *The Caregiver's Hotline*, a free weekly news bulletin sent out in email form. This new career has made Chris realize that *helping those who help others* is more than a company motto, it's the way he wants to live and work.

— Susan Seliger

Caregiver's HOME COMPANION

Special Edition
www.caregivershome.com

HELPING THOSE WHO HELP OTHERS

The Reluctant Caregiver

How to Care for Someone You No Longer Care For

By Sharon Palmer

Muriel Lee had endured a 30-year loveless marriage with a verbally abusive husband and was contemplating divorce when she learned he had terminal throat cancer.

"When you are not in a good marriage, you face a moral dilemma about what to do. If your husband is unpleasant, do you leave him or stick it out? I made the choice to stay with my husband," says Lee, who chronicled her five-year experience of caring for her difficult husband in *Journeys: The Roads Traveled by a Reluctant Caregiver and an Ill Spouse* (Beaver's Pond Press, 2002).

Why do people in poor relationships take on the role of caregiver? Many feel a sense of responsibility. Caregiving is such an intimate relationship that the sick often want someone who has seen them at their worst to be the ones providing the care. Others want to spare their children the burden. Sometimes the decision is purely a result of financial considerations.

Caregiving crises, bringing ex-spouses together, may become a growing trend — there were 2.7 million divorced Americans older than 65 in 2003, compared with only 1.7 million in 1994. Hospice workers report positive outcomes when seeing ex-spouses at the bedside — they think it's good for couples to get past old wounds or possibly rekindle lost relationships.

Reluctant caregivers can also include children who have had poor relationships with their parents. In *Caregiving: The Spiritual Journey of Love, Loss, and Renewal*, author Beth Witrogen McLeod shares the story of Linda, a daughter who cared for an abusive mother out of duty and ended up ditching years of painful baggage in order to forgive the past.

Think before You Leap

Plunging into the role of caregiver for someone who has treated you badly is probably one of the most difficult challenges. Some psychologists say that it may not even be the best course of action, as anger and resentment may surface. Sometimes it may be better for everyone to have someone else act as a caregiver.

As for those who take on the job of reluctant caregiver, many quickly discover that most available support services are designed for caregivers who are in a loving relationship, not for caregivers overwhelmed with a painful past and resentment. Simply put, they may find themselves in a very lonely situation with neither a close relationship with their spouse, nor a circle of caregivers who will admit to a similar circumstance.

Caregivers in bad relationships may have an intense burden. In a University College in London study, researchers noted that caregivers in poor-quality relationships with the patient often experienced both depression and anxiety — as well as anger and resentment.

"It took a lot of therapy to get me through it and friends who took care of me," reflects Lee on coping with her caregiving experience. She adds that the hospice program was a tremendous source of support. But probably the biggest coping mechanism for Lee was journaling through her pain. "Journaling helped me cope. It helped tremendously. I had 1,500 typewritten pages when it was over," says Lee, who ended up weaving in writings from her husband with her own pages to complete her book.

Lee's story has a happy ending. Since her husband's death, she has published a book and found true love. "My husband was verbally abusive. He lived for five years after he was diagnosed and had a large tumor on his neck, so he lost his voice. He knew it was karma that he lost his voice," adds Lee.

If you take on the job reluctantly, Lee suggests, "You must do something good for yourself every day, even if it's taking a 15-minute bath or stepping outside to look at your flower garden."

Ten Tips for Reluctant Caregivers

Finding methods of coping is extremely important for reluctant caregivers.

1. Take care of yourself first.
2. Acknowledge your emotions, even negative ones, and find a support group or therapist.
3. Reduce isolation — get yourself and the care receiver out of the house to a weekly support group or adult daycare, if possible. Take advantage of that free time for yourself.
4. Develop some reasonable expectations for yourself as a caregiver — don't make yourself help too much.
5. Rely on your community, social, volunteer, or family resources for some of the caregiving duties.
6. Get support from other family members or friends who may have a better relationship with the care receiver.
7. Develop healthy releases, such as exercise, healthy eating, or journaling.
8. Make sure to find time for yourself every day.
9. Recognize signs of stress and depression, and get help when necessary.
10. Pat yourself on the back — it's good to take pride in what you are doing.

Sharon Palmer is a writer and registered dietician with 16 years of health-care experience. She is a member of our board of experts in our online Ask an Expert section, and can be reached at spalmer952@earthlink.net.

"Don't Step on Your Father"

A Lesson in Zen from My Mother ... and Alzheimer's

By Robert Hirschfield

My father's body lay curled up like a ball of wax outside the bathroom. My mother was busy eating her Sabbath chicken in the kitchen.

"Have some chicken," she said, dislocating a drumstick. She had forgotten whose body was lying on the floor on the other side of the wall. But that morning her memory had leaped across the chasm. A dead body must not be moved on the Sabbath! Dad would have to stay put until sundown.

A friend had just given me Joseph Goldstein's *The Experience of Insight*, the first book on Buddhism I'd ever read. That led me to read more: in olden days, young monks were sent off to burial grounds to contemplate corpses, so as to drive the teaching of impermanence deep into their bones.

Lowering myself into a cross-legged position, I stared at my father's cratered buttocks beneath his soiled whites. (A two-pack-a-day Pall Mall smoker, he died of lung cancer during the early days of my mother's mind-robbing illness.) I felt desolate and heroic, surprised to find myself still breathing in this space where breathing had stopped, in the absence of a man who had never been present — a man of impenetrable silences, who would plunder the sports section of the newspaper to the exclusion of war, fraud, famine, the tears of the world.

En route to the bathroom, my mother stopped to shoot a quizzical look at the corpse. The face was familiar, but the context threw her. She, with her Alzheimer's, was beginning to have the same effect on me.

"Don't step on your father," she said.

She was always tripping over time: "Where is dad?" she asked.

"Dead," I answered.

"Where is papa?"

"Dead."

"And mama?"

"Dead."

"Who is alive, then?"

I'd go down the survivors list.

Where am I? I ask myself. In Hell. A tiny space in which all the grass was burned away.

Buddhist teacher Suzuki Roshi was trying to grow a new patch for me: "The true purpose of Zen is to see things as they are, to observe things as they are, and to let everything go as it goes."

When my mother was not hiding dollar bills inside her tissues, or imprisoning her dinner in the refrigerator, she was mistaking living relatives for dead ones, and day for night. As her caregiver, I was there to extricate and disentomb, to illustrate and explain. It was like wrestling with wild air. But to let go? I was too busy waging jihad against calamitous change to let go.

One bright day, when she said, "It's so dark out!" it occurred to me that maybe she saw the darkness outside as a reflection of the darkness inside.

Sitting in meditation on my sky-blue zafu, I breathed in and breathed out my first-ever conscious breaths. Such a simple thing really, noticing that I was breathing, discovering a silent space

> **When my mother was not hiding dollar bills inside her tissues, or imprisoning her dinner in the refrigerator, she was mistaking living relatives for dead ones, and day for night.**

where the weary dance could come to a full stop. Every caregiver should try this.

"Bobby, aren't we going shopping?" she asked on a good day.

It might have been the seventh or tenth time she had asked me that. I took her to the little grocery owned by a squat, clean-shaven Hasidic survivor of the concentration camps, and his squat, wigged wife. That day my mother was light on my arm. I'd have a long wait before she was that light again.

Across the marble counter, the three of them used to return at will to the Jewish ghost lands of Eastern Europe. A few zany mouthfuls of Yiddish, and muddy streets would stir once again in the New York City borough of Queens.

The dialogue between them was now stripped bare. "So, you are out shopping with your son?" on their part. A request for a packet of cheese on hers.

As a new dharma (or divinity law) student, my confrontation with Alzheimer's was rather like asking someone just learning how to swim to swim across the English Channel.

I came to think of caregiving for Alzheimer's as the burial ground of the mind — fire that incinerates light.

For seven years I sat beside that fire. It periodically burned awareness into me like a good teacher should. How to describe it?

The sadness, like mold that would settle in the throat, in the defeated marrow of the bones. The sadness was especially strong when I was about to enter my mother's house, or when I had just left. On one side of her door, her absent presence; on the other, my pulverized love. My desire to be with her, to be gone from her; my desire for her never to go, my desire for her to be gone.

Robert Hirschfield is a writer, Zen and Dharma student — and caregiver — in New York City. His address is roberthirschfield@yahoo.com.

Crawling After Grannie

By LeAnn Thieman

Terry, a grown granddaughter, went home to help her mother care for Grandma. Heartbroken by Grandma's mental deterioration, Terry attempted to add some joy by taking her to a buffet restaurant. There, the only food Grandma recognized and selected was red Jell-O.

The two were enjoying a pleasant lunch when suddenly Grandma jerked Terry under the table, yelling, "Indians! We've gotta get out of here!" Heading for "cover," Grandma, wearing a skirt and stockings, crawled across the restaurant floor — and granddaughter, now on all fours, trailed behind her. When they arrived at the front door the manager looked down and asked in disbelief, "Is everything all right, ladies?" Grandma stood, brushed herself off, and said, "Yes, now that you're here, Marshall Dillon."

By now her granddaughter was laughing so hard she couldn't stand up! Grandma tugged her to her feet, brushed her off, and pulled her toward the door saying, "Come on, Terry, we've got to get out of here — you're embarrassing me!"

Then Grandma laughed — and their joy connected them.

If there are too few laughing occasions during your caregiving days, create them. Think back to what used to make you both laugh. Recall your favorite *I Love Lucy* episode or funny family escapades. Rent funny movies; read humorous books aloud (ask your local librarian for her favorites). If all else fails, try crawling though a restauant.

Remember, laughter soothes the soul and weary mind. It is, indeed, the best medicine.

LeAnn Thieman is a nationally acclaimed speaker, nurse, and co-author of the *New York Times* best-seller *Chicken Soup for the Nurse's Soul* and the recently released *Chicken Soup for the Caregiver's Soul*. A nurse involved with the 1975 Vietnam Orphan Lift, Thieman has found fulfillment in caring for others and teaching people to do the same. She can be contacted through her website leannthieman.com.

Free Resources

These places can help:

- The Well Spouse Foundation: wellspouse.org, (800) 838-0879
- U.S. Administration on Aging's National Family Caregiver Support Program: aoa.gov/prof/aoaprog/caregiver/carefam/carefam.asp
- Caregiver's Home Companion Spousal Caregiving pages: caregivershome.com/spousal/spousal.cfm
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THE BIRTH OF A CONJURE
A NATIVE AMERICAN JOURNEY INTO THE BEATING HEART OF THE WORLD

Ancient and knowledgeable civilizations once flourished on this land we call the American continent. For whatever reason, many were destroyed, and the healing techniques and medical traditions that were the norm in these cultures largely vanished with them. The methods known as powwowing or conjuring were never examined in any significant way by the American scientific community. A bridge was never built across the cultural chasm dividing one set of practices from the other. The final judgment of history seems to be that all conjures were charlatans. This is a racist, fraudulent view, and I know it to be untrue. Conjure practices kept people healthy for untold generations, perhaps even more healthy than we are today.

Powwowing is a healing ceremony conducted by a conjure. Mine isn't the last word on the subject, nor am I trying to revive anything. I realize these practices are mostly lost, but I wanted to record what little I know as best I can for posterity. I don't wish to convey that I am an expert on conjure or any sort of medicine man, for I am certainly not. In the early sixties, I was initiated into a hidden ring of conjure under the tutelage of Mary Gardener, who I studied with for four years. To become a conjure takes years of experience, dedication, and study — many more years of commitment that I was eventually unwilling to make. Though I have personal experience with these ancient arts, I am simply a writer.

STORY BY DAVID CARSON PAINTINGS BY JUDITH LOWRY



PAINTING PHOTOGRAPHED BY WILKE/DIPAOLO

A long time ago all the stars came down to earth for a visit, at least that is what I was told as a child. When the stars flew back up to be in the midst of the night sky, the country where the Big Dipper had been became Oklahoma. The Great White Father in Washington said, "We're going to put all the Indians in that big skillet and cook them. That will be their land." So they did. And after all the Indians were cooked, the Great White Father said, "Now we're going to take your skillet. You don't need it anymore." Soon Oklahoma was no longer Oklahoma, land of red people. Now the state belonged to practically everybody and their dog.

I'm one of the mix-ups, called an Okie coyote or breed. Though of Choctaw descent, I don't qualify to be an FBI — fullblood Indian. And I've found a lot of things that disqualify me from being white, too. We breeds are different, a bunch of coyote mix-ups out barking at the moon. Some people call coyote a half-breed, and some say he has no breeding at all. Oklahoma is full of such mix-ups as me. The trick if you are a coyote is just to be one. Be proficient. Be a coward when others are brave. Be brave when others are cowardly. Tell lies when others speak truthfully. Tell the truth when others are lying. And so on until everyone is mixed up. When that happens it will be the same for everyone. There'll be no more mix-ups.

I have long been interested in various occluded aspects of the ancient legacies of Native America. When I was growing up, my aunts Ruby and Agnes, along with my mom, Opal, belonged to Native women's circles that were devoted to preserving secret knowledge and unwritten practices. For instance, these circles cleansed and fed power objects. During the lunar year, there were times to open and close sacred medicine packs and perform life-enhancing ceremonies. Many power songs were sung and the memory kept. These oral teachings were closely guarded and passed from women to men, then from men to women. The sacred information and training flowed over time in this manner from one generation to another.

THE CONJURE WALKS A TRAIL OF LONELINESS. IT IS A ROAD THAT FEW OTHERS WILL FOLLOW — A SOLITARY OCCUPATION. YET YOU WILL SEE THINGS NO OTHER HUMAN WILL SEE. THE NIGHT WILL HAVE DAY EYES, AND THE DAY WILL HAVE NIGHT EYES. IT'S A LONG AND DIFFICULT TRAIL, BUT ONLY THEN WILL YOUR HEART OPEN TO ALL THAT IS.

Some awareness of this rubbed off on me, but I certainly didn't know it then. I was too busy being a kid and having fun. From my aunts I learned to observe animals in the wild and I learned about their powers. My mom taught me to be proud of my Indian heritage and to respect the beating heart of its traditions.

When I grew older, I sought to gain some of this secret knowledge through formal apprenticeship in the Ouachita mountain chain in the southeastern part of Oklahoma. The Ouachitas go due east almost to Little Rock, Arkansas. A segment of the Choctaw Trail of Tears is a part of their sad history, and the mountains are considered holy and big medicine. It was there I found my teacher, an Indian woman named Mary Gardener.

Mary was a snake-skirted woman, as they are called. In olden times, snakes symbolized the umbilical cord, and snakeskirts were midwives. But that isn't all they were. They were conjures, keepers of highly secret knowledge.

"There's an art to conjure," Mary told me soon after I met her. "Aspire to its power. It's right here before you. You don't have to go off a long, long ways. The circle of conjure is right down where your two feet are planted. It's nowhere else. The conjure walks a trail of loneliness. It is a road that few others will follow — a solitary occupation. Yet you will see things no other human will see. The night will have day eyes, and the day will have night eyes. Believe me, you will walk through hardscrabble and thorny places. It's a long and difficult trail, but only then will your heart open to all that is. Yes, you must go into the beating heart of the world. By doing that you will go deep into your own heart. In that understanding is your birth as a conjure."

AWAKENING WITH DIRT

One day after breakfast, many years into my apprenticeship, Mary led me to a field not far from her cabin and told me to sit down. The earth was warm from the heat of the day, yet soft. However, it was not a place I would normally choose to sit down, left to my own devices. It felt unusual. The dirt here was red and sandy — real Oklahoma dirt. Mary began to circle me and chant. She took a handful of dirt and threw it in the air. She repeated this again and again. It made a red puff and scattered. She went around me several times, letting a thin trickle of the dirt drop from her hand. The purpose of all this eluded me.

When she had finished the dirt-circling operation, she came over and squatted down. She seemed to be examining me, using a birdlike cock of the head. She grasped both of my hands and placed them palms up, extended out from my shoulders. I felt she was using me like a human scale, because she lowered my right hand and raised my left one. She scooped up some dirt and put it in both hands and told me to hold it.

"Sit like so, and don't move from your position."

"Okay."

"Be quiet and shut your eyes."

"Okay."

The next thing I knew, Mary was throwing dirt on me — barrage after barrage — all over me, everywhere. I began to cough softly and wanted to sneeze. I didn't think I could bear it much longer. The rain of dirt suddenly stopped.

Mary said, "Open your eyes."

I did. She was sitting directly in front of me, smiling. "Thanks," I said, unamused. There was grit on my lips and in my mouth. My hair and eyelids also felt laden with crud. I felt like a chicken drumstick floured and ready for frying. I needed an immediate soapy shower.



PAINTING PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROB WILKE

"Hold still and keep silent," Mary said. "It was the crawfish that brought dirt in the beginning of the world and showed us how to use it. You are being protected. This dirt had a hunger for you and the sickness is running away."

Using a pointed stone, Mary began to scratch the dirt between us. My eyes were stinging. Tears welled, and this caused everything to blur. I tried to focus on the elongated stone as Mary used it, but it rippled in my watery vision. I felt as though I was tilted sideways, and this had a dizzying effect. From sitting in an awkward position, I was beginning to ache. Yet, watching her mesmerized me. Her extravagant movements were lulling me into a trance. I soon realized she was etching something. With the slicing stone, she was creating a human form with a long neck. The dirt picture made me feel strange, and I shut my eyes. "No, look at it," she ordered.

I opened my eyes. The incision looked like the stick figure of a woman, yet there was something wrong with

WATCHING HER MESMERIZED ME. HER EXTRAVAGANT MOVEMENTS WERE LULLING ME INTO A TRANCE. I SOON REALIZED SHE WAS ETCHING SOMETHING. WITH THE SLICING STONE, SHE WAS CREATING A HUMAN FORM WITH A LONG NECK. THE DIRT PICTURE MADE ME FEEL STRANGE, AND I SHUT MY EYES.



PAINTING PHOTOGRAPHED BY WILKE/DIPAOLO

it. It brought a dark presence, a dim area just above the top of my head. And this was being sucked down into the ground and into the thing. Mary began blowing her breath strongly over the figure. I watched it cover over and disappear. This affected the polarity of my body. I was being pulled toward it as it vanished. I tried to squirm backward but couldn't move.

"It's trying to suck me inside," I managed to whisper. "Yes, don't be afraid," said Mary. "Dirts are alive. No dead thing can give birth to a living being. See the green stalks all around us? This soil swells with the miracle of life. Now I will tell you a story to illustrate this. Be silent. Don't move. Listen, because I have an important tale. A teaching story can help you forget your aches and pains. I did exactly as you are doing once. This is the way it was told to me."

I suddenly became aware of my ungainly posture, and my neck hurt and my arms seemed paralyzed. I was filthy. Mary stood up, did an about-face, and walked quickly away. "Wait, Mary. What do you want me to do with the dirt in my hands?"

Mary turned and looked back at me. "What dirt?"

I unclamped both of my hands, which until now had been tightly holding the dirt Mary had put into them. I looked at my palms. Both were completely empty.

"It's gone!" I gasped. I felt dizzy, experiencing another of what I was beginning to think of as my "reality blurs."

"There are many kinds of dirts," Mary replied. "Maybe it was the disappearing kind." She chuckled a bit unkindly again, so it seemed, and walked away without waiting for me. I got up and dusted myself off, feeling as contorted as a piece of bent wire. I tried to catch up. Finally, I found her sitting under the chinaberry tree near her cabin. She had a bundle in her lap. It looked to be a simple piece of canvas tied with rawhide. She stood up as I approached and tossed the bundle across her shoulder, carrying it like a slung rifle.

"Follow me," she said, motioning with her head in a different direction.

Mary led me to a small place that was hidden from view. It was a squarish piece of grassless ground, but all around was vegetation of one kind and another. She swept the ground using a dead, leafy branch, evening and smoothing the earth. Then she seemed satisfied. "This is

YOUR HEAD IS CALLED A PLANET," SHE SAID, PLACING A LITTLE MOUND ABOVE AND BETWEEN MY EYEBROWS. "WE ARE BUILDING DIRT STRUCTURES — LITTLE TEMPLES. THERE ARE RIVER TEMPLES, FIRE TEMPLES, BREATH TEMPLES, AND BOTH FEMALE AND MALE TEMPLES TO HONOR CENTRAL PRINCIPLES OF LIFE."

the proper place," she said, glancing at the ground. She told me to remove my bracelet, watch, shoes, and socks, and all my other clothes except for my underwear. When I had done so, I folded my clothes up carefully and made a little neat pile. I felt embarrassed, knowing how comical I must have looked standing in front of her in my Jockey shorts. Mary told me to lie down on my back. She looked tall, towering over me in my supine position. I became more self-conscious. The more I tried to relax, the more ashamed and tiny I felt.

"What are you doing now?" I asked. The question was more addressed to the reddening sky above me than to Mary.

"I am going to place dirts on various parts of your body."

"But you already did that."

"Yes, but before it was only in a general way. Now we get to specifics. We will restore your bond with dirt. Since you are on the ground, the dirt power will be drawn up through you. You have lost touch with earth's chief emanations. Emotions come up from earth, so this will help you control them."

Mary knelt down next to me and unrolled her bundle. There were at least 30 bulging Bull Durham tobacco bags inside it. She began opening them up, undoing little yellow string ties and peering inside to examine the contents.

"What's in there?"

"Dirts. What else? A big assortment."

"I don't get it," I replied.

"David, dirts medicine is simple and direct. There is a deep hunger within you. Dirts will feed it. Dirts will get to the center of your craving and fill it in. Dirts will give you a rush of power, a medicine of renewal. Now lie still and try not to speak. Let me work."

She gazed up my body, cocking her head. She took my ankles and shook them, pulling on each of my legs at the same time. She moved up behind my head. She took my two wrists and pulled my arms back, stretching me once more. It was a strong pull she gave me, but it didn't hurt. Then she placed my arms back at my sides, palms up.

After that, she set to work. I couldn't see what she was doing very well, but the dirts were of several colors — jet black, gray-green, ocher, and so on. She used a little horn spoon with a cone-shaped bowl to remove the dirts from the Bull Durham sacks. Then she placed little mounds of each on different places on my body, taking care to be precise.

WE WILL RESTORE YOUR BOND WITH DIRT. SINCE YOU ARE ON THE GROUND THE DIRT POWER WILL BE DRAWN UP THROUGH YOU. YOU HAVE LOST TOUCH WITH EARTH'S CHIEF EMANATIONS. EMOTIONS COME UP FROM EARTH, SO THIS WILL HELP YOU CONTROL THEM.

"Your head is called a planet," she said, placing a little mound above and between my eyebrows. "We are building dirt structures — little temples. There are river temples, fire temples, breath temples, and both female and male temples to honor central principles of life.

"First, I am mounding your brow and chin. We will pick up magnetized life force here, which will become excited and draw from your entire body. Shut your eyes and see what you might see." It was suddenly as if I was dreaming, but with startling clarity. I saw relatives. My uncle was puttering around in his backyard with garden tools, and I saw two of my female cousins calling to a family horse named Knothead. Knothead shook his head at them, his mane flying.

Mary placed a small mound of dirt on my chin, and the scene abruptly disappeared. Now it was as though I was sitting on my own chest, looking down at my head and shoulders. I could see myself perfectly well. I could also see Mary bending over me with the horn spoon full of dirts. I watched as she placed two mounds near my collarbone, to the right and left of my shoulder. Next she did a series of dirts placements on my chest, and then down my arms to my hands.

"We have stopped your wobbling planet," Mary

SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY I HEARD A WAILING CRY. I REALIZED WITH A SHOCK THAT IT WAS ME, SCREAMING AT THE TOP OF MY LUNGS. I SAT UP SUDDENLY, DASHING ALL THE CAREFUL MOUNDS OF DIRTS TO THE GROUND. I WAS WRACKED WITH PAROXYSMS OF SORROW.

announced. "Now we are building four atmospheres. This second one relates to the star bringing you luck."

I had no idea what she meant, but now she was mounding the creases at both my elbows. Then she moved down to the center of both wrists. "In olden times, these placements were called the encircling hoof. Think of the horseshoe, which today is a symbol of luck. If you have both your arms at your sides and make a path across the top of your chest connecting them, this arch of energy is in the shape of a horseshoe. If it is out of whack, as yours is, you will not be lucky, not in love or marriage, not in business or commercial doings, and certainly not in gambling. I'm fixing it."

Mary made three more mounds, placing the first in the center of my chest and then two to either side of my solar plexus. When she was done, she said, "This third placement relates to inner sun. It may be emotionally painful to you, as the next one may also be."

She was right. At first, so many images flickered by that I couldn't grasp the meaning of them. There was my father, my mother, and then I was a little child, frightened because I had lost them for a time. I saw painful incidents with my brothers and sister teasing me and telling me I was too little to play with them. I saw angry nuns, priests, and teachers and remembered being beaten with a rubber hose by a school principal. I relived a fistfight I'd had in the showers when I was in the marines.

I recalled, or rather relived, a barroom incident in a foreign country. I had been the ugly American, surrounded by antagonists. To escape, I had broken a beer bottle and charged the man guarding the door, aiming the bottle at his face. He tripped me and I went sprawling into the street. My right index finger was gashed and pouring blood. I got up and ran as fast as I could, chased by a bunch of angry drunks. I saw myself again, cowering behind a fence, trying to stanch the flowing blood. My pursuers ran past without seeing me. I laughed out loud at their stupidity, because all they had needed to do was follow my trail of splattered blood. "Let these things go, David," Mary murmured. "All of them. They are useless to you now. Let them pass through you. Send them packing. We have to finish our work. We must go to the fourth atmosphere, related to earth-moon."

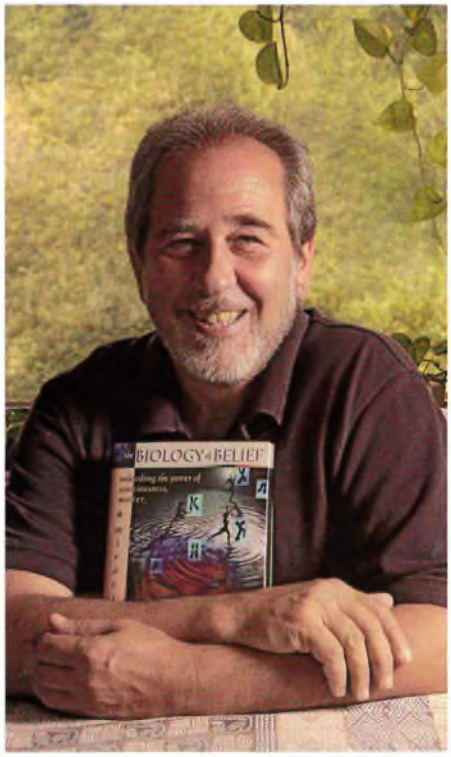
Mary made two mounds of dirt on each side of my navel and just a little below it. I was smashed down so hard I gasped for breath. All the tragedies I had been re-experiencing were immediately forgotten. I was moaning for air, my chest heaving frantically. Mary completely ignored my struggling and went about placing more dirt above and below my knees, then at both feet. "Listen," she said. "These are bearing placements, and connect with the moon. The moon always knows where the good road is located. Bear toward the good road, the spiritual road. This road is always of earth, married with the moon." As Mary worked on, I felt as if my body contained a series of strings connected to each other like a net or web. Each time Mary placed a new mound of dirts, it set the web to vibrating. The effect of these gently placed mounds was to cause a cascading, harmonic ripple throughout my body. Each new dirts placement raised the vibration an octave in pitch. I had never felt remotely similar sensations as were reverberating through me, pleasurable but so unfamiliar they frightened me.

I tried to concentrate on the sensations. I noticed I was beginning to feel slightly numb, especially my left leg. The numbness percolated upward to my jaws, and I realized I was gritting my teeth tightly. My mind began playing

Continued on page 75

MAGICAL MEM-BRAINS?

Cell biologist Bruce Lipton says our lives are not ruled by our genes but by our cell membranes — which respond to our thoughts. Has he found the key to mind–body healing? Listen to his remarkable conversation with veteran science writer Jill Neimark.



AP PHOTO/MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ

The mystic healer Edgar Cayce once said, "Remember that thoughts are things, and as their currents run, they can become crimes or miracles." Now cell biologist Bruce Lipton, formerly at University of Wisconsin and Stanford medical schools, suggests that Cayce was right. Lipton, author of *Biology of Belief: Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter, & Miracles*, contends that our thoughts can activate changes in the activity of the cell membrane, and thus alter our health and life.

Genes, proteins, and hormones all are players at the gates of the cell's membrane, says Lipton, where consciousness and matter interact. In fact, he states bluntly that by changing our subconscious programming we can influence membrane function, and therefore, "We are not victims of our genes, but masters of our fate."

Though Lipton may be reaching too far in some of his claims, his book has sparked interest not only from hypnotherapists and energy healers, but from cell biologists working on cancer at places like the University of Illinois at Chicago, where researchers have already published findings consistent with his emphasis on the cell membrane.

—Jill Neimark

JN: Early in your book, you describe a kind of eureka! insight where you realize that the cell membrane is the equivalent of each cell's brain. Later in your book, you write that interacting with the cell membrane will enable us to change our lives, health, maybe even the activity of our genes. By changing our deepest beliefs, you say, we can change the signals reaching the cell membrane, and thus our entire bodies from the cellular level on up. But before we get into all that, "brain" is a loaded word. What exactly do you mean by brain when you speak of the "magical mem-brain"?

BL: I mean the cell membrane functions as the active intelligence of the cell. At any given time, every cell membrane contains hundreds of thousands of switches, and the behavior of a cell can only be understood by considering the activities of all the switches. So I asked myself, Where does the cascade of activity for a cell start? And it starts at the membrane. In contrast, genes are remarkable molecules, but they are only blueprints that are activated by signals from the cell membrane. Genes are not our fate. Of course, a very small percentage of people actually arrived on this planet with defective genes, and in those rare cases the blueprint itself is inappropriate.



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JN: Scientists have long known that genes are influenced by signals from their environment. There is the famous book *The Beak of the Finch*, which shows us that evolution is happening right before our eyes in just a few generations of birds on the Galapagos Islands. The length of the finch beak changes according to climate change, which affects the type of seeds that grow on the island and the type of beak a finch needs. So haven't we known for a while that genes are flexible and responsive?

BL: I fully agree and do say in my book that if you're a leading-edge scientist, this will not be news. But if you ask the average person on the street what controls life, they will tell you genes control life. It was Nobel Prize winner Francis Crick who suggested that genes are both the blueprint for the body's proteins and that DNA controls its own replication. The first is true but the second is not. Genes are indeed blueprints. But a gene cannot cause or control its own expression. It is not self-regulatory. If genes don't control life, then what is in charge of life? I say it's the cell membrane. This is the "brain" equivalent. The membrane is the physical structure that interfaces internal "self" and external "not-self." It is an interface that dynamically reads and interprets environmental cues and responds by generating signals that enable the cell to function and survive. And science supports this. One of the remarkable studies I mention in my book shows that a cell whose nucleus — with all its genes — is removed will keep functioning for as long as a month! This was a shock to me at first, since I was trained as a nucleus-centered biologist as surely as Copernicus was trained as an Earth-centered astronomer. It was truly a jolt when I realized the nucleus does not program the cell. On the other hand, if the cell membrane is damaged, the cell will immediately become dysfunctional and, frequently, die very quickly.

"Genes are blueprints. But a gene cannot cause or control its own expression. It is not self-regulatory. If genes don't control life, then what is in charge? Membranes."

JN: You sent me a very interesting article on stem cells from *Nature*, which you jokingly titled, "It's the stem cells, stupid!" It describes how the body is like an ecosystem, and the activity of a cell depends on its ecological niche, or where it lives. Stem cells, which are the subject of so much hope and controversy today, are influenced by their environment to become a neuron or a blood cell or any other kind of cell. But all this fascinating new research actually reinforces my view that every molecule of the body is intelligent in its own way. Genes, receptors, stem cells, hormones, all are key players and intelligent. The synergy of our minds and bodies seems more like an Escher painting to me, where the beginning loops around to the end and around again to the beginning. I think you are overemphasizing the membrane. Just out of curiosity, how do you think life began — do you think it began with RNA, DNA, cell membranes, or something else?

BL: I think the membrane was a very important part of the beginning of biological life. If I take fats called phospholipids and shake them up in water, they spontaneously form membranes. And these membranes undergo fission — in other words, they separate into two. They seem to "grow" like cells. Now, lipids are nothing but a container, and that's not life itself. But once we have a container we can define inside and outside and start to regulate the conditions inside. The ability to regulate our internal domain is required for life, since we must

have very specific environmental conditions for certain biochemical responses. For instance, a cell needs to maintain a certain pH and salt balance. I believe that when ancient RNA and other proteins in the primeval soup became encapsulated within membranes, we had a breeding ground for life.

JN: You state that we're mostly controlled by subconscious programming, and that if we can change this programming, we can actually change the signals the membrane sends into the cell. First, how are you defining subconscious? A lot of work has been done in recent years showing which specific brain structures are involved in states like fear, compassion, or the peaceful cosmic consciousness felt by experienced meditators. Are you using subconscious as a metaphor like Freud did, or are you referring to particular places in the brain?

BL: By conscious mind, I mean the part of the brain that is self-reflective and self-observing, which is governed by the more recently evolved prefrontal cortex of the brain. By subconscious, I mean the part of the brain that is more ancient and doesn't necessarily require conscious attention. It's the programmable "hard drive" into which our life experiences are downloaded. The programs are fundamentally hardwired stimulus-response behaviors. This is so automatic that people often refer to the fact that somebody has "pushed their buttons" — leading to an instinctive response.

JN: How does subconscious programming influence the cell membrane?

BL: When I have a thought, my mind sends out signals, in the form of growth factors, hormones, or other chemicals. Thoughts can also initiate rapid oscillations of nerve cells in unison, which creates a kind of field effect that influences other cells and neurons almost instantaneously. Now, what's interesting, and what I found out in my research at Stanford, is that your brain can veto what's going on in other places in your body. The signals sent out by your central nervous system actually override the function of cell membrane receptors that are responding to signals in their immediate environment. That means the brain can ultimately control the activity of tissues and organs. I believe that the most powerful information processing by the brain is in the domain of the subconscious and that it can shape tissue responses. These signals can actually influence the membrane to engage selected genes that then actively respond.

When part of the brain senses stress, for example, it initiates a complex signal cascade that directs the body's cells to launch a protection response, particularly through a stress hormone called cortisol.

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BOOKS, MOVIES, MUSIC

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Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

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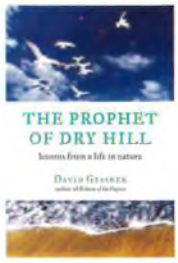
Hilary Hahn plays Bach

Smoosh: She Like Electric

The Prophet of Dry Hill

Lessons from a Life in Nature

by David Gessner
(Beacon Press, 2005, hardcover, $19.95)



Some people persist in viewing the natural world and its inhabitants as having no value other than to serve humans as resources, commodities, and tools. And then there are special individuals like John Hay, a writer now in his mid-eighties who has spent 50 years watching, celebrating, and working to preserve nature.

Since 1946, when Hay settled on Dry Hill in Cape Cod, less than a mile from the sea, he has been contemplating the diversity in the environment around him. The author of 15 books, including *A Beginner's Faith in Things Unseen*, *In the Company of Light*, and *The Bird of Light*, he has been called a prophet of nature in the company of Henry David Thoreau, Henry Beston, and Rachel Carson.

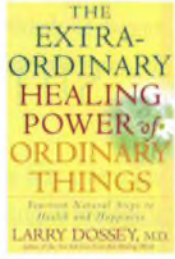
In this tribute to Hay, David Gessner (*Sick of Nature*) presents his in-depth conversations over the course of a year with this elder who looks upon the sea, sky, fields, and forest with loving eyes. The importance of seeing well is a major theme in his work. Hay recalls one telling incident: "I was down at Gray's Beach watching terns last spring. There were these two women walking down the boardwalk. All this life was swirling around them — laughing gulls, ospreys, terns — but they were not seeing it. They each had a cellular phone and they were both talking — separately! — into their phones. Now, I understand that we are social creatures, but we seem to have lost the ability to be alone and to look outward. They didn't look anywhere else, just staring ahead and talking, and I thought this was a perfect metaphor for how we visit our landscapes. They were blind to it. We're all blind. That's the real trouble. We need to open our eyes."

Gessner is impressed with this octogenarian's ability to empathize with other creatures. A "fierce astonishment" shines through his writings about animals of all types. He demonstrates the kind of humility that enables him to leap out of himself and see the world of connections. Hay respects the mysticism of Native Americans who are able to honor the sacredness of place, open themselves to the world of plants and animals, and experience daily the wonders of nature. Gemma Lockhart, a Sioux Indian, has called him "an arrow-shooter" who shows others how they might live better in the world. This book will give you many ways to respect the earth, to cherish animals, and to carry on the great work of preserving the diversity of ecosystems.

The Extraordinary Healing Power of Ordinary Things

Fourteen Natural Steps to Health and Happiness

by Larry Dossey
(Harmony Books, 2006, hardcover, $24.95)



We can be thankful to modern medicine for high-tech and surgical interventions that save lives. But there are many simpler and less invasive ways to heal from illnesses.

Over the years, Larry Dossey, M.D., has explored the interface between medicine, consciousness, and spirituality. He has expanded our horizons in regard to the healing arts through his 10 books and is currently executive editor of *EXPLORE: The Journal of Science & Healing*. Many of the essays in his engrossing new book were presented in the journal *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, which he edited for nearly a decade.

The author's own most profound heal-

ing event came before he entered medical school. He was in the hospital coming out of anesthesia after an appendectomy. He recalls awakening with large doses of pain and anxiety. The surgeon who performed the operation was not around, but "the nurse's lingering touch conveyed to me — silently, powerfully, unequivocally — that everything was going to be all right. It was, and the occasion is seared into my memory."

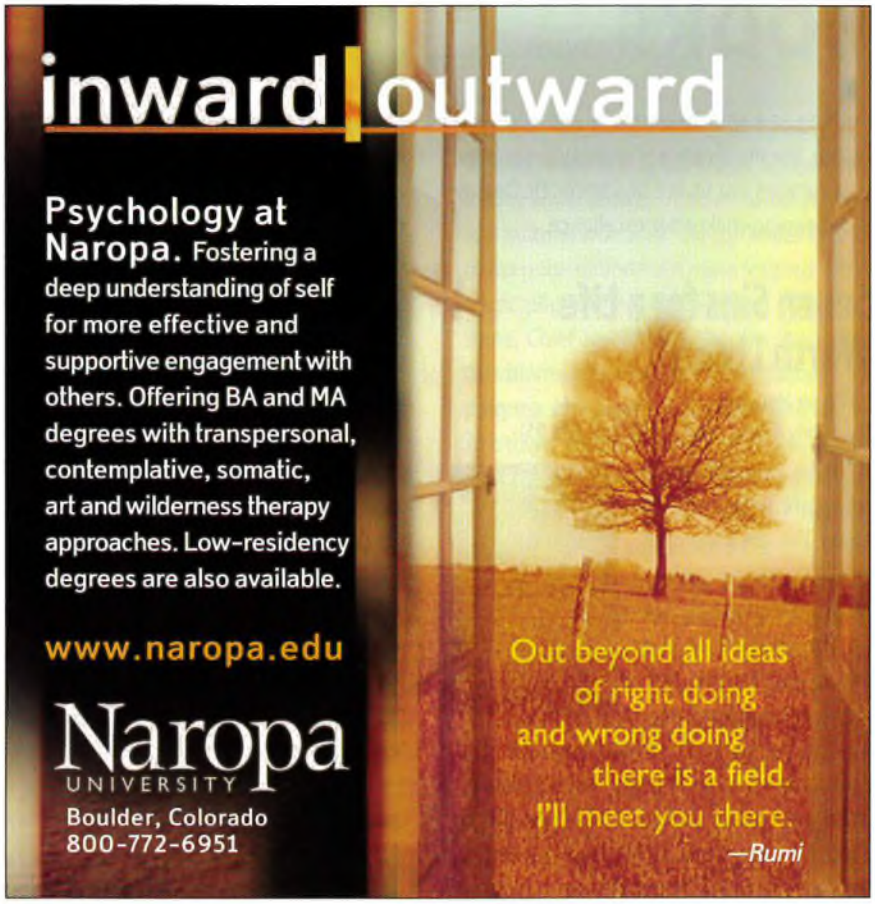
Since then he has been entranced by simple, ordinary health interventions that we take for granted or consider to be not worthy of serious consideration.

One of these is optimism. Research has shown that optimists get sick less often and live longer than pessimists, and they seem to be much happier as well. Still, the medical profession is filled with far too many gloomy Guses who, because of their regular encounters with death, tend to look on the dark side of things.

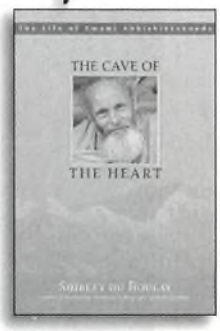
Another ordinary step toward health is crying. Dossey pays tribute to tears, agreeing with Barry M. Bernfeld, Ph.D., that "crying is natural, healthy, and curative." Many ancient cultures so valued tears as an expression of love and caring that individuals collected and stored them in bottlelike containers called lachrymatories. Perhaps hospitals would be more compassionate places if this practice were carried on in them.

New products are being created all the time to intensify our war on dirt. Why do so many of us have such an aversion to this universal aspect of the human condition? Dossey suggests that we call a truce in this battle and see that we often have transferred our bias about dirt to "the lowly, the humble and the unclean." One essay that made us squirm a bit charts the return of maggot and leech therapy to help the medical establishment deal with the increasing resistance of microbes to antibiotics and a rising tide of chronic infections.

Other essays in this thought-provoking volume deal with music as a healing art, the value of plant-based medicine, unhappiness as an ally deserving of our gratitude, doing



Spiritual Lessons from the East



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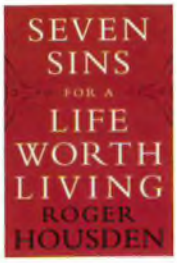
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Seven Sins for a Life Worth Living

by Roger Housden
(Harmony Books, 2006, hardcover, $18.95)



Imagine yourself sitting in a café with time to spare. You are looking at the fascinating variety of people passing, like an improvised drama set up just for you. You slowly sip your tea, savoring the moments of solitude. Thoughts pass through your mind, but you feel no pressing need to act on any of them. According to Roger Housden (*How Rembrandt Reveals Your Beautiful, Imperfect Self*), this art of doing nothing has been perfected by many European cultures, where productivity and being number one are less important than savoring the many simple pleasures of life: "They eat the best food on the planet, drink the best wine, take the longest vacations, surround themselves with spectacular architecture, and come up with some of the best art, dance, and music. In short, they enjoy themselves."

In this spiritually savvy volume, Housden contends that Americans are so pragmatic and driven that they have a hard time relishing the delights of this world. He challenges us to move beyond our culture of self-denial, negativism, and punishment to embrace "seven sins": the pleasures of the senses, being foolish, not knowing all the answers, giving up on perfection, doing nothing useful, celebrating the ordinary, and coming home. These pages are filled with tart and astute observations on changes we can make in the way we live so our days are more joyful.

The materialism that always seeks to purchase the latest product and never cherishes the one we bought last year is an attachment to novelty that can expand into an obsession. Better the *adab* practices of Sufis, who kiss a book or a fallen object in the home as a sign of respect. Housden quotes a work by Salman Rushdie, where he talks about the Indian habit of kissing holy books and other things as well.

There is a playfulness to some of the seven sins. Housden acknowledges that in his moments of foolishness, he has felt closely connected to others. He concurs with Wes Nisker, who suggests that the best thing for humanity would be to celebrate our foolishness and to rejoice together on April Fool's Day. This is all a far cry from Housden's own admission of doing things to accentuate his specialness and to have others be impressed by how different he is. The virtues explored in this imaginative work open our hearts and minds to a less calculating, less anxious, and more productive way of life.

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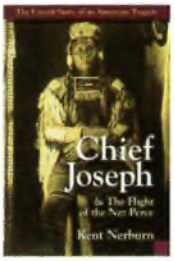
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Chief Joseph & the Flight of the Nez Perce

by Kent Nerburn
(HarperSanFrancisco, 2005, hardcover, $24.95)



You have probably heard of Lewis and Clark and their journeys into a majestic land known as the Columbia Plateau, with its misted valleys, high mountain meadows, and gigantic gorges. But how much do you know about the Nez Perce tribe that considered this awesome place their home? They made the strongest bows of any native people, they could create a cradle board with 100,000 beads in it, and their young men would boldly swim across the ice-laden Salmon River to keep strong.

Chief Joseph was the quiet, resolute, and peaceful leader of the Nez Perce who took 800 men, women, and children on a 1,500-mile retreat after they were illegally forced from their homeland in Oregon by a U.S. government that was unwilling to hold true to its treaty obligations. Buffalo Bill Cody called him "the greatest Indian America ever produced," and photographer Edward Curtis saluted him as "one of the greatest men who ever lived."

Who was this man and what can we learn about the history and the soul of America from him? Kent Nerburn asked himself this question during the four years that it took to research this poignant account of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce exodus. The author of *Neither Wolf Nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder* and 11 other works about personal spirituality, Native American values, and the power of the land, Nerburn traveled more than 20,000 miles to talk with Nez Perce elders and descendents of this extraordinary leader.

With measured words and narrative power, Nerburn presents a dramatic portrait of Chief Joseph as a man of peace whose true greatness has been "obscured by myth and shrouded by legend." Here is a sympathetic account of a leader who "allowed himself to be elevated to a cultural icon after the surrender in order to keep the nation's attention focused on the tragic plight of his beleaguered people." To some, Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce were troublemakers who could not accept the progress of a growing and changing nation. To others, all Indians were primitive people who could be saved only through conversion to Christianity. To Easterners who had read James Fenimore Cooper and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Indians were mythologized as noble children of the plains and forests. To many settlers out West, the Nez Perce were dangerous and untrustworthy savages.

The U.S. military lied to Chief Joseph repeatedly until his heart and mind were drained of hope that he would see his beloved homeland before he died. More than anything, Nerburn conveys the compassionate leadership of Chief Joseph on his long and arduous journey. Sadly,



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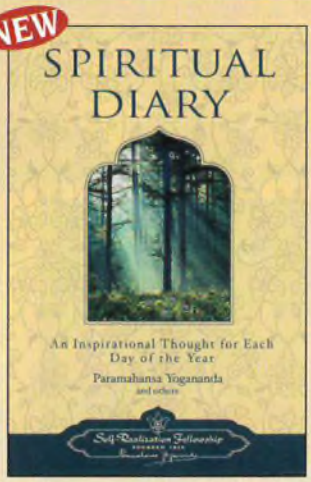
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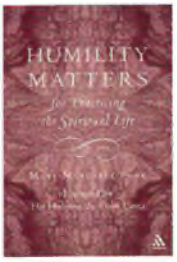
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this moral quality was nowhere to be found in the actions or attitudes of the whites who dealt with him. This sad, scary history lesson reveals the shadowy side of America, which unfortunately still animates a war-prone nation to treat others with no respect and to take whatever we want.

Humility Matters

For Practicing the Spiritual Life

by Mary Margaret Funk
(Continuum, 2005, hardcover, $19.95)



"Humility matters," writes Mary Margaret Funk in this third volume of a trilogy (*Thoughts Matter: The Practice of the Spiritual Life* and *Tools Matter for Practicing the Spiritual Life*). "So central is this quality of being that it may be said that humility is to a Christian what enlightenment is to a Buddhist, realization is to a Hindu, sincerity is to a Confucian, righteousness is to a Jew, surrender is to a Muslim, and annihilation is to a Sufi. Humility is what others see of our purity of heart."

The low door of humility was demonstrated repeatedly by Jesus, and it led to the monastic emphasis on four renunciations: of our former way of life, of the thoughts and desires of our former way of life, of our self-made thoughts of God, and of our self-made thoughts of self. Funk demonstrates how the desert fathers and mothers trained their minds in regard to afflictions of the body (food, sex, things), afflictions of the mind (anger, dejection) and afflictions of the soul (acedia, vainglory, pride). She creatively uses the form of dialogues between two pioneers of humility: Saint Teresa of Jesus (Avila), who shows us how to renounce our self-made thoughts of God through the practice of recollection, and St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who shows us how to renounce our self-made thoughts of self through the practice of the Little Way. The fourth renunciation is explored in the Institutes of John Cassian, who presents 10 indicators of humility, including holding one's tongue, being satisfied with utter simplicity, and maintaining a gracious obedience and steadfast patience. This volume nicely complements its two predecessors, creating a wonderful compendium of spiritual practices for Christians.

The Universe in a Single Atom

The Convergence of Science and Spirituality

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
(Morgan Road Books, 2005, hardcover, $24.95)



Whereas many religious leaders are skeptical of the collaboration

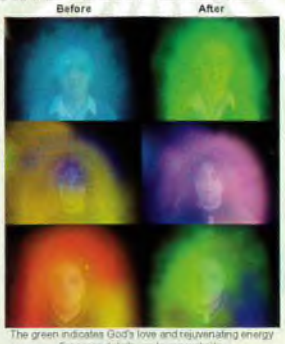
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Conjure

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irrational tricks. I suspected that Mary had deceived me. She was a spoiled child making mud pies, and soon she would splat one right in my face and laugh. That's all she ever wanted to do: make me appear ridiculous. I felt full of rage, first at Mary and then at other unpleasant thoughts and memories that had come to mind. Mary's dirt juggling was digging up things I had worked hard for many years to bury.

I was breathing heavily, and I could feel my skin turning red to match the evening sunset. I started to writhe, arching my neck backward and straining my body into a tense bow with most of my weight on my head.

I was overcome with self-pity and self-hatred. I had done nothing worthwhile with my life. I was a big zero in the estimation of the people I knew. I felt my body dispersing, disappearing. Life had poisoned me, and now I was coming apart. Then somewhere far away I heard a wailing cry. I realized with a shock that it was me, screaming at the top of my lungs. I sat up suddenly, dashing all the careful mounds of dirts to the ground. I was wracked with paroxysms of sorrow, and feeling naked and exposed. "It's okay," I heard Mary say. Then I felt her arms around me. "Your earth is being made clean. Flow. It takes a river of tears to do it." She held me pressed to her breast for a long time while I cried like a big baby. By the time I calmed down enough to put on my clothes, darkness had engulfed us. ❖

Adapted from *Crossing Into Medicine Country: A Journey in Native American Healing*, Copyright ©2005 by David Carson. Used by arrangement with Arcade Publishing, New York, New York. Arcadepub.com. David Carson is the co-author of *Medicine Cards: The Discovery of Power Through the Ways of Animals* and has lectured and given animal consultations and medicine card readings to people worldwide.

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Mem-Brains

continued from page 69

Now, let's look at what happens to, say, a typical liver cell, which has receptors on its membrane that bind to cortisol. When it does this, the membrane sends information to the genes inside the nucleus of the cell to shut down their ability to break down a form of sugar called glycogen. The genes stop doing this, and extra sugar is released into the blood. That sugar is used as energy to counter the stress. This cascade could have been started by a real stress, or by a belief that causes stress even if it is a misperception.

I actually think this system explains how the placebo effect works. And a recent article on the placebo effect on pain in the *Journal of Neuroscience* confirms this. When researchers used sophisticated imaging of the brain, they found that placebos that were believed to quench pain activated parts of the brain that directly affected opioid membrane receptors. That's how a "belief" results in the chemical cascade that results in the placebo effect — and in this case, a reduction in pain. For hundreds of years we've been discussing the mind–body duality. What I'm proposing is a mechanism for its power.

JN: The description is fascinating and makes sense, but I think our frameworks are very different. I still don't see a top-down hierarchy from the brain to the membrane. I see us as a web that has no weaver, that weaves itself, and the act of weaving is us. Nobody has yet explained how physical processes give rise to conscious experience in the first place. We don't know how a stimulus turns into the blueness of blue, the sweetness of sweet, the sentience of anything from a cell to a person. So it seems a leap to say that we now know how conscious experience modulates physical processes. What brought you to this work?

BL: My dad was an immigrant from Russia who came here at age 11, and by the time he was 16, he and his brother owned their first supermarket in New York City. I was born in 1944, and shortly after that we moved up to Chappaqua, the town where the Clintons now live. My mother told me that at that time there was a sign at the entrance to the town that read, "No Jews, no blacks, and no dogs." We were Russian Jews and completely displaced into an environment that disapproved of us. I had one friend down the block, and that was it. That's why the first time I looked into a microscope, in the second grade, I was so mesmerized. Here was another world with living creatures and it had nothing to do with my own troubled world. I remember spending an entire summer with an old Brownie camera

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between science and spirituality, His Holiness the Dalai Lama values the interplay between these two endeavors.

For more than 30 years the spiritual leader of Tibet has held meetings with scientists in different fields, including subatomic physics, cosmology, biology, neuroscience, and psychology. He states that we cannot ignore the basic insights of key theories of evolution, relativity, and quantum physics: "I believe that spirituality and science are different but complementary investigative approaches with the same greater goal, of seeking the truth. In this, there is much each may learn from the other, and together they may contribute to expanding the horizon of human knowledge and wisdom. Moreover, through a dialogue between the two disciplines, I hope both science and spirituality may develop to be of better service to the needs and well-being of humanity."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama brings his Tibetan Buddhist spiritual perspective to the discussions. For instance, he is baffled as to why the scientific investigation of human behavior has failed to develop any systematic understanding of the powerful emotion of compassion. Instead, the emphasis in modern psychology has been on negative emotions such as anger, aggression, and fear. Equally disconcerting for him is the inability or unwillingness of those who espouse Darwinian evolutionary theory to explore deeply the question of altruism. The scientists who seem to be most excited about ways of manipulating human genetics miss the mark when they emphasize intellectual achievement, physical beauty, or athletic achievement. The Dalai Lama believes that the real value of a person is their innate capacity for compassion. These kinds of insights are what make this spiritual leader's contributions to this dialogue so important for us.

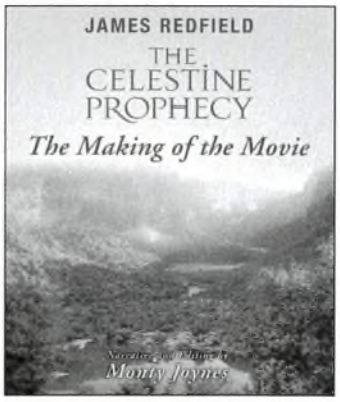
The Dalai Lama discusses the relevance of emptiness, dependent origination, attention, and meditation to scientific pursuits. He states that he has always encouraged his colleagues to study science. This stands in contrast to many Christian fundamentalists who eschew evolution and other scientific understandings of the modern world. But spirituality can also temper science that has succumbed to the rigidity of reductionism or nihilism.

The Dalai Lama's efforts to collaborate with scientists through the many conferences he has initiated are salutary in a time when many are fearful of the dangerous misuse of technology that could lead to a nuclear holocaust. His closing statement is one that must be heeded by all world religious leaders: "My plea is that we bring our spirituality, the full richness and simple wholesomeness of our basic human values, to bear upon the course of science and the direction of technology in human society. In essence, science and spirituality, though differing in their approaches, share the same end, which is the betterment of humanity."

continued on page 79

BOOKS THAT MATTER

This winter the film adaptation of the spiritual novel that created a worldwide sensation will be hitting movie screens across the country. Lavishly illustrated and lovingly crafted, this making-of-the-movie book takes you inside the imagination of the filmmakers and makes a perfect gift for spiritual seekers and film buffs alike.



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Mem-Brains

continued from page 76

trying to take a picture of cells in my microscope.

JN: How has your belief in belief changed your own life?

BL: My sense of humor has saved me. Years ago, after my divorce, I fell deeply in love with a woman and one day she said, "I think I need some space," and what seemed like 10 minutes later, she moved in with a cardiac surgeon. I pined away for nearly a year. I'd come home from work and just be alone and have this imaginary conversation with Barbara. I missed her all the time. Then one night, I was alone in my dark living room in the typical cold, grey Wisconsin winter and missing Barbara and I yelled out, "Just leave me alone, Barbara!" And all of a sudden the pure absurd humor of it struck me. I said to myself, "Well, she has left you alone and that's the problem." The next time I started missing Barbara I thought about the absurd humor of it, and I started laughing.

Humor has had the same impact on the rest of my life. In a very similar way, I was berating myself one day for not being good enough. And right in the middle of all my negative self-talk it was as if a voice offstage said, "Isn't there anything more fun to do than this?" It was like I was in a stand-up comedy routine and I laughed out loud then and there. I'd been willingly engaging in "not-good-enough" programming from my subconscious, and there was something different I could do and I did it right then. I went to a movie. And the next time I got into a negative spiral of self-talk, the humor struck me again, and it just transcended my self-talk. That laughter was almost like a switch. Eventually, over time, the negative self-talk just stopped.

JN: What's the one take-home message from the biology of belief?

BL: That we're not, as individuals or societies, the pawns of our genes, or stuck in a vicious cycle of violence and competition. You can reinvent your life. The global community can reinvent itself, too. A study last year by two biologists, Robert M. Sapolsky and Lisa J. Share, showed this in a troop of baboons. The aggressive males happened to die out from foraging contaminated meat from a garbage pit. In the wake of their deaths, the females in the troop helped steer the remaining, less aggressive males into a more peaceful, cooperative community. We are all spiritual beings who need love as much as we need food. We can use the intelligence of our own cells to change our lives. ❖

Jill Neimark is a contributing editor of *S&H*. She is currently finishing a book on love and health with bioethicist Stephen Post.

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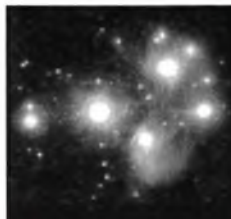
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MOVIES

Recent releases on VHS and DVD reviewed by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Millions

Directed by Danny Boyle
Fox Home Entertainment, PG



"Leaving the miraculous out of life is rather like leaving out the lavatory or dreams or breakfast," Catholic novelist Graham Greene once wrote. *Millions* is about miracles and money and saints and the divine love that will not let us go. Mixing the everyday activities of two young English boys with some astonishing dollops of magical realism, this movie will challenge you to see afresh the wonders awaiting those who step into their calling as saints, doing good things in a world off-kilter due to greed and lusting after new goodies.

Nine-year-old Anthony (Lewis McGibbon) and seven-year-old Damien (Alex Etel) are trying to cope with the drastic changes in their lives. Their mother has died, and their father, Ronnie (James Nesbitt), has moved the family to a new housing development. When Damien is playing, a suitcase of cash drops out of the sky. Damien, who has visions and conversations with saints, is inspired by St. Francis of Assisi to give it away. This does not prove easy. Pay special attention to an account by St. Peter of the feeding of the 5,000; it contains important clues to the nature of true generosity.

Crash

Directed by Paul Haggis
Lions Gate Films, R



This powerful film provides a crash course in unmasking the racial and class divisions in American society, and we applaud this morally rich, nuanced, and poignant drama set in Los Angeles. Director Paul Haggis has said: "My aim with this film is to explore how intolerance is a collective problem. I did not set out to offend or ignite controversy, but to look at many different people, each with his or her unique perspective. Film enables us to walk, however briefly, in the shoes of strangers. In that sense, I hope that *Crash* succeeds not so much in pointing out differences, but in recognizing our shared humanity."

In the course of the drama, we realize that no human being deserves to be thrown out of our heart or exiled from our consciousness.

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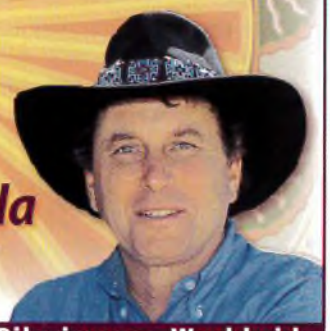
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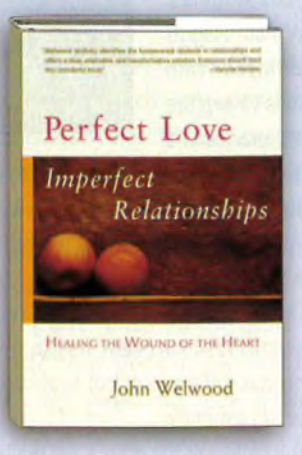


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MUSIC

Reviews by Benjamin Ivry

Ageless Inspiration from the Mouths of Babes

Aselin Debison

Sweet is the Melody

Odyssey 87707
aselin.com



The Book of Psalms states that inspiration for fighting spiritual challenges can be found in messages from the "mouths of babes." Canadian singer Aselin Debison's voice has the kind of purity and naturalness that hypnotizes fans of Celtic New Age divas like Enya and Méav.

On *Sweet is the Melody*, 12-year-old Aselin — named for Aslan, the enchanted lion in the beloved series of Narnia fantasy novels by C.S. Lewis — sings with fierce love for her home in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia. Her inspirational song "The Island" defends local miners who struggle with unemployment and its attendant social problems: "Oh the sweat on the back is no joy to behold / In the heat of the steel plant or mining the coal / And the foreign-owned companies force us to fight / For our survival and for our rights."

Standards like "Over the Rainbow" and "What a Wonderful World" are performed in a spiritually lofty, unadorned way that makes us feel heartened and encouraged. Explaining the untrained freshness in her high and low notes, Aselin told an interviewer, "I get my high notes from my mom and my low notes from my dad." Aselin has already recorded a second album, *Bigger Than Me* (Epic EK 81171), so far released only in Canada, but well worth seeking out online.

Ryan Holladay

New Kid in Town

Skaggs Family 2012
skaggsfamilyrecords.com or ryanholladay.com

A recent Oprah Winfrey show about the world's most talented kids introduced Ryan Holladay, a 12-year-old bluegrass prodigy from Camden, Tennessee. Self-taught on the banjo, at age five Ryan played the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, the youngest-ever performer on that legendary stage. In *New Kid in Town*, Ryan expresses strength in the face of adversity in the song "When It Rains." He draws fortitude from simple faith with a convincing bluesy twang in the anthem "There Is a God," backed up by harmonies from his mother, Lisa, his father, Mark, and his uncle, Mike. In addition to family solidarity, Ryan's nimble, dynamic mastery of the banjo, guitar, and mandolin make his listeners feel energized and exalted. Small wonder that his hometown has launched an annual Ryan Holladay Bluegrass Festival as a way of further sharing the inspiration.



Hilary Hahn plays Bach

Sony Classics 62793
hilaryhahn.com or sonyclassical.com

After the young Yehudi Menuhin (1916–1999) gave a recital of Bach's music in Berlin in 1928, Albert Einstein, who was an amateur violinist as well as a great scientist and humanist, ran backstage to announce, "Now I know there is



a God in heaven!" A more recent player, the Lexington, Virginia-born virtuoso Hilary Hahn recorded this CD of works by Bach when she was just 16. Bach's "Partitas for Solo Violin" are structured as a series of baroque dances, with grandeur and grace that approach the divine. Hilary's sober, unshowy approach to the miraculous "Ciaccona" movement of the Second Partita makes it into a cathedral in sound. Listening to musicianship of this quality from a young artist is an exalting experience. Einstein was right to run backstage.

Smoosh

She Like Electric

Pattern 25 Records P2510
pattern25.com

NPR's *All Things Considered*, CNN, and NBC's *Today* show have recently celebrated two sisters from Seattle, Asya, age 13, and Chloe, 11, who make up the indie-pop-rock-band Smoosh. Asya writes, plays keyboards, and sings while Chloe plays drums. Despite their appearance as blonde moppets, Asya and Chloe's first CD, *She Like Electric*, is acutely sensitive. *Rolling Stone* has praised their "pensive lyrics" and melodies, which sound like they come from "moodier artists twice their age." Smoosh's ethically demanding songs cast an eye on grownups' foibles, like "Pygmy Motorcycle," which scolds an adult who is lost in materialism: "You come home late from your work every day / And you've got bags of money hidden away ... You don't seem to have any goals in your life," sings Asya, delivering the line as a crystalline spiritual diagnosis. ❖

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By Jennifer Derryberry Mann

Sit Tall, Feel Better

Yoga poses can ease aches and pains even when you're stuck in a chair all day.

Susan Winter Ward took her first yoga class at the behest of her girlfriends, and just a few years later, she taught her first class to a group of her mother's friends. Ward was 45 years old when she took that first class and most of her first students were in their sixties.

Aging isn't easy, but for the first of the 77 million baby boomers who start turning "sweet 60" this year, "old" is being rapidly redefined. Body practices such as yoga, tai chi, and some martial arts offer aging bodies a gentle way to move, a prescription for keeping joints well oiled, and a path to deep relaxation that research increasingly reveals is essential to keeping the heart healthy.

"There's no reason that we have to be decrepit," says Ward, whose lithe frame and thick, healthy hair reflect her vitality. "There's no reason we can't stay strong and healthy in our later years if we stay physically active. A lot of what boomers have done to stay physically active — jogging, aerobics, pumping iron — is too punishing for the body as it ages. Yoga is a great alternative."

And for people who have never been active, or for those who can't be that active because of disability, traditional fitness activity like running isn't practical, either. But Ward believes people of all ability levels and ages can still build strength and flexibility from yogic movements. Yogic breathing, she says, gives the experience of relaxation and well-being. So Ward has accepted as her "assignment" teaching beginning-level students and those who can't very easily participate in a mat-based class.

Such accessibility means that whether you're a working person stuck at your desk



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSAN WINTER

Yoga practice can keep us vital into our nineties.

(maybe you're one of those boomers who keeps working into retirement) or an elder who relies on a wheelchair, there are yoga poses that can help you feel better. "A student may walk in with a back problem," Ward says. "But they stay for the spirituality, that inner voice that quiets them down, that helps them relax, follow their hearts, and be at peace." With the following few simple movements, described in the "Sitting Fit Anytime" DVD, Ward says you can expect to feel:

- relief from aches and pains
- a deep sense of relaxation
- better posture
- increased flexibility and strength
- clarity of mind

For each of the following exercises, place your chair on a flat surface, and secure it against a wall or a desk. For most of these poses, sit tall at the edge of your chair, with your feet flat on the floor. (A couple of exceptions are noted in the following pose descriptions.)

Shoulder Shrugs Inhale; draw your shoulders toward your ears and squeeze your shoulder blades together. Exhale; release your

There's no reason we can't stay strong and healthy in our later years if we stay physically active ...

shoulders and slide your shoulder blades down your back. Repeat several times.

Neck Release Extend your left arm toward the floor, and use it to lightly brace yourself in the chair. Look straight ahead. Inhale, then exhale as you release your right ear toward your right shoulder. Draw your left shoulder down to deepen the stretch. Take several breaths, then gently inhale as you lift your head back to the center. Repeat on the other side.

Wrist Circles Press your palms together in front of your chest, fingertips toward the ceiling. Inhale, expanding the rib cage. Exhale, pressing the palms together as you draw your shoulder blades down your back. Inhale, extending your arms in front of you at shoulder height. Make gentle fists with your hands, then circle your wrists toward each other several times. Change directions, continuing to breathe deeply and steadily.

Twist Sit farther back in your chair. Cross your left thigh over your right. Inhale and extend your right arm to the right. Exhale and cross your right arm in front of your body, then grasp the outside of your left leg. Inhale and extend your left arm toward the ceiling. Exhale and twist to the left, setting your left arm across the back of the chair. Take a few breaths, then inhale with your left arm up, and exhale back to the center as you unwind. Repeat on the other side.

Hip Stretch Sit farther back. Place your left ankle on your right thigh, your hands in your hip creases. Inhale; extend your spine. Exhale; lean forward with a flat back. Inhale; raise your torso back to center, keeping your spine long. Repeat several times, then change sides.

Beginning a practice isn't easy, but knowing we can stay vital into our nineties, "maybe even our hundreds," Ward says, may be a powerful motivation. ❖

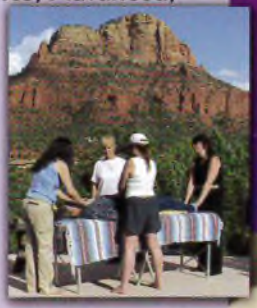
Jennifer Derryberry Mann is a freelance writer and yoga teacher based in Minneapolis. She is the former editor of *Science & Spirit* magazine.

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Unwavering Spirit

By Lama Surya Das



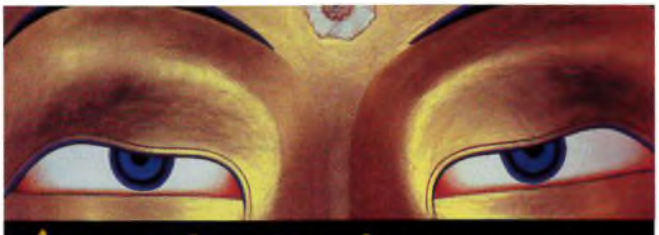
Ripening over Time

The Art of Becoming a Wise Elder

In traditional cultures with strong spiritual foundations, age is associated with maturity and insight rather than senility or worldly success. The second half of life is a time for deepening reflection and inner self-discovery, when we round off the rough corners and our lives become more profound and harmonious. As Hafiz, the fourteenth-century Sufi poet, wrote: "The impermanence of the body / Should give us great clarity, / Deepening the wonder in our senses and eyes / Of this mysterious existence we share / And are surely just traveling through." Even spiritual realization ripens over time.

In Buddhism, meditation and a certain perspective on awareness, consciousness, energy, and spirit include not just a particular formal contemplative activity, but also an outlook on life that matures with age like a good wine and helps us intuitively appreciate time, eternity, and the bigger picture — including our part in all of it.

As we become the elders, we become the ancestors for generations yet to come. We must awaken the sage and leader within, gathering what wisdom we can muster and passing it on to the next generations. We can do that in innumerable ways, great and small, through modeling a wise, healthy, balanced, and beautiful way of life. Through teaching, parenting, mentoring, inspiring, motivating, volunteering, healing, helping — that is, being of service wherever and whenever we can — we can and must be genuine benefactors to the young. True teachers, wise and authentic elders, are inspired torchbearers who light lamps



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Aging rounds off the rough corners and allows us to become deeper and more harmonious.

wherever they go, passing the candle flame on to those who have the good fortune to come into contact with them.

The sage loves, trusts, and accepts others, therefore others trust and accept him. A sage befriends him- or herself, and is thus the friend of one and all. The wise know reality and comprehend their place in the world, the universe, the cosmos — understanding life's big questions. And with this wisdom comes an uncommon common sense as well as deep meaning and purpose.

In *Insecurity of Freedom*, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel writes:

"One ought to enter old age the way one enters the senior year at a university. The years of old age may enable us to attain the high values we failed to sense, the insights we have missed, the wisdom we ignored. They are indeed formative years, rich in possibilities to unlearn the follies of a lifetime, to see through inbred self-deceptions, to deepen understanding and compassion, to widen the horizon of honesty, to redefine the sense of fairness." Pablo Casals at the age of 93 was practicing the cello five or six hours a day. Someone asked him, "Pablo, why are you still practicing the cello? You're 93!" Casals answered: "Because I think I'm making some progress."

As we learn to live deeper and connect more authentically, life at any stage, anywhere, and at anytime can always be accessed and experienced at another level, in a deeper dimension, as a more authentic, loving being. My friend Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has for years been inquiring and asking how to develop spiritual eldering as a process so that we may transform the downward arc of physical ageing into the upward and inclusive arc of expanded consciousness that can crown and enable an elder's journey through the later stages of life, including contact with the divine and timeless reality. He aptly names this process "Ageing and Sage-ing."

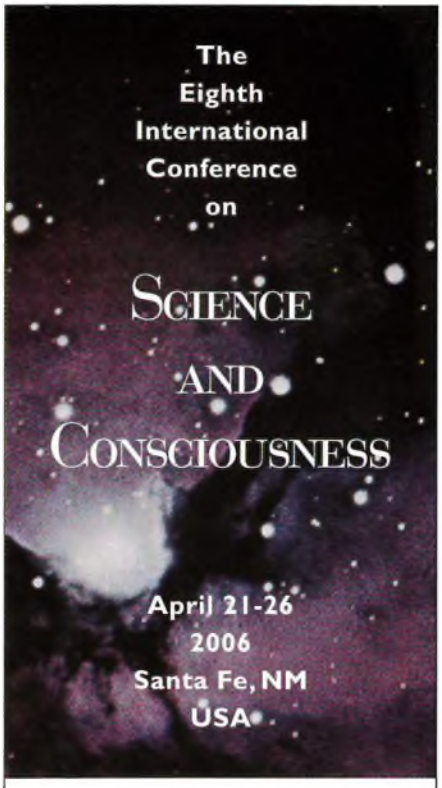
Wisdom can be cultivated and can be found within us. Wisdom must be developed if we are to have any significant chance of surviving and flourishing as a race. How to develop it? What is wisdom? Wisdom is knowing reality, just as it is. It includes a higher form of objective judgment coupled with profound discernment, rooted in an illumined and lucid state of consciousness latent within us all.

Tibetan Buddhist teachings tell us that wisdom is developed through three traditional forms of wisdom practices, or phases of true higher education: learning, reflection, and experience, which integrates learning and makes it our own. "It is experience, not learning, that leads to wisdom and the path to immortality," professed William Blake. Anyone can become wiser, more unselfish, and loving through such a process. Carl Summer says: "The first step to wisdom is silence; the second is listening." And to paraphrase Thomas Merton, the profound well of silence at the heart of our being will not fail us.

Who today has time and space to stop and look deeper into any one thing, harvesting the wisdom of longevity, with so much activity, outer and inner, constantly competing for our attention? Let me put forth the notion — and I am certainly not the first to say this — that true elders represent those who take the time to focus on exploring life more deeply than most, and who remain among us to tell the tale. If only we would listen.

The sage reads books, hearts, and minds, and also opens the book of nature. Wisdom is knowing what matters and what is irrelevant, what is beneficial and helpful and what is not, and being fixated on nothing. It's not what happens to you, but what you make of it that makes all the difference; we can't control the wind, but we can learn to set our sails and to navigate better. Understanding the world is knowledge; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Wisdom tells me I am as nothing; love tells me everything. ❖

Lama Surya Das is one of the foremost teachers of Buddhism in the West. The founder of the Dzogchen Meditation Center, he is active in interfaith dialogue and charitable projects in developing countries. He is the bestselling author of *Awakening the Buddha Within* and *Natural Radiance: Awakening to Your Great Perfection*, and he writes a regular "Ask The Lama" column on Beliefnet.com.



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Soul Boosters

Quotes from recently published books

Selected by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Karma Currency

Karma moves in two directions. If we act virtuously, the seed we plant will result in happiness. If we act nonvirtuously, suffering results. The words virtue and nonvirtue may sound moralistic, but karma is not based on any kind of judgment. It's just how reality works. If we're at the cosmic bank and we give the teller self-obsession and anger, what we get in exchange is based on the currency of pain. If we give the teller generosity or patience, what we get in return is based on the currency of happiness.

— SAKYONG MIPHAM
Ruling Your World:
Ancient Strategies for Modern Life
Morgan Road Books, hardcover, $22.95

Forgiveness as Healing

Many of us grew up believing that forgiveness was an act to be performed or an attitude to possess, and the reason that we could not forgive was that we were not trying hard enough. But what really keeps us from forgiving the people who hurt us is that we have not yet healed the wounds they inflicted.

Forgiveness is the gift at the end of the healing process. We find it waiting for us when we reach a point where we stop expecting "them" to pay for what they did or make it up to us in some way. . . .

Forgiveness is moving on. It is recognizing that we have better things to do with our life and then doing them.

— DR. SIDNEY B. SIMON AND SUZANNE SIMON
Yom Kippur Readings
edited by Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins
Jewish Lights, hardcover, $24.99

The American Jungle

At times America reminds me of a jungle. There, everything alive is allowed to grow according to nature's laws. Lush and unruly, the environment gives rise to every kind of flower and weed. There is life at every level: snakes along the jungle floor, monkeys in the thick lower branches that twine into one another, and large birds in the singular reaches that form the tops of trees. And after centuries, the taller trees have formed a canopy. By sheer growth, they have secured the right to drink



RONNIE SHUSHAN

from the sun's light first, leaving the smaller vines and plants to twist and slink in odd directions to grab their sliver of light. Some of the smaller plants are choked from any light and simply die. Still, the land is so lush and brilliant that all forms of life want to migrate there. At times, it seems that America and its people, with the best of intentions, have grown in this way. For freedom is a different experience for those twisting for their sliver of light than for those privileged trees that form the canopy. Still, accepting how precious a thing freedom is, the question before us, as before the Founding Fathers, remains: What is freedom for? What does one do with complete freedom? Produce and consume? Or root and care for each other?

— MARK NEPO
Deepening the American Dream:
Reflections on the Inner Life
and Spirit of Democracy
Jossey-Bass, hardcover, $24.95

Should Life Be Comfortable?

Perhaps it's the belief that we shouldn't have any problems, any discomfort, any pain, that makes modern life seem so distressing. Life doesn't match our image of how it should be, and we conclude that life itself is wrong. We relate to everything from the narrow, fearful perspective of "I want" — and what we want is to feel good. When our emotional distress does not feel good, we recoil from it. The resulting discomfort generates fear, then fear creates even more distress, and distress becomes our enemy, something to get rid of. Let us instead examine our basic requirement that life should be comfortable. This one assumption causes all of us endless difficulties.

— EZRA BAYDA WITH JOSH BARTOK
Saying Yes to Life:
(Even the Hard Parts)
Wisdom Publications, paperback, $15.00

Little by Little

There is sacredness in the words "little by little." God could have sent full-blown perfect beings, flying through the cosmos, to arrive here in one instant. Gradualness, it seems, is favored by that mysterious Intelligence.

The marvelous creation of a child takes nine months. A great task is often accomplished by a series of small acts. A skillful cook lets the pot boil slowly. Night by night the new moon gives a lesson in gradualness. . . . Gradualness, indeed, is a characteristic of the action of the Sustainer of the Universe. . . .

Do your work of transformation little by little. Rumi says: "Little by little, wean yourself. This is the gist of what I have to say. From an embryo, whose nourishment comes through the blood, move to an infant drinking milk, to a child on solid food, to a searcher after wisdom, to a hunter of more invisible game."

— JAMAL RAHMAN
The Fragrance of Faith:
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The Book Foundation, paperback, $15.95

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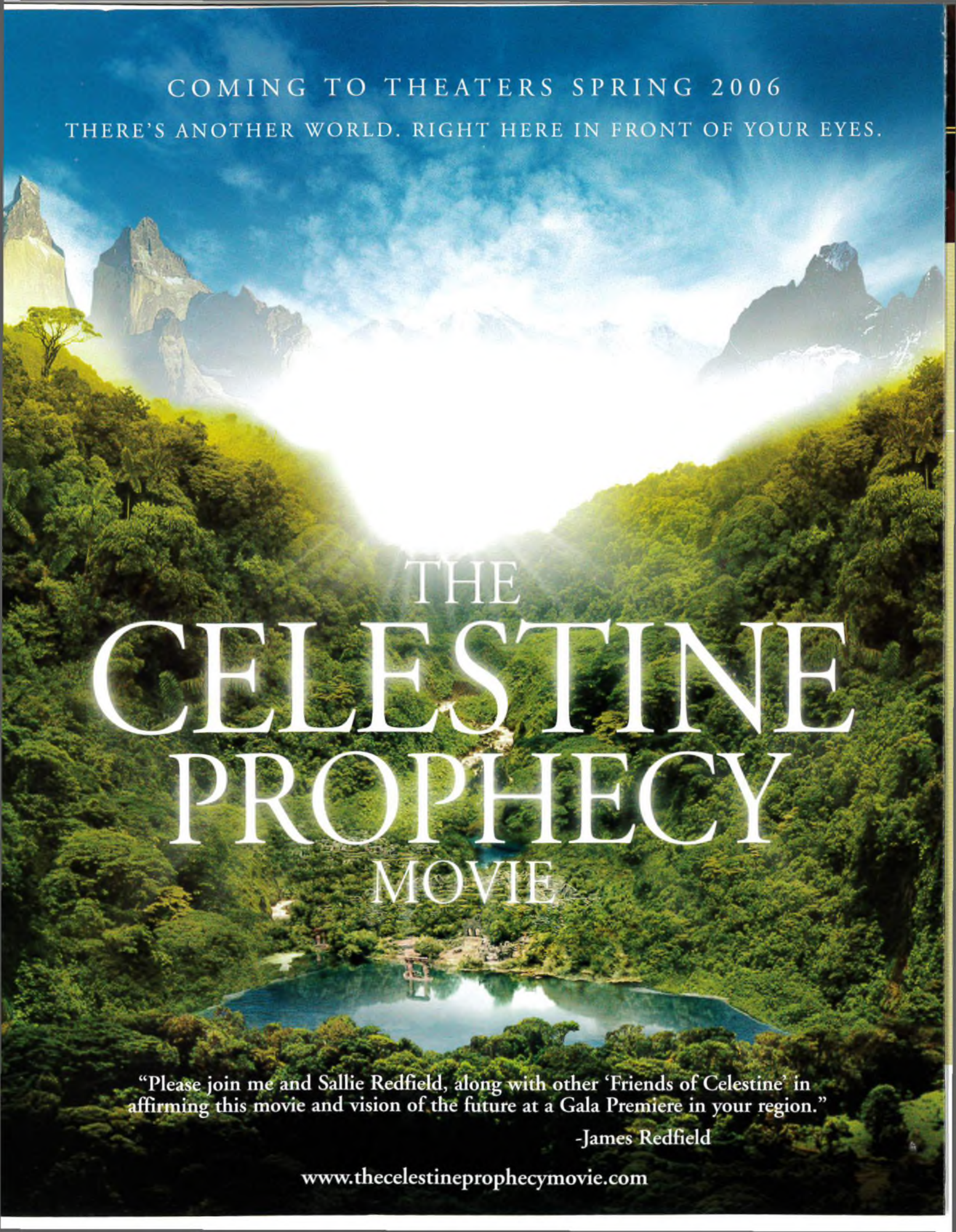
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