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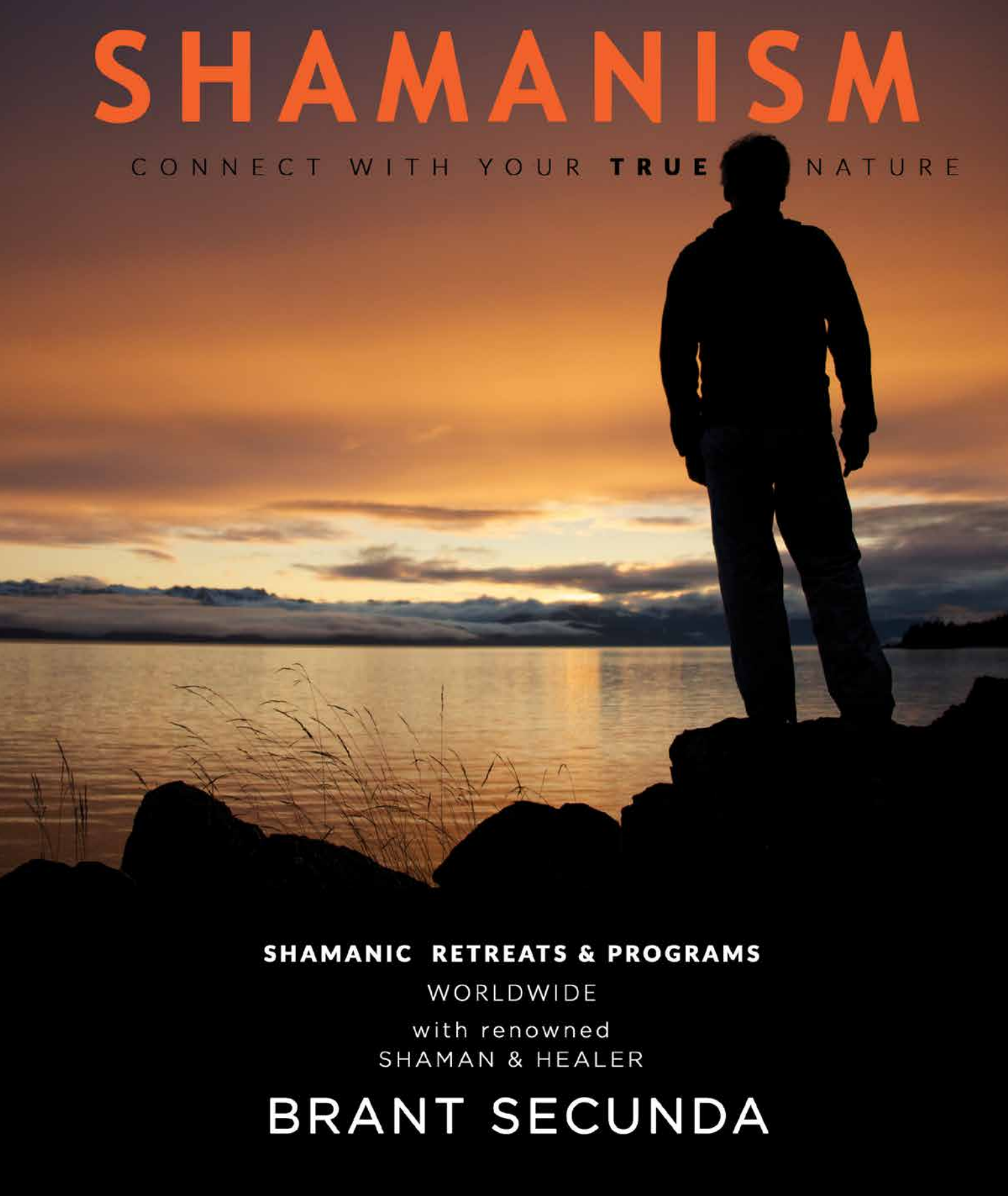
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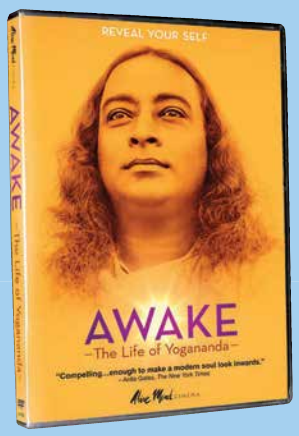
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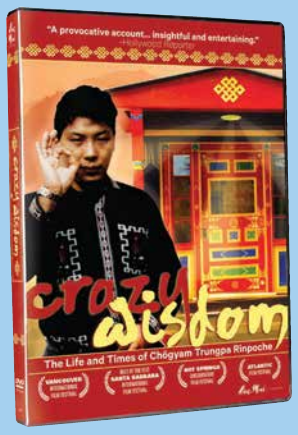
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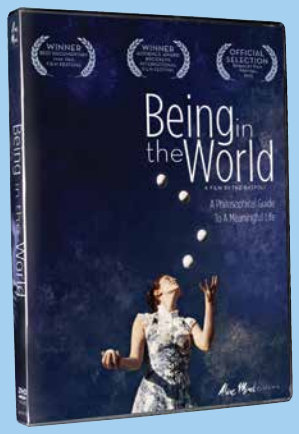
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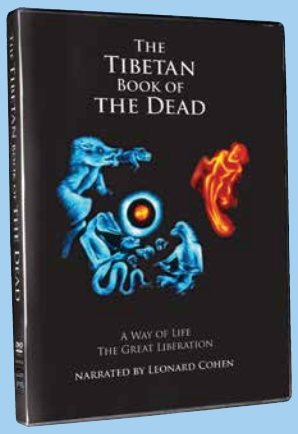
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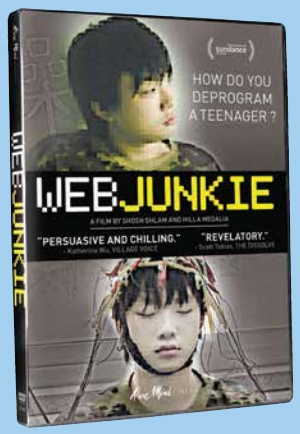
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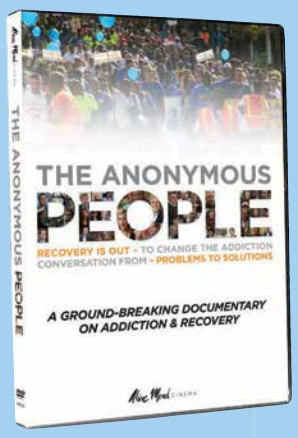
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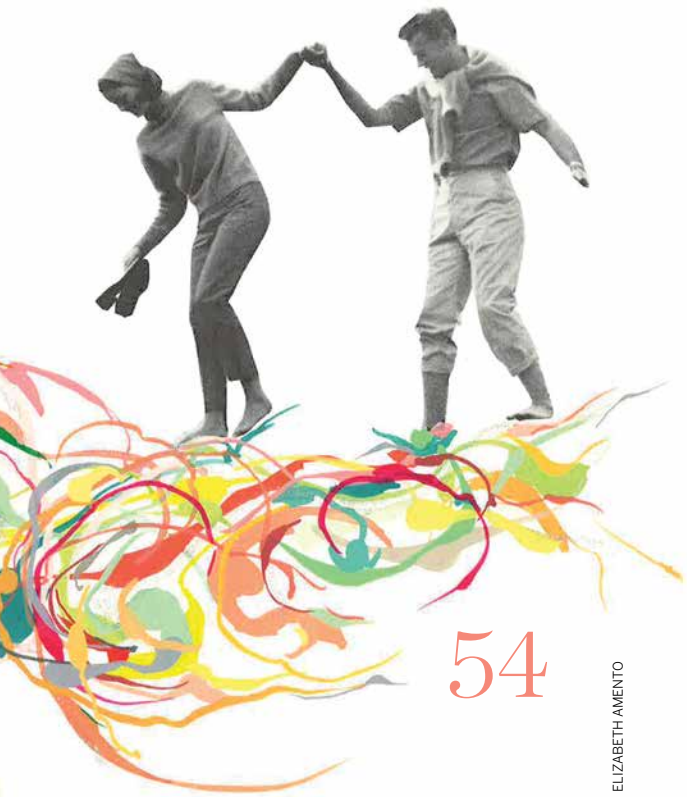
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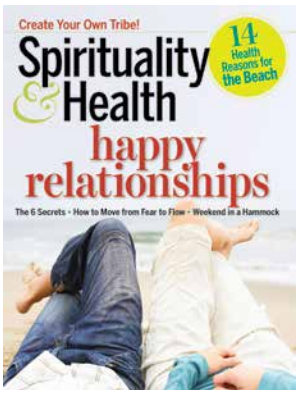
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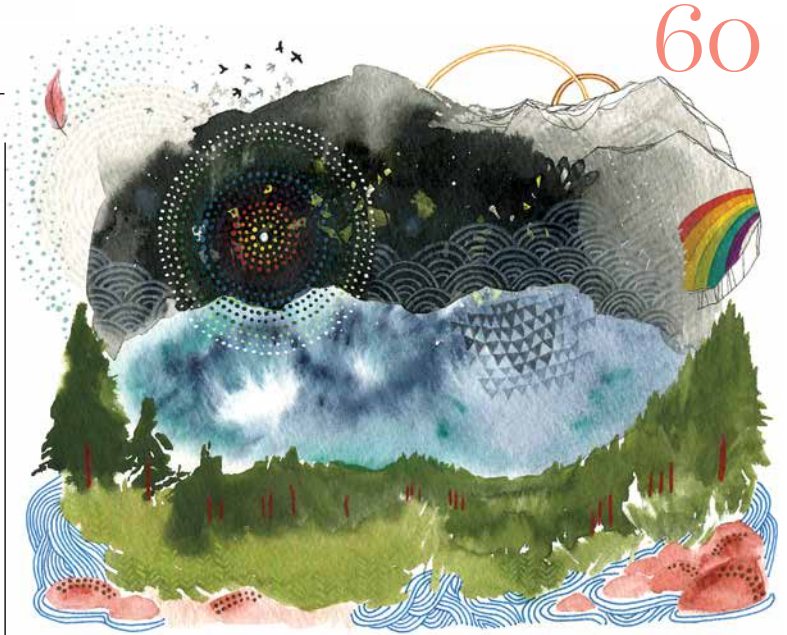
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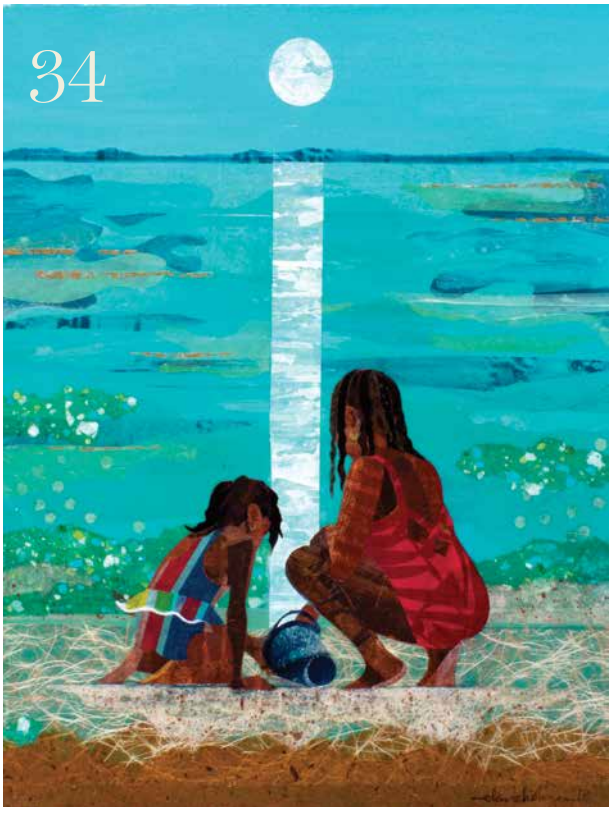


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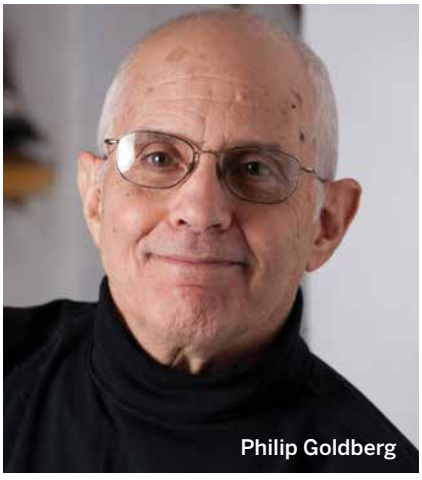
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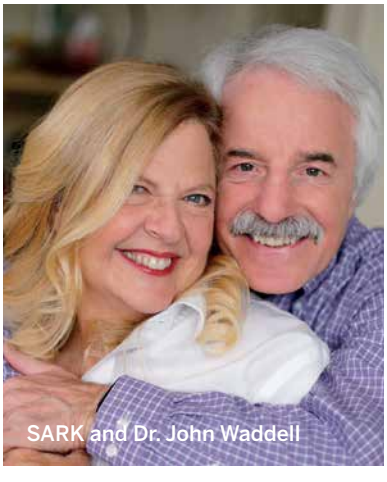
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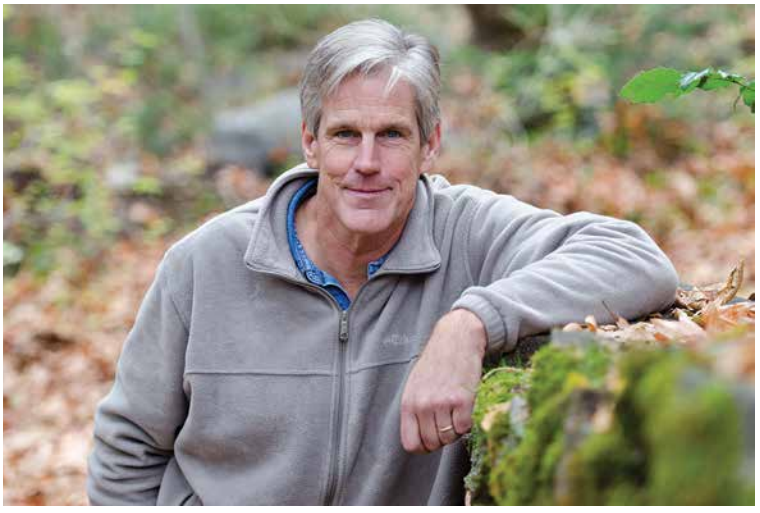


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FROM THE **EDITOR**

"Be yourself," my dad told me early on. "You'll be amazed at what people are willing to put up with." Before he died, he looked back on his relationships and mused, "So I tried radical honesty." Then he shrugged. "That didn't work, either." That said, my parents shacked up for a glorious 50th anniversary weekend, despite having been divorced for 35 years, and my siblings and I are all friends. So, for what it's worth, I think our secret to good family relationships was our round dining table: No head, but you were expected to be there with something interesting to say.



TIM KIESLING

So I like the tribe my friend Bill Kauth has put together (Page 22). Unlike the intentional community my parents tried to build on a single piece of property, this "bicycling distance" tribe with weekly meetings seems to work. I'm sure the tribe is work too, but they do look out for one another—and that's the best health insurance money can't buy. As Bill discovered, a tribe starts with one person, so consider adding "tribe" to your to-do list.

What launched this issue conceptually was the announcement from Israel that new brain scans don't show much, if any, difference between women and men. (84) Think of it: When you see a woman or a man, you actually have no idea where her or his brain might fall on some sort of feminine/masculine continuum. We can't even place ourselves on such a continuum. I once put on a skirt and heels and it changed my worldview—and not just because I was taller. The better we know ourselves, the more an "authentic self" seems both true and utter nonsense—with weight on "nonsense." Why? Because we are relational beings, cocreating ourselves all the time. If you don't believe that, put yourself in a dramatically different pair of shoes and take a walk downtown.

Alan Clements, one of the world's great meditation teachers, points out that going off to meditate is actually the easy path to enlightenment (whatever that is). The difficult path to enlightenment is the Boddisattva path, the path of relationships. (24) Can I get a big Amen! to that?

The easy path to anything is rarely the most interesting, let alone the most fun. I know that because we get so many queries that go essentially like this: "I've been living in my cave for the last X years! I have finally achieved enlightenment! And now I'm ready [truly desperate] to share my teachings!"

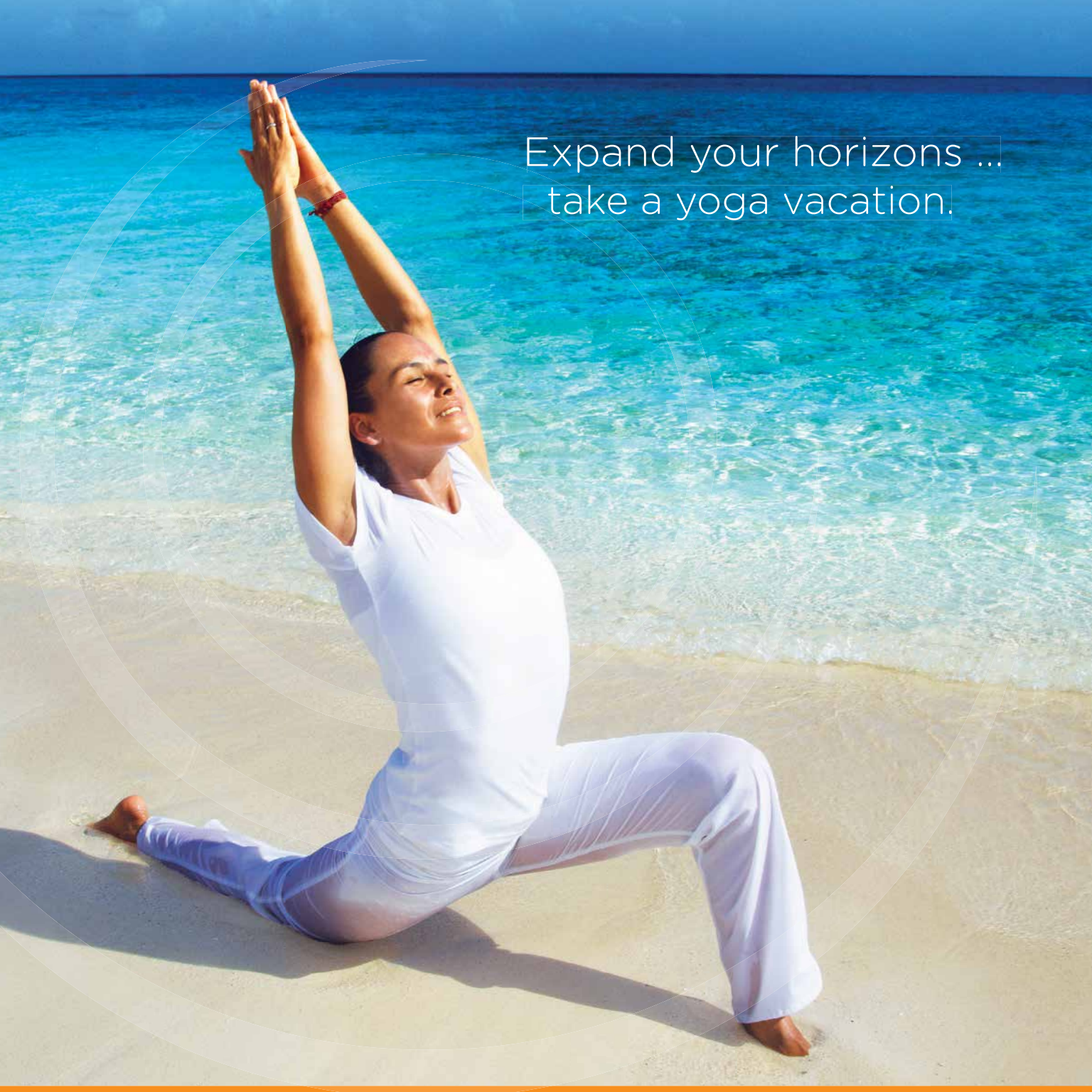
This is not to insult those who go off and soak up themselves. Not at all. If that calls you, just do it! Yet doing so seems to raise the bar not only on what you may want from a relationship, but also on what you need. Life will likely get better yet not easier.

Some years ago my wife and I had dinner with Gay and Katie Hendricks, the relationship gurus who wrote "From Fear to Flow." (54) Theirs seems a strong relationship, but it didn't seem easy, either. Both are passionate people who have honed themselves. The tools they have created are battle tested. They work.

The spiritual life—the life of total aliveness—is not easy. Our stories don't neatly fit into parables for how to live or how not to. That's why I love Natalie Goldberg's "What to Do with the Stories That Haunt You." (48) You write them down. Share them. The irony is that by taking our most personal stories and throwing them out in public, we figure out what they mean.

So send them. We can't run them all, but they're still worth writing.

Stephen Kiesling
editor in chief
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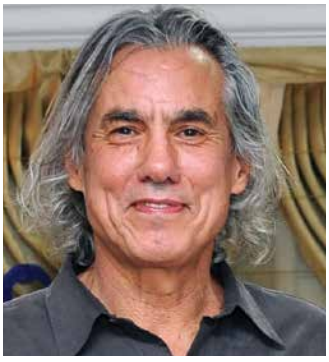
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CONTRIBUTORS



Cara Carmina (Norma Andreau) is a Mexican contemporary artist living in Montreal who studied in Mexico City, Florence, and New York. Her work is to "convey the beauty of simple things." She writes, " I love to experiment with different mediums and techniques, and that's how I started drawing with my sewing machine—using it as my brush and my black thread as my ink." See samples of her beautiful dolls on page 42 and at caracarmina.com.



Alan Clements was one of the first Westerners to be ordained as a Buddhist monk in Myanmar (formerly Burma). Forced to leave by Burma's military authorities, Clements integrated into his classical Buddhist training a political awareness that included global human rights, environmental sanity, democracy, and the preciousness of everyday freedom. He is the author of fine books, including *The Voice of Hope* with Aung San Suu Kyi and *Instinct for Freedom*. Read his take on the difficult path to enlightenment on page 24. Worlddharma.com



MMITSUE NAGASE

Natalie Goldberg is the author of many books, including *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* (1986), which started a revolution in the way we practice writing. Natalie is also a prolific painter, and her book *Living Color: A Writer Paints Her World* describes painting as her second art form. Natalie has been teaching life-changing seminars in writing as a practice for the last 30 years. Read an excerpt from her new book, *The Great Spring*, and see her latest paintings on page 48. nataliegoldberg.com

---

Kathlyn (Katie) Hendricks, PhD, has been described as an evolutionary catalyst and contextual disruptor who creates transformational collaboration around the world. She considers her life and relationship a living laboratory and invites others into cocreation free of drama and conflict. She has been a pioneer in the field of body intelligence and conscious loving since 1980. Katie has an international reputation as a seminar leader, inspiring professionals from many fields in the core skills of conscious living and conscious loving. Hendricks.com

Gay Hendricks, PhD, has been a leader in the fields of relationship transformation and body/mind therapies for over 45 years. After earning his PhD in counseling psychology from Stanford, Gay served as professor of counseling psychology at the University of Colorado for 21 years. He has written and coauthored (with Katie Hendricks) 35 books, including the best-seller *Conscious Loving*. Read an excerpt from his latest book, *Conscious Loving Ever After: How to Create Thriving Relationships at Midlife and Beyond,* on page 84. Hendricks.com

Mona Shah Joshi has facilitated more than 50,000 hours of programs in mind/body wellness as a personal development expert and meditation instructor for The Art of Living Foundation. As director of The Art of Living in Georgia, Mona has received the Bold Award for Spirituality and induction in Morehouse College's Martin Luther King Chapel Collegium. She believes that meditation, volunteering, and conscious acts of kindness can help uplift human values in society. Read her "6 Secrets of Happy Relationships" on page 42.





artists

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Can't Stand the Wait (page 54), *Happenstance* (57), *I'll Meet You in the Middle* (59)
found image and gouache on paper
elizabethamento.com, mammoth.co/products/ill-meet-you-in-the-middle

Apak Studio
Cosmic Family (page 38)
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Oh, Boy (page 31)
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Cara Carmina
Untitled 1–4 (pages 42–47)
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Meditation Heads (page 24), *Mountain Climbers* (40)
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Natalie Goldberg
Trees and Stars (page 48), *Self Portrait 2014* (50), *Backyard* (52)
gouache and ink
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Ekua Holmes
Cancer Rising, Aquarius Moon (page 35)
collage on canvas
ekuaholmes.com

Michelle Kingdom
Still the Sky Was Blue (page 81)
embroidery
michellekingdom.com

Cathy McMurray
Cascade (page 61), *Glacier* (63), *Quest* (64)
mixed media
cathymcmurray.com, cathymcmurray.etsy.com

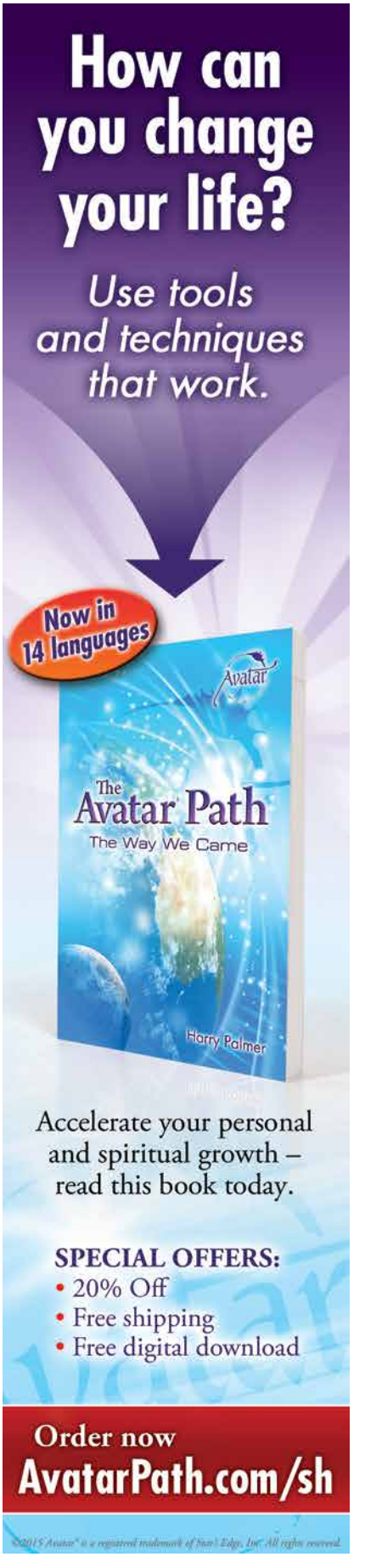
Ellen Rooney
Returning (page 26)
mixed media collage
ellenrooneydesign.com

Sandra Salamony
Storage Warehouse, Cambridge, MA (page 37)
photography
sandrasalamony.com

Lily Shih
Snow Leopard Gecko (page 21)
photography
LilyShihPhoto.etsy.com



Still the Sky Was Blue (detail)
Michelle Kingdom



Why Listen to Mary?

I concur about the quantum change. I call it the quantum leap. Dr. William Miller is correct: One day you are angry, and the next you are jumping in ecstasy. How does that shift occur? For me, it was not anyone, or anything, and my life did not pass before me; however, my incandescent presence through meditation and prayer brought me to my knees. I surrendered to everything I had lived into. In that process, I let go of my judgment, I walked away from my ego, and I forgave those that had betrayed me. In my journey to reclaim my life I had to forgive, and as I whole-heartedly surrendered, I succumbed to sacred energy, not through vision, but through the space of being present... I don't know about the Mother Mary or any other icons. I do know that transformation occurs through commitment to the inward self, and the quantum leap (change), is the product of that work.

Kim Snyder

Muslim Christmas

I am writing in response to Rabbi Rami's answer to the American Muslim couple whose children wanted a Christmas tree. The rabbi stated that Christmas and a Christmas tree had nothing to do with being Muslim. While that may be true, I would have felt better if the rabbi had responded that this would be a wonderful opportunity to teach your children about other religions and allowing them to experience these other religions in the safe environment of their home. As someone who draws from all religions for my own spirituality, I know how important it is to have



a well-rounded spiritual base, and experiencing and understanding other religions is so important in the world today, especially for children. I applaud the couple for even entertaining the Christmas tree idea. I wish they had just done it and written a lovely article about it and included other religions rather than asking the rabbi's advice, since he obviously thinks beautiful trees are just for pagans and Christians; how appalling.

B. L. O'brien
Akron, Ohio

Muhammad Worries

While I respect Steven Scholl's attempt to defend Muhammad and Islam in the Jan./Feb. issue, I find fault with many of his arguments. To begin with, you cannot compare George Washington and Dwight Eisenhower to Muhammad because we do not worship Washington and Eisenhower as religious leaders and use their words as a guide to daily life (and Muhammad is worshiped as evidence that you cannot joke about him without invoking a violent reaction).

Secondly, most people who read the Koran are not scholars and therefore will not put passages into their correct context—culturally or time wise. So to them, reading "Kill the unbelievers" will read and mean "Kill the unbelievers." Lastly, although Khadija had her rights, where were the rights of Muhammad's nine-year-old bride, Aisha? Her exact age can be debated but she was certainly a child much younger than Muhammad's 50-some years. (It is said that he often watched her and her friends play with dolls.) Although she grew to be a respected and strong woman, I cannot be convinced that a young child went willingly to the bed of such an older man.

Although the majority of Muslims in the Western world practice only the positive aspects of their religion—as do most Christians and Jews—I still think it is prudent to view Islam as practiced in the Third World as very dangerous indeed.

Beth

talk to us

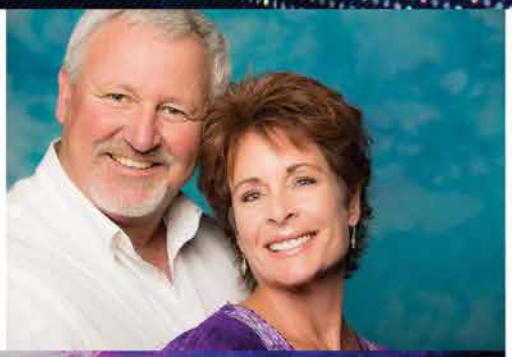
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- Brad Wallis



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Collaborate on a Painting

TWO PEOPLE, THREE COLORS, FOUR LAYERS—AND A LOT OF FUN!

EXPLORE A RELATIONSHIP and expand your comfort zone with this cool collaborative exercise. Follow the simple, directed steps, trading the canvas with a lover, friend, or child—and enjoy the surprise that unfolds.

What you need:
Stretched canvas or canvas paper
Acrylic paint
Paintbrushes
Paper palette or coated paper plate
Paint pens, black or white

1. Choose a three-color palette with your partner. The first partner paints a few shapes with the first color; the second partner then adds shapes with the second color for balance. One of the partners fills in the remaining white space with the third color.

2. Choose a companion color for each of the first three colors. Here, red is chosen for the maroon, hot pink for the coral, and sky blue for the gray-blue background. Add these companion colors around the edges of the large shapes to blend and soften them a bit. Both partners can work simultaneously, blending wet into wet paint, using quick, light strokes. Just play with the paint. Let dry.

3. Use a black or white paint pen or a fine paintbrush to add quirky, personalized doodles to the painting. Work together from both sides of the canvas, rotating it as you work. Add lucky numbers, initials, and favorite hobbies.

4. Add color to your doodles. Use thinned paint for transparent tints and full-strength paint for more opaque coverage. This is where your painting really comes to life.

5. Sign your collaboration and make a color copy so you both have one.

This is a wonderful project to do with a small child. Allow the child to take the lead and you finesse the details. Let the child choose the colors and paint the first layer. Then you work on the second step and smooth out the edges. Let the child draw adorable doodles and the adult can add color to make them stand out. The paintings you create are always a source of pride and bonding.

—STEPHANIE CORFEE

Adapted from *Paint Lab for Kids: 52 Creative Adventures in Painting and Mixed Media for Budding Artists of All Ages* by Stephanie Corfee. Quarry Books, December 2015.

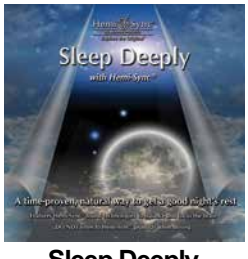
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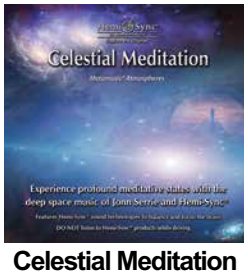
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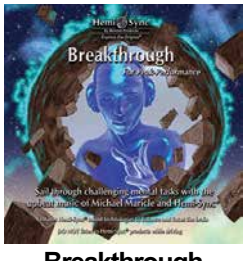
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- Enhanced sleep and ease of falling asleep
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- Access and develop your intuition
- Relaxation and stress reduction
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Sleep Deeply



Celestial Meditation



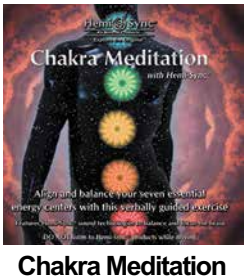
Breakthrough



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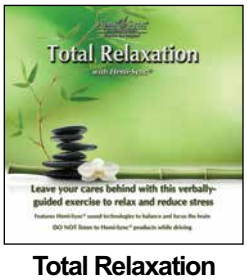
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Kristin Meekof, author of *The Widow's Guide to Healing*



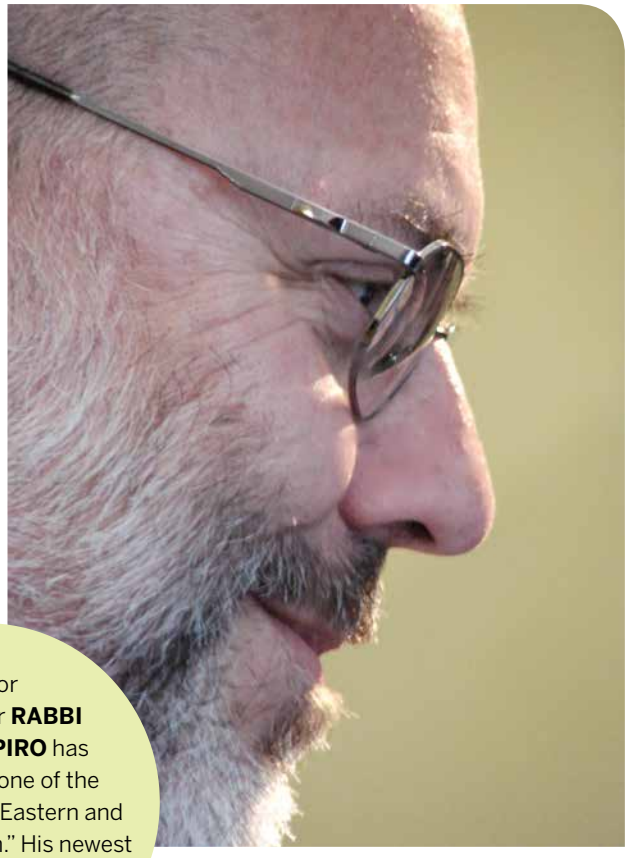
Essential Conversations

with Rabbi Rami

Featured Guests:

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John Donvan and Caren Zucker, authors of *In a Different Key*
Steve Scholl, author of *Muhammad: The Prophet of Islam*

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Author and teacher **RABBI RAMI SHAPIRO** has been called "one of the best bridges of Eastern and Western wisdom." His newest book is *Embracing the Divine Feminine*.

How can I overcome my fear when hearing *Allahu Akbar*?

How can I overcome my fear when hearing a Muslim say, *Allahu Akbar?*

Rabbi Rami: Whenever you hear *Allahu Akbar,* affirm it: Yes! God *is* great! Greater than my fear; greater than my xenophobia; and greater than anything keeping me from being a strong, loving, and prophetic voice for compassion and justice. *Allahu Akbar!*

My daughter came home from Sunday school telling me God created her the way a potter creates a pot. Where do they get this stuff? Something about this bothers me. What's your take?
The metaphor comes from Isaiah 64:8. Comparing God to a potter and your daughter to a pot separates your daughter from God. I think God created your daughter the way an ocean creates a wave. Your daughter is never apart from and is always a part of God, the source and substance of all reality.

I'm a Bible believer and feel called to love. But what does it mean to love?
Love is "being a blessing to all the families of the earth" (Genesis 12:3) by seeing to the welfare of all the families of the earth, human and otherwise. Love is expanding your circle of compassion to include "the other" without erasing that which makes "the other" unique. When called to love this way—go for it!

Which is the more ethical: the Bible or the Qur'an?
While I study both books, my preferred ethical guide is the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. In nine pages this booklet provides a wonderful foundation for ethical thinking and policymaking. It isn't perfect, but neither can it be used to excuse oppression, racism, genocide, misogyny, and terror.

Why are evil people successful?
Let me challenge your premise: Evil people can be wealthy, powerful, and famous, but not successful. Success for me is "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly" (Micah 6:8), all things evil people don't do. To say evil people are successful is to value wealth, power, and fame over justice, compassion, and humility—something I suggest we should not do.

Life has meaning because we humans are meaning makers.

Do you think life has meaning?
I think life has direction: moving toward ever–higher levels of consciousness and ever more inclusive levels of compassion and justice. Life becomes meaningful when it evolves species with the capacity to make meaning. On earth humans are that species. So yes, life has meaning because we humans are meaning makers.

My church denies the reality of evil. Do you think evil is real?
Yes, I do. Evil goes with good the way light goes with dark, front goes with back, and up goes with down. It is in the interplay of opposites that life and creativity happen. Some religions are so addicted to the saccharine that they risk putting people into a spiritual coma, thus rendering them incapable of confronting evil. These religions become a means of escape from reality, rather than a prophetic catalyst for improving it.

If I were raised Catholic instead of Muslim I'd believe very differently than I do. If beliefs are that serendipitous, how can we trust they're true?
We can't. We want security and surety; we want to feel safe—if not in this world, then in the next. But there is no security, surety, or safety. There is only the wildness of life lived in the shadow of death. If your religion provides you with the humility to know you don't know, the wisdom to see past what you claim to know, and the courage to navigate the unknown with compassion, curiosity, justice, and grace, then it is as true as any religion can and needs to be.

What is the point of spiritual practice?
The Bible defines spiritual practice this way: "*Lech l'cha* from your land, your tribe, and your parents' home to see the world as God sees it and to live as a blessing to all the families of the earth," human and otherwise (Genesis 12:1–3). *Lech lecha* means to walk (*lech*) toward oneself (*l'cha*). Spiritual practice is an inward journey beyond isms, ideologies, and the narratives of culture, tribe, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, ancestors, and parents, etc., that we might see all life as God manifesting. And when we do, we engage life in a manner that benefits all the living, which is the point of spiritual practice.

Our daughter married an atheist who will have nothing to do with our faith. Jesus said he came to set daughter against mother and warned us that we will have enemies in our own households (Matthew 10:35–36). Should we treat our son-in-law as an enemy?
Yes. And what does Jesus say about enemies? Love them and pray for them (Matthew 5:44).

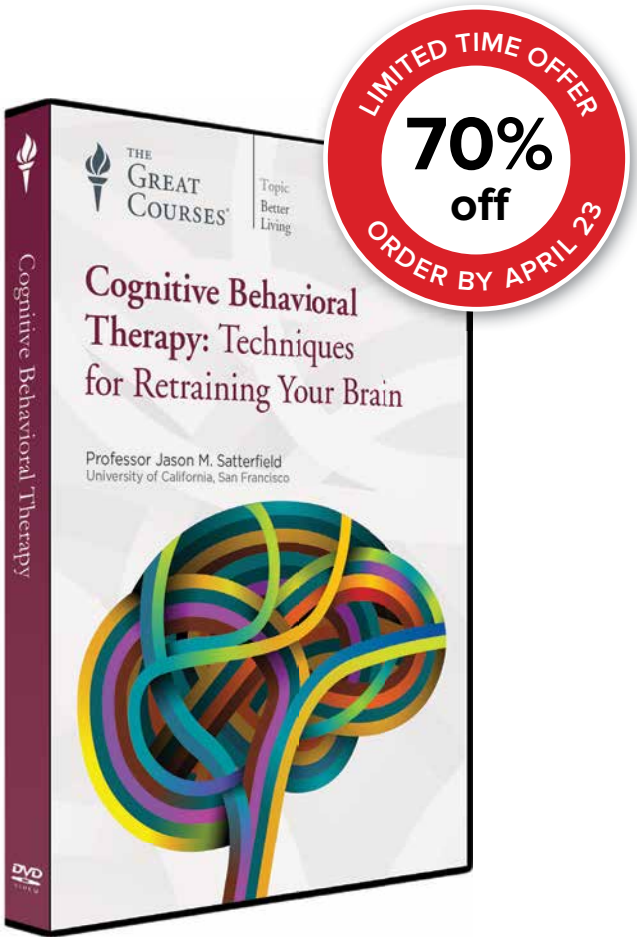
I'm outraged at the refusal of some Christians to admit we all worship the same God. Isn't it time to admit this is true, and to love our neighbors as ourselves?
Actually I think it's time to admit just the opposite. The God of the Jews never had a Son, while the Triune God of most Christians is nothing without Him. Allah dictated the Qur'an to Mohammad through the angel Gabriel, something these other two Gods did not do. And Lord Vishnu incarnated as Krishna, not Christ. To say we all worship the same God implies that the theologies of Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are unimportant, which is insulting to those billions of Hindus, Jews, Christians, and Muslims for whom they are vitally important. While it is PC to speak of God in the lowest common denominator, doing so actually diminishes the creativity at the heart of human religiosity. The challenge is to love your neighbors as they are, and not as you imagine them to be. **S&H**

ONE FOR THE ROAD

My cancer is terminal. Dozens of people are praying for me to heal, but God has said "no" to them. My friends say this means God is anxious to welcome me into heaven, but I worry God is eager to send me to Hell. How do I know which is true?

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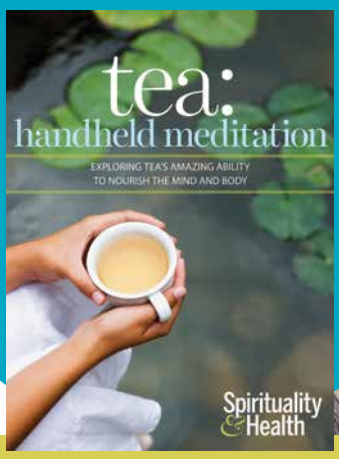
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In knowledge, a smile is free like the sun, air, and water and anger is extremely expensive, like a diamond. Make your smile cheaper and anger expensive! You are here for a greater cause. Just remember that. Take a challenge:

"Come what may, I am going to smile today and be happy!"

— SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR



Snow Leopard Gecko
Lily Shih

WORKING MODEL

Time for Tribe

We are a tribe of 21 people mostly born in the 1940s–50s. We share specific values, hold each other as a priority, and formally commit to one another. "Bicycle distance" is our metaphor for living close enough to meet face-to-face with weekly consistency.

Here's how to start your tribe.

A TRIBE STARTS WITH one person. It begins when the "champion" talks with friends she or he has come to trust over the years about intentional friendship.

After enough conversation, there comes a time to formalize the acceptance of an invitation. In our case, Bill invited Zoe and presented her with a written document to formalize her intention. Upon completing and signing her "Testament of Intent" she dramatically presented Bill with the same opportunity. This created a movement from thought to action and established a base for expansion. Now we could reach out and present the shared vision, values, and essential structure to one person or one couple at a time.

Some friends liked what we offered and accepted our lead. A small core group of men and women formed. Beginning with a commitment of three years we called this our family of choice. Next, we invited four trusted friends as "initiates" into a 15-hour training over five weeks, every Tuesday, to learn to feel safe and build trust. Here we shared in depth our values and structure, a practical conflict resolution process, and a way for men, women, and those of gender fluidity to be together in deep safety.

Everything we do is by invitation and with mutual respect. Our ceremonies and rituals are fun and often surprise people. Arriving the first day, they come up our steps to find two of us greeting them with a feathered fan spreading sweet smoke around them in a special, heartfelt welcome. They are asked to enter in silence past a transparent silver cloth, and are greeted with music.

We create a safe space for initiates to consciously practice intimacy skills. In one process we like, we invite each person to take the time to be with each other person, one at a time, and, looking eye to eye, one says, "I am here to be seen." And the other responds from the heart, "I see you."

The training is an experiential orientation where participants begin to find their own place in the tribe. They learn our values of living near each other and staying put, meeting face-to-face every week, experiencing long-term commitment, realizing the deep importance of gender safety in our tribe, learning how to resolve conflict in a safe way, and seeing how the membership sequence unfolds.

The "tribe training" brings everyone onto the same page as to who we are, what we believe, and how we function. At the end of the training they are "initiated" into the tribe as provisional members for three months to a year. It's a bonding time of mutual observation, and when they are ready each creates his or her initiation ceremony into full membership and may then sponsor trusted friends as possible members.

Our Commitments Reflect Our Values:

1. **To Place:** we choose to stay put, to not move on
2. **To Each Other:** seasoned friends growing together
3. **To Gender Safety:** clear boundaries and transparency
4. **To Personal Integrity:** we're accountable and we tell the truth
5. **To Long-Term Intention:** we imagine a lifetime together
6. **To Celebrate Relationship with Divine Presence:** spirit
7. **To Cultural Cocreation:** action toward sustainability

The "tribe training" brings everyone onto the same page as to who we are, what we believe, and how we function. At the end of the training they are "initiated" into the tribe as provisional members for three months to a year.

Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone,* offers a most useful distinction as he identifies "bridging and bonding" groups. Bridging groups focus outward and include different types of people in order to be of service to them in some way. Bonding groups are people of like mind, focused inward, working together with the intention of personal growth and evolution. Our tribe is a bonding group; therefore, we carefully choose whom we invite. We find that once people have a safe place to grow and thrive they naturally "bridge" out in service to others.

As founders we designed our roles to move from leaders to cocreative equals. Thus, once our group was of adequate size and competence, the members felt ready and released us as founders. In a wonderful, "derolling" ceremony, the first dozen or so stepped up to be more fully responsible for the cocreative tribe process, and we as founders no longer had to hold so much responsibility.

Now as peers we are wrestling with how to make challenging group decisions in a good way. We have been exploring a NVC/Sociocacy Consent Decision-Making model. With each new challenge we are enjoying the dynamic process of building the plane as we fly it.

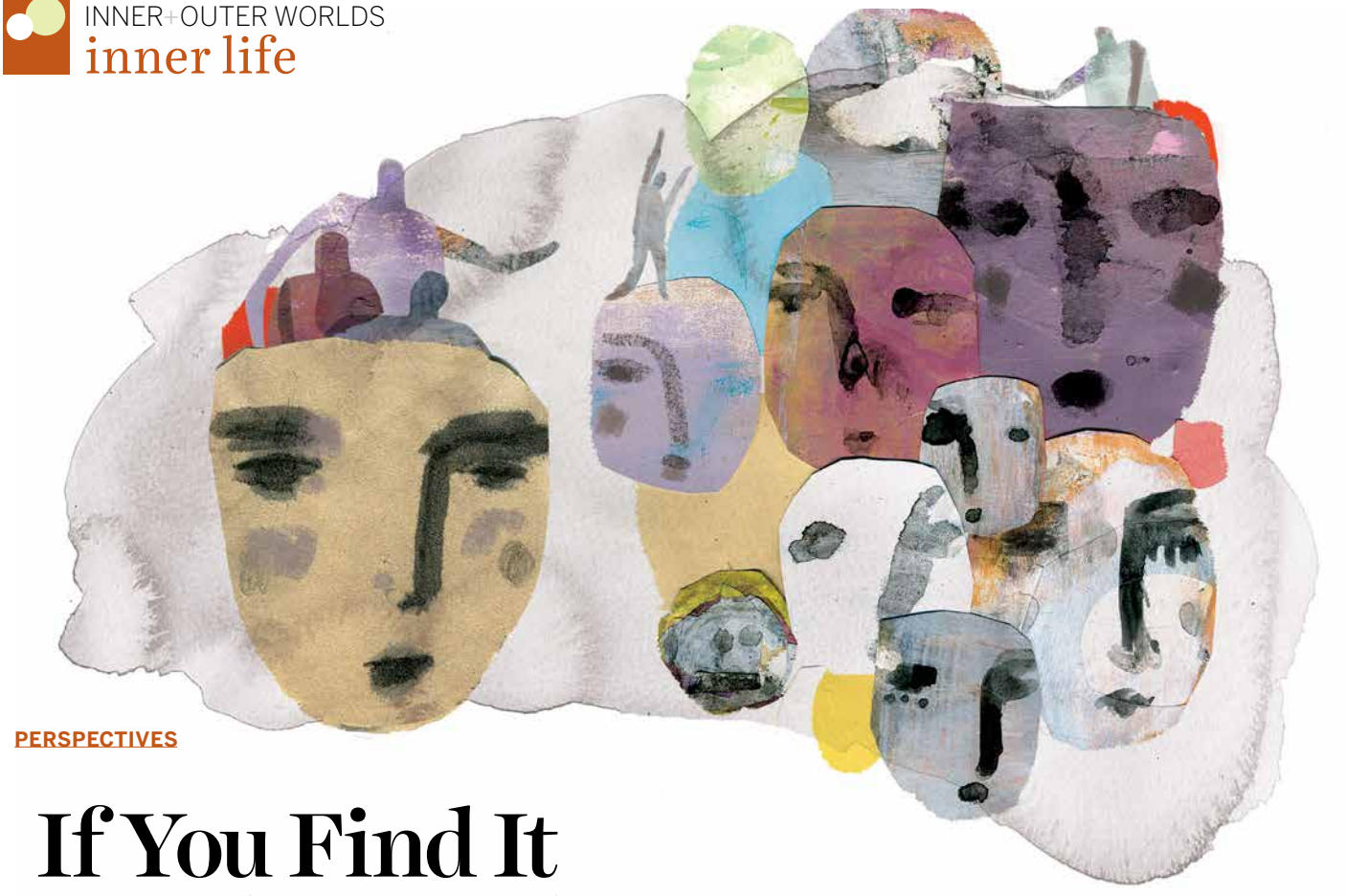
When one of our members was informed after a routine physical that he needed immediate open-heart surgery, the tribe sprang into action. His wife was away for the weekend, so men stayed with him the night before surgery. In the morning, others joined his wife at the hospital, and a large portion of the tribe adjusted their schedules to hold a song circle—singing until the surgery was complete. The surgery took half the time expected. Once he was home, we regaled him with more song and his recovery was remarkable. The biggest challenge was to not make him laugh too much.

—BILL KAUTH AND ZOE ALOWAN

Bill Kauth cofounded The ManKind Project in 1984, is the author of *A Circle of Men,* and has launched literally thousands of self-help groups. **Zoe Alowan** is an artist, and together they have written *We Need Each Other* and *Toolbox for Tribe: How to Build Your Own Community.* giftcommunity.net



Totem
Laura Berger



Meditation Heads
Andrea D'Aquino

PERSPECTIVES

If You Find It Hard to Meditate...

Try the difficult path to enlightenment.

WHEN I ENTERED a meditation center in Burma, one of the first things I was taught is that there are two ways to find liberation. Surprisingly, given that this was a meditation center, I found that meditation—"self-oriented" liberation—was the second and easier path to awakening. The first, and the more difficult, was liberation through world relationships.

The classical Buddhist texts refer to this approach as "the way of the Bodhisattva." In contemporary, trans-religious terms this essentially means that by engaging in relationships we discover ourselves. Its more elevated meaning is that by serving the freedom of others we free ourselves. This style, which is the cornerstone of the "liberation through living" model of spiritual awakening, rests on the idea that wisdom—the liberating blend of intuitive discernment, creative compassion, and basic goodness—counters the habit of self-centered fixation. And self-centered fixation is the root cause of greed, fear, anger, and all other forms of suffering.

"Liberation through living" can be likened to the dedication of good parents who are willing to endure anything to safeguard their children. Caring is foremost in their minds. In time, their sense of family—a sphere of love and compassion—can expand beyond their own blood to embrace a larger, more complex circle of life. One begins to feel empathy—a deep heart bond—for life and for "otherness," not just for one's own children or circle of friends.

Such a person thrives on engaging relatedness; all types of relationships become one's vehicle for awakening. Of course, the existential, psychological, and emotional physics of interpersonal relationships are complex and difficult, as we know. We will encounter numerous challenges and obstacles. When humans risk loving others as the basis of their being, it's only natural that their hearts will be broken many times. Nonetheless, one must not be intimidated by rejection, hurt, or any other complexity. No one can take away or bargain with our dignity. When liberation becomes more important than safety—as I saw so often with those seeking freedom in Burma—the heart grows stronger and less protective. It becomes more available to actually participate in intimate situations. When people impose conditions on their freedom,

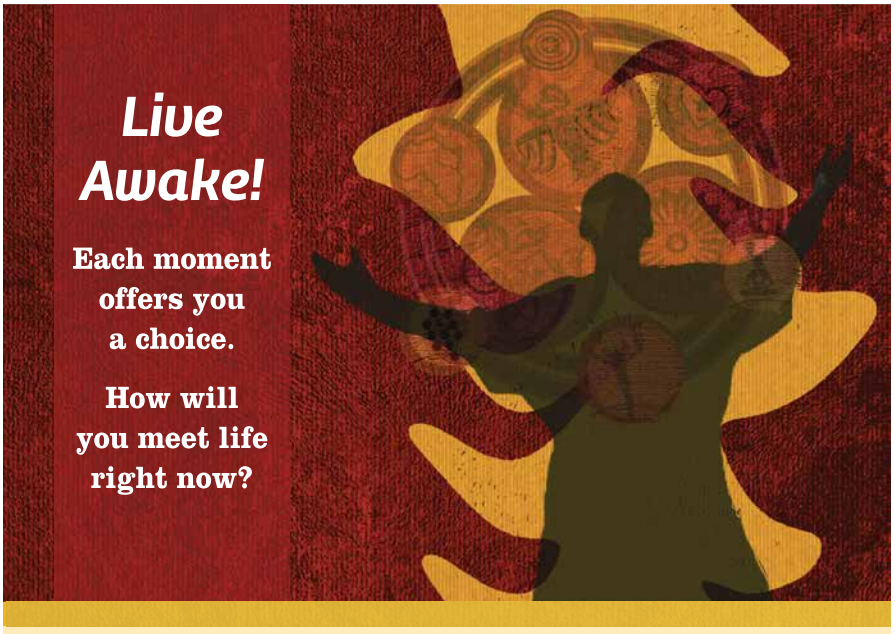
they are not free until those conditions are met. If they become dependent on those conditions, their freedom disappears. Striking a human and realistic balance is necessary. As such, free people continually challenge fear and make "liberation through living" a way of being.

My Burmese guides often spoke about the importance of compassion. "The mindset of a person dedicated to liberation through world-relationships makes a life out of caring for others," Mahasi Sayadaw said, "but it must be understood that caring for others is not enough." He made it clear that compassion must be guided by dharma intelligence, which he described as "being able to discern the right course of action from the wrong one."

To understand the subtleties involved in making skillful wisdom choices—decisions that release limitation and expand freedom—the person who seeks liberation through world-relationships, he said, "understands that awareness is the chief quality responsible for human freedom." In other words, to understand how to liberate "shared space," one must become fluent in knowing where one's person begins and ends, what belongs to self and what doesn't. Meditation—the application of sustained awareness—was essential in finding liberation through living.He concluded by explaining how most people in Burma who are serious about liberation "practice a combination of both styles"—liberation through intensive awareness meditation, and liberation through world-relationships. "One form serves the other and vice versa," he said.

—ALAN CLEMENTS

Alan Clements was one of the first Westerners to become a Buddhist monk in Burma, and coauthored *The Voice of Hope, Conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi,* the 1991 Nobel Peace laureate, as well as *Instinct for Freedom*. He is a spiritual maverick working for global human rights and environmental sanity, while sharing his contemporary understanding of liberation. worlddharma.com



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Returning
Ellen Rooney

Why I Returned to Church

REFLECTIONS ON POPE FRANCIS' YEAR OF MERCY AND MY RETURN TO BEING CATHOLIC

I'M AN unlikely Catholic. When nuns forced my childhood self to contemplate the Stations of the Cross, I was mainly belligerent. Why should I feel responsible for Jesus' brutal treatment nearly 2,000 years after the fact? When nuns tried to railroad me into confirmation—my adult decision to join the church—I refused.

Boy, was I surprised when more than three decades later I felt a pull to return. It wasn't the homophobia, pedophilia, sexism, antichoice position or bizarre stance on birth control that beckoned. Nor was it Jesus. Instead, it was the incense, candles, saints, relics, statues, stained glass and, most of all, the holy water and the Holy Spirit. Plus, Pope Francis had come into power. He's smart, humble, stubborn, and ready to shift the church away from shaming poor, weak individuals and toward shaming large, abusive power structures.

Returning was frightening and emotional. But at my neighborhood church, the cherub-faced Vietnamese priest gave me a comedic lecture about keeping God waiting so long, then shook my hand and welcomed me back. I was stunned it was so simple. No year of penance, no cat-o'-nine-tails. I was in.

HOLY DOORS

As soon as I heard about Holy Doors, I wanted to walk through one. These symbolic doors grace only seven important cathedrals in the world. The most famous is on Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. The other six are in Rome, France, Spain, and Quebec.

Normally these doors are sealed from the inside by mortar and cement. But every twenty-five years, in jubilee years, they're ceremoniously opened. Pope Francis declared a special Year of Mercy starting in December 2015 and called for all the holy doors in the world to be opened for the duration. I wanted to believe that walking through a holy door during the year of mercy would make me a kinder, more caring and merciful person. And in Quebec City, I got the chance to find out.

QUEBEC CITY

On December 12, 2015, Cardinal Gerald Lacroix opened the holy door of Notre Dame Cathedral de Quebec. Holy doors are located on the sides of cathedrals. The idea is that rather than automatically drifting through the front door, you have to make a conscious decision to enter. Also, holy doors are entrances rather than exits. You can only walk *into,* not *out of,* your faith.

After mass, people lined up on a dark and chilly night to enter through the holy door. The line reached around the block, but moved quickly. We plodded along, chatting while awaiting our turn.

As I drew near the front of the line, I tried to cultivate a meditative mood. I hoped to feel *something* when I crossed the threshold. As I started to focus, a woman beside me turned her phone to selfie video mode and started narrating her trip through the holy door. The man on my other side wanted me to photograph his trip over the threshold. No, I said. *No.* I tried to focus on the spiritual, but suddenly I was at the door, pausing for two seconds, and through. It happened so fast I wasn't sure if I felt anything or not.

Inside the church, I lit a candle in front of a Mary statue and contemplated mercy.

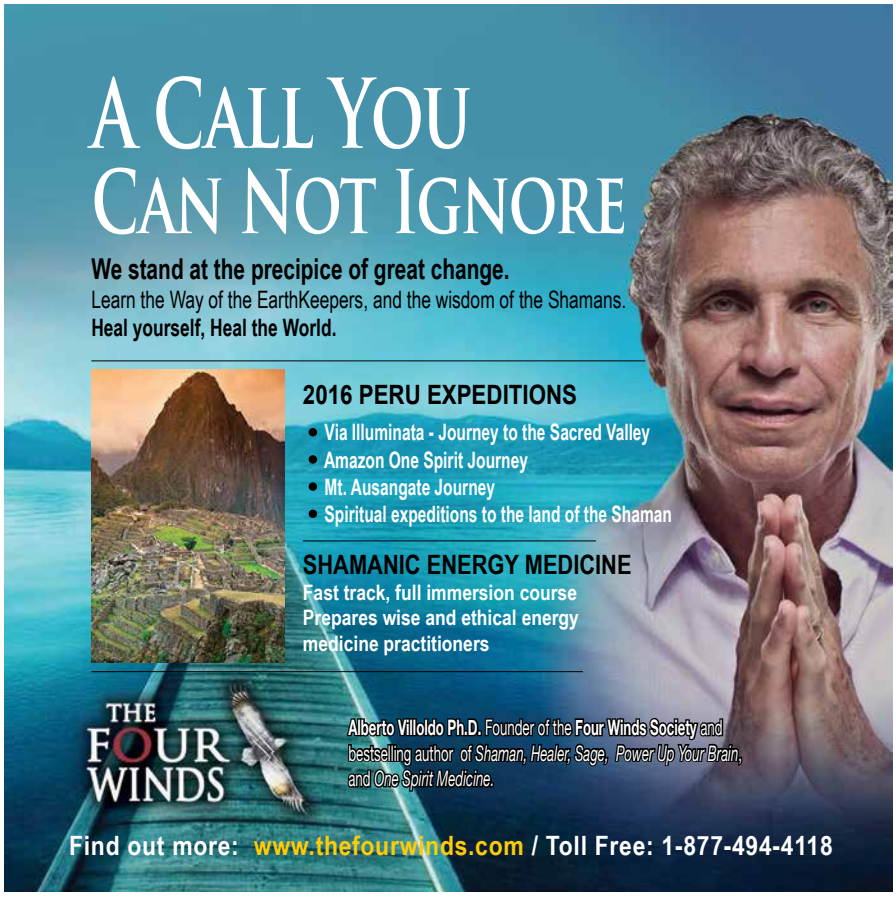
MERCY

I photographed the tall green candle I lit after entering the holy door and set it as the wallpaper on my phone, a reminder of mercy. My year-of-mercy goal is to reset my default, so I give people the benefit of the doubt rather than automatically assuming they're jerks. This sounds like what any halfway decent person would naturally do. But how often do we readily extend this mercy to other drivers, our partners, or relatives at holiday dinners?

Growing up, hearing, "See what he's going through for *your sins?*" while a forehead-poking thorn streamed blood into Jesus' eye, I never would have considered the church merciful. But when I came back decades later and the priest in my neighborhood church smiled and said, "Welcome back," it felt merciful beyond my imagining. And maybe showing mercy is as simple as assuring ourselves and the people around us, You're welcome here. You belong here.

—TERESA BERGEN





OFF THE MAT

Fear & Flying

AWAKENING THROUGH ACRO YOGA

FOR DECADES I've practiced and taught self-awareness and self-acceptance through yoga. Last month, at 57, I decided get off the mat and try flying with what's called acro yoga. This is yoga with a partner, so depending on where you are in a relational continuum of communication, ease, and trust, the partner aspect can make things easier for you—or more challenging.

My first class began in a circle with us all spelling our names in cursive with a body part of choice. Foolish, fun, and we learned each other's names. We then moved into more fun, interactive warm-ups that moved us across the mats, before we were shown some of the simple counterbalances that we would be practicing as well as how to "spot" (to physically help others execute these aerials safely) and, perhaps most important, how to fall.

I learned that acro yoga requires nothing less than the complete attention and inner/outer awareness of traditional hatha yoga, but you have to extend these qualities to include another yogi. For me this meant explaining with each new partner that flying (being the person held aloft, usually by their partner's feet) was easy for me, but basing (being the person who holds up their partner) was more challenging, as I have a titanium bearing in my right hip and am missing a couple of small muscles that make the needed dexterity and proprioception difficult. And that taught me something else: Having to repeatedly relay such personal information created a quick intimacy that rarely occurs in traditional yoga classes.



COURTESY BEVERLY FREDERICK

In a traditional hatha yoga class, we practice syncing our movements with our breath, mindfully connecting the breath and the body and, if we're lucky, unlocking higher states of consciousness that ultimately move us toward a felt sense of oneness. In the practice of acro yoga, the aim is much the same. Only rather than simply unifying your breath and your movements, you add partnership and teamwork. Issues you can hide in the solitude of your asana practice will come bubbling to the surface, called forth by the presence of a partner. For example, when balanced on top of your partner's feet in flight, you may feel like you're about to fall. To enjoy the experience, you have to give up some control, and that can feel risky. However, if you are able to build enough trust to surrender to the strength and balance of your base, you can enjoy moments of unique and transcendent peace, as though it is actually possible to swim through the air. The world begins to feel like a safer place, and a magical realm of possibilities you hadn't dreamed before opens up.

Ultimately, acro yoga is all

Issues you can hide in the solitude of your asana practice will come bubbling to the surface, called forth by the presence of a partner.

about communication, verbal and nonverbal. Opportunities abound in all the roles (flyer, base, or spotter) for expressing yourself honestly about what you want or clarifying what you are being asked for. But there are even more opportunities for listening deeply, especially to the vast reserves of nonverbal information in your partner's body as the two of you attempt to stack joints and move safely as one.

Keep in mind that the difference between acro yoga and circus acrobatics is the difference between yoga asana and gymnastics. It's the difference between meditation and simply sitting and doing nothing. If you're after a fulfilling, transcendent experience, your personal intention and inner approach create the portal for that transformation.

Acro allows me to work my own "edges." I do not expect my teachers to know what I need. And I don't throw myself into every difficult flow (or "washing machine," as they are sometimes called). Instead, I actively watch and support or spot until I am ready to slowly and steadily get into a new flow. And I step away from visually appealing flows that hold too great a potential for injury.

The image I will leave you with can't be captured in a still photograph. Paired off with my teacher, who is over 40 pounds heavier than me and holding both my hands, we take turns rhythmically rolling down onto the mat on our backs, negotiating our feet to each other's hips in order to seamlessly "fly" each other in turn without breaking rhythm. I am basing and flying, flying and basing, basing and flying, without any thought of the titanium bearing, or whether or not I will be able to hold his entire body weight...without any thought at all, in fact. With a single-pointed focus, laughter, and connection, I was joyously (and safely) exceeding anything I imagined my 57-year-old body and its bionic parts was capable of!

—BEVERLY FREDERICK

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RECOVERY

How Psilocybin Beat My Addictions

A NEW LIFE BEGINS WITH A "MASSIVE SPIRITUAL AWAKENING."

MY LAST, SOUL-FRAGMENTING, "fall from grace" memory was of smoking crack cocaine with a woman in a seedy motel in the Watts district of Los Angeles at 7:00 a.m., with porn playing in the background. I had previously taken several Ambiens, which made me zombie-like, so I recall little between taking the sleeping pills and ending up in the motel with the woman. But I remember her crying, and when I asked why, she said she was five months pregnant. I left that motel and found my way back onto the freeway to head home to Malibu. I had only a couple of days to regroup before informing my boss about the relapse. I took a large dose of niacin at the gym and must have sat in the sauna for an hour, with toxins of crack cocaine streaming from my pores. I couldn't go on. What was I going to do?

For some reason I visualized myself high up on a mountain trail in Sedona, Arizona, surrounded by the vast red rock country, with red-tail hawks soaring in the bluest of skies. I thought of shamanism, and "magic mushrooms" came to mind—something I took many times in college, but as a "fun drug" in which any sacredness, healing benefits, or entheogen-like experiences were obliterated by beer, marijuana, and whomever I was partying with. In the sauna, however, I felt as though something outside myself was giving me a very specific set of instructions. And what happened was this: I got rest, asked for a psilocybin mushroom from a "sober" friend from AA, drove out into the desert, put on a pack, filled up the Camelback with water, and set off up a mountain. After a while I deviated off the main trail, lay on a rock, ingested the mushroom, closed my eyes, and allowed myself to think about everything I had lost in my life—despite the best efforts of fancy rehabs, AA, and psychiatry.

I thought of a woman I'd met in New York during a brief time when life had became warm and fuzzy. I told her that I was taking Amtrak to Boston to visit my friends and family, but that when I returned, we would be together. I boarded the train the following day for Boston and stayed with my parents that first night, but then came the obligatory night out with my buddies when I credulously bought something I thought was crack cocaine. Exhaling the smoke, I tasted something horribly acrid and chemical-like, before my lights went out and my face hit the curb. The ambulance took me to Mass General and I had to move back into my parents' house for a year while my face was reconstructed. I never saw the woman again.

My thoughts got worse, a life unfolding as a bad trip. Then the psilocybin kicked in—and I got better.

What happened was a massive spiritual awakening. I was reminded that we are all vibratory beings, in essence, and that our rates of vibrations are based on our attitudes, our earthbound attachments, and our propensity for honesty and love. I learned that despite the insane, violent acts of individuals, there is no separateness; we are all connected, we are all one love, we all swim in the same spiritual ocean, and there are those who have simply forgotten and have lost their way, as a result of buying into an illusion. I was informed of the need to stay vigilant and not to do or think things

What happened was a massive spiritual awakening. I was reminded that we are all vibratory beings, in essence, and that our rates of vibrations are based on our attitudes, our earthbound attachments, and our propensity for honesty and love.



Oh, Boy
Stasia Burrington

that would block me from the light.

The mushroom breathed into my consciousness that I must pulverize fear immediately when it arises, concurring with the AA cofounder and my personal hero, Bill Wilson, who once wrote that "fear is an evil and corrosive thread." Wilson also wrote, "When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." For some years, during his sobriety, Wilson used LSD in the hopes that it would break him out of his depression and possibly help him recapture the spiritual fervor he had felt from his original "white light" experience. Although he was chastised by some AA members, Wilson believed the LSD was beneficial. In "The Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous, Dr. William Silkworth says this about people in my position: "unless this person can experience an entire psychic change, there is very little hope for his recovery." That's true.

Now I am a popular, well-respected drug and alcohol counselor in Malibu, laboring on the front lines of the addiction and mental illness epidemic. I have worked with literally thousand of souls suffering from often-inexorable demons. Paramount to my own wellness is the ability to stay honest with myself. Where have I been dishonest? Where did I lie, cheat, steal, or backstab? Where have I omitted the truth? And as my kick-ass AA sponsor used to have me ask myself, "Where did I fail to see the truth about a particular person or situation, when it was staring me right in the face?"

I don't want to lambaste psychiatry, as I've had beneficial relationships with some of the best in that profession. They do good work, and often it is necessary work. However, we need to keep in mind the sacred and natural medicines. There is a good reason more people are flying down to Brazil to use *ayahuasca*, or going to Mexico to use *ibogaine* to kick opiates. Getting these natural healing substances legalized for medicinal reasons in the U.S. may seem quixotic, yet I'm hopeful. I feel that many people, especially the addiction prone, as well as sufferers of various mental disorders, are in dire need of finding something sacred within themselves.

—BILL SMITH

IT'S NOT "OUCH"

The Most Dangerous Word in Exercise

WHEN YOU HEAR IT, ASK YOURSELF, "WHY? WHAT AM I TRAINING FOR?"

A HALL OF FAME NFL running back I knew once suffered a knee sprain. His trainers, some of the best in the world, set up a training protocol that involved aggressive strengthening for the quadriceps muscle, coupled with increasing the flexibility of the hamstring muscle. The result: The quadriceps remained tight and explosively powerful, but the hamstring was comparatively flexible. Weeks later he was back on the field for the first game since his injury. There was considerable buzz and anticipation: How would he perform? Then, on his first play, on national television, in super slow-mo, he took the ball and exploded out of the backfield, powerful legs churning. No one touched him as he reached peak power and stride. What happened next is that his flexible hamstrings couldn't counteract their opposition, so his knee hyperextended, tearing his hamstring, and he went down like a sack of bricks. Across America, people cringed in empathetic agony, but hardly anyone got the message. His problem had to do with flexibility: too *much* of it!

Okay, so most of us are not pro football players, yet the point is the same. In fact, it may well be more relevant to many of us. Beyond a certain age, most of us are training for life, more specifically quality of life. That quality of life is measured physically by our functional capacity to do all the stuff we like to do—like taking a hike in the mountains, dancing at weddings, and picking up kids and grandkids and pets. These critical life movements each require a specific functional range of motion for each joint involved. Too little range of motion, and we can't do what we want without straining. Too much range of motion, and we too are



likely to go down like a sack of bricks.

This is why I don't like to use the word *flexibility*. The culture of the word implies that more is better, and that is simply not true. A healthy goal is not flexibility but rather joint stability with a sufficient, functional range of motion. It sounds complicated, and is—but also is not.

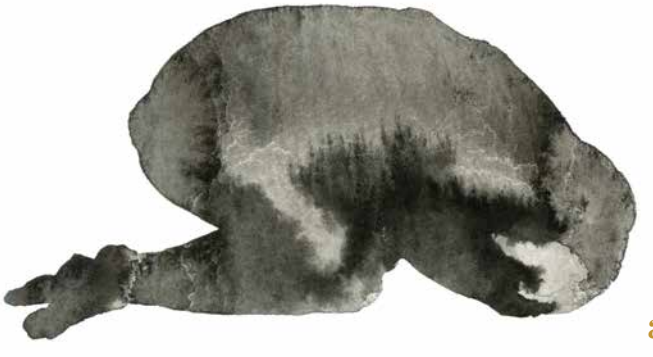
That brings me to yoga, which I take with at least a grain of Sanskrit.

My job as a medical exercise specialist is to assess people's medical conditions, their co-morbidities, and their contraindications, as they relate to exercise programs. Co-morbidity simply means you have more than one medical thing going on at a time. A contraindication refers to a movement or activity that would be bad for that condition. Things get especially tricky when you have contraindications *within* co-morbidities, meaning that what might be good for one condition could be disastrous for another.

There are so many yoga poses and medical contraindications that it would take a book address them. But let me put it this way: I get a lot of "rehab" business as a result of yoga. The basic problem is that "progress" tends to mean getting deeper into a pose—increasing "flexibility" by creating an increasingly dubious, if not actually dangerous, range of motion. When instructed to breathe and sink deeper into a pose, the first question to ask your instructor is "Why?" Is there a functional good beyond achieving the pose itself? If you're young, you may not have to pay a price for being overly flexible for many years. If you're older, paying the price can happen fast.

Let's say you join a yoga class because your primary goal is to loosen your psoas muscles and strengthen your core. These are pretty common issues, and you inform your instructor of them before class. You also mention that you have spondylolisthesis. Maybe your instructor doesn't know what that is (an anterior slippage of a lumbar vertebra), or does and figures the core and psoas work will ultimately help support the spine, so off you go. The contraindication here is that even the most basic back bend (think "upward dog") for someone with spondylolisthesis creates what is commonly known as "the watermelon seed" effect, exacerbating the anterior slippage of the affected vertebra. You had the best of intentions, but now you are sidelined and injured.

My advice is to let your yoga instructor know your various conditions and ask her if she is comfortable with accommodating you. If her eyes glaze over, move on down the road. There are many, many ways to become and remain functionally fit—and they each have pros and cons. But please consider evaluating every program using a very simple measure: Will this movement be useful for the rest of my life? —ANDY BAXTER



Untitled 7, 6, 5, 1
Hannah Drossman

The basic problem is that "progress" tends to mean getting deeper into a pose—increasing "flexibility" by creating an increasingly dubious, if not actually dangerous, range of motion.

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SPRING BREAK

14 Reasons for a Beach Vacation

Take the plunge for all these health benefits:

1. **Feel Refreshed**—Beach mist is filled with an abundance of anions (negative ions), which boost the immune system, facilitate oxygen absorption in the lungs, and relieve stress and depression by regulating serotonin levels in the brain. These anions also act as antioxidants, cancelling out free radicals and thus increasing longevity and preserving youthful looks.

2. **Breathe Easier**—Because gusts bring beach air to shore from the ocean, it tends to be clean and pollen-free. Sea air is also a natural nasal saline spray, clearing your respiratory passageways of allergens and pollutants. In fact, experts find that those who live by the beach and regularly swim in seawater tend to have healthier respiratory systems. If you have allergies, asthma, sinusitis, or bronchitis, swimming at the beach will naturally help flush out phlegm.

3. **Exfoliate**—Your first step onto the beach begins to naturally exfoliate your feet. Now lie down and get a free, full-body exfoliation by gently scrubbing beach sand all over.

4. **Repair Skin Damage**—Swimming in seawater opens your pores while sea salts (potassium chloride and sodium chloride) naturally seal any damaged skin. Regular swimming at the beach has been shown to relieve eczema, psoriasis, and rashes, as well as to shrink pimples and facilitate the healing of cuts and scrapes.

5. **Ease Pain**—A plunge into cool water activates cold sensors positioned about 0.2 mm beneath your skin, which then trigger adrenaline and endorphin surges, thereby instantly dulling pain and invigorating you. Long term, bathing in seawater has anti-inflammatory effects that ease arthritis as well as your other aches and pains.

6. **Moisturize**—One study found that dry-skin sufferers experienced significant hydration after a 15-minute soak in seawater, but no benefit from a similar soak in tap water. (Note: One big difference is salt water's magnesium, which helps boost the glow of moist skin.)

7. **Replenish Minerals**—Seawater's chemical makeup is similar to blood plasma. (After all, all life originated in the ocean!) Simply wading in seawater helps replenishes your blood with magnesium, iodine, potassium, sodium, calcium, and other minerals and amino acids, which enter through your pores.

8. **Beat Stress**—Magnesium has also been shown to relieve anxiousness and irritability and to induce calmness. Beach swimming not only replenishes magnesium, it also preserves your melatonin (involved in sleep regulation) and tryptamine. In bringing all these neurotransmitters up to healthy levels, swimming in seawater relieves stress, relaxes muscles, and helps cure insomnia.

9. **Build Resilience**—The more frequently you expose yourself to cool seawater, the less your heart and breathing rates will increase during physiological stress, ultimately making your body more resilient.

10. **Improve Cardio**—When you enter cool water, your body quickly moves your blood from your extremities to concentrate it around your inner organs. Then, after your body heats up from swimming, your body moves your blood back around your extremities to prevent overheating. This super-cardio training will help keep you warm all winter.

11. **Detox**—When your blood rushes from your extremities to your organs and back again, the cycle flushes out toxins through your pores.

Simply wading in seawater helps replenish your blood with magnesium, iodine, potassium, sodium, calcium, and other minerals and amino acids, which enter through your pores.

12. **Boost Immunity**—Studies show that, first, beach swimming increases white blood cell count over time. The theory is that the cold seawater acts as a mild stressor, like a workout for your immune system. Second, like breathing in beach mist, iodine enters your skin's pores from seawater while swimming, further strengthening your immune system via enhanced thyroid regulation.

13. **Lose Weight**—Cool-water workouts can burn twice the calories of warmer pool swims, because you burn energy to keep warm.

14. **Feel Sexier**—Routinely exposing yourself to cold seawater increases testosterone levels in men and estrogen levels in women. Your libido will increase, your fertility will improve, and you'll feel better all over.

—JUSTIN VICT



Cancer Rising, Aquarius Moon
Ekua Holmes

EXPLETIVES UNDELETED

The Secret of Real Anger Management

MAYBE IT'S TIME TO UNLEASH WHAT IT REALLY FEELS LIKE TO CARE.

YEARS AGO, in a desperate attempt to get out of limbo in our seven-year revolving-door relationship, my boyfriend and I decided to get some professional help. Our counselor was an older, gentle giant of a man who listened to our weary situation with soulful compassion and much head nodding. At the end of our second session, he slowly and calmly made a declaration about our obvious, perpetual dilemma.

"Well, if I were Joy right now, I think I might be thinking something like—[he took a significant pause, seeming to carefully find his words]—well, something like, 'Fuck you!'"

Those words cut through my trance of self-pity. I sat bolt upright, my vision cleared, and I felt a hot surge of energy flow through my body. In that moment, I woke up to how numb I had become to my boyfriend's criticisms. Somewhere along the line, I had come to believe that it was my duty to listen to, even validate, his judgments of me. I left our session finally ready to face how I had been futilely trying to prove myself worthy of love—suddenly understanding that trying to earn his love was inherently flawed. On that pivotal day, that gentle giant helped me reunite with a feeling state that I would eventually teach to empower others: anger.

In my practice I find that anger is the feeling state most people want to deny, avoid, or override—and with good reason. Most of us have been overexposed to distorted forms of anger where self-righteous blame, passive-aggressiveness, vengeance, or shaming rage are the norm. As children, we may have been given the message that our anger was wrong and unwelcome. Yet expressing healthy anger may be the way to finally ascertain our truth, create healthy boundaries, and take a stand for what we value. In other words, we get angry because we *care*.

Recently, I watched a client's neck flush and jaw muscles tighten as she talked about her boss. When I mentioned that she seemed angry, she retorted, "I'm not angry. I'm just annoyed." This sort of denial is the norm. Most people seem uncomfortable even using the word *anger*, let alone claiming it. Others have learned to substitute tears. It is also common for conflict-avoidant types to mask their anger by focusing on their fear instead.

Yet, not wanting to experience anger doesn't make it go away. It simply goes underground. Buried anger is called "resentment." Chronically squelched or misdirected anger in a relationship leads to distance, dampened vitality, and broken agreements.

Not wanting to experience anger doesn't make it go away. It simply goes underground. Buried anger is called "resentment."

Hannah Fry illumines the science of this in her 2015 TED Talk, "The Mathematics of Love." She says that every couple has a "negativity threshold," which she describes as "how annoying the husband can be before the wife starts to get really pissed off, and vice versa." Surprisingly, research substantiates that couples with a *low* negativity threshold—meaning they argue often—tend to go the distance. She reports that successful couples are continually trying to repair their relationship and have a much more positive outlook on their marriage.

Many couples come in my office knowing they have "anger issues." They are often locked in a cycle of blame and defensiveness. Without a clear container for expressing



Storage Warehouse, Cambridge, MA
Sandra Salamony

anger, partners tend to either blow up or sequester themselves when conflict arises. Sometimes they both agree that *one* of them has an issue with anger. Ultimately they come to see that they both do. Having them each take full responsibility for their anger and committing to ending the "blame game" is key to reestablishing trust and intimacy. This requires them to see that the story they are telling themselves about *why* they are angry is less important than having a safe space to feel angry. A huge shift occurs when they are both able to simply acknowledge "I'm angry" without having to blame anyone—their partner or themselves. In this new context, a space of curiosity opens up where couples learn to listen to the longing beneath the anger their partner is presenting.

—JOY HOSEY

Deconstructing Anger

In understanding how feelings work, it's helpful to think of them as having an energetic signature in the body. On a basic level, they flow up or down, in or out, run cold to hot. They have reliable ways that they affect the body, our breath, even our visual perception. In my experience, the optimal energetic flow of anger is one of an upward-moving energy that runs warm to hot. Anger's breath pattern is full and deep. It rises through the core of the body, out the top of the head, and circulates back down into the earth. At first, the visual field becomes chaotic, then clarity comes with a renewed focus. When a rush of anger flows to completion it is replaced with an inner spaciousness, vitality, and often insight.

Again, this is optimal. It is more common for anger to get stuck somewhere along the central channel of the body, where it creates mild to extreme tension—either in the solar plexus, the chest/neck/shoulders, or the head. Breath becomes short and tight. It produces a sense of being armored or can bunch into tight, squiggly knots in specific places, which is why we may refer to someone being "a pain in the neck." It can also be experienced as energetic spikes coming out of the body and especially through the eyes (aka "if looks could kill"). It is also a real phenomenon to have "tunnel vision" or even "see red" when fury is present. Sardonic looks and sarcastic humor are the most popular passive-aggressive forms of expression. Getting stuck in mental loops of blame and judgment are also indicators that anger is stuck.

Our bodies are constantly giving us feedback about what we are feeling, if we are willing to listen. There is an entire spectrum of angry feelings—from peevishness or frustration or resentment to quiet fury or ballistic outrage. Taking a moment to identify and acknowledge angry feelings—instead of denying or defending them—is the first step to neutralizing anger and receiving the insight it offers.

BE SWAYED

A Weekend *in a* Hammock

I HATE TO SAY IT WAS PERFECT, BECAUSE I'M SURE IT WASN'T...

MY FAMILY SPENT the weekend in a hammock. There were other parts, too, but basically we were suspended in the air on a web of cord.

It was awesome.



Hammocks are usually vacation-worthy, hanging from palm trees on beaches far from real life. We never had one when I grew up, probably because of all the snow. I've considered buying one over the past few years but we don't have a good spot to hang one.

Then I helped a friend clean up a rental property. The renters had absconded, leaving a horrible mess behind. And a hammock stand, with a perfectly serviceable hammock swinging on top.

"Is this yours?" I asked my friend. I'd never seen it before, but maybe I had missed something.

"No. Do you want it?"

My eyes lit up with glee.

After two loads of trash and branches and weird plastic blocks getting a ride to the dump, my husband went back to pick up the hammock.

Two days later, after realizing how easy it was to assemble and disassemble, we headed out to the desert. Hiking, campfire, stargazing—the whole reason we live in the Southwest.

Before it got dark, the husband set up the hammock 10 or 20 feet away from the fire pit. It looked funny to have a bit of furniture in the middle of nowhere, nothing but scrub brush and ocotillo cactus with arms like Medusa.

I hate to say it was perfect, because I'm sure it wasn't. Yet with a fire to one side, a chill in the air, and a boy under each

There's something about hanging in a hammock that makes it pretty hard to stress about things.

If I want to yell, I've got to sit up.

« *Cosmic Family*
Apak Studio

arm, I watched the stars. We snuggled, we shouted for shooting stars. We speculated about satellites and planes and alien life.

Things got a little heavy when I switched out and my husband got in with the kids. Then they talked universe expansion and galaxies and black holes and how the sun will kill us all in a billion years. That sort of thing stresses me out, but the males in my family eat it up. So I stared at the flames and moved just a little further away from the serious talk behind me.

I wondered if the hammock would be like so many other things—fleetingly great, then shoved to the back of the garage. So far, we're all still in love. I've caught people out there in the desert reading in the sunshine, or napping, even coloring in chalk nearby.

There's something about hanging in a hammock that makes it pretty hard to stress about things. If I want to yell, I've got to sit up. I can't see the tasks that need to be done around my house when lying horizontally.

Looking up is something we don't spend enough time doing. Whether we gaze at stars, imagine what clouds look like, or simply gaze into the blue, there's a peace that comes along. The hammock makes me slow down and notice.

When it gets a bit chilly, I've got the perfect hammock blanket, one we sit on at the beach or the park for random picnics. It's sturdy in the wash, super-soft from decades of use. And big enough to cover at least three people comfortably.

Our terrier hates the hammock—he's not so comfortable without feeling a solid surface beneath him. For the two-legged part of our family, though, that suspension is part of the magic. Carefully climb in, breathe deep, and just let go. It seems to work on six-year-olds and 43-year-olds alike.

—ELIANA OSBORN



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EXTREME SPORTS

Understanding the Rush to Connect

HOW THRILL SEEKING IS A GATEWAY DRUG TO BIOCENTRICITY

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE the feeling of finally 'scending a climb that I have worked on for some time. The rush I get when my hands touch the top of the route can certainly be linked to an adrenaline surge, the feelings of victory rushing through me in that moment. But that's not what drives me. What matters is that I feel so incredibly present and engaged with the world around me. The rock provides the way to the top but it is up to me, the climber, to figure out what the way is. To "'scend," a climber must not just work with the rock but must also become absorbed by it. For me, this feeling resonates as a deep connection to all of nature.

Yet research in psychology typically sees participation in extreme sports as linked to a general affinity for risky behavior, coupled with a lack of thought for consequences. Those of us who pursue such sports are likened to drug addicts and gamblers because psychologists tend to concentrate on the brain chemistry produced by these types of activities, which is remarkably similar to that of addicts.

Yet such analysis ignores the lived experience of so many extreme athletes. Psychologist Eric Brymer, a white-water rafter, has taken on the task of defining what may be the other motivations for engaging in these sports. Brymer became interested in this topic after noticing the inconsistencies between what the athletes he encounters in his sports community say about their experiences and inspiration, and what outsiders imagine them to be.

The stereotype of the extreme athlete is that of an aggressive young guy, hell-bent on conquering nature. In reality, the people who participate in these sports come from a wide range of backgrounds and vary considerably in terms of gender and age. In his work, Brymer looked at older athletes, interviewing 15 men and women between the ages of 30 and 75. What he found is that these people often feel empowered more by humbling emotions than by dominant ones. Instead of feeling larger than life, they feel small and vulnerable. Like me, this emotion stirs in them the sensation that they are one with nature. As these athletes work in unity with the natural environment, humanity's dependence on and responsibility to the earth becomes markedly clear.

Psychologists also study ways to motivate people to become engaged in issues of environmental sustainability. One of the more important contributing factors for engagement is whether an individual holds an anthropocentric or a biocentric worldview. Anthropocentrism is the idea that human beings have more value than other types of life, and that the natural world is only useful in the ways in which it may be used and exploited by humankind. Biocentrism takes the opposite stance, bestowing all types of life with intrinsic value separate from how they may serve humanity.

This emotion stirs in them the sensation that they are one with nature. As these athletes work in unity with the natural environment, **humanity's dependence on and responsibility to the earth** becomes markedly clear.



Mountain Climbers
Andrea D'Aquino

Holding an aspect of one's personal identity in the natural world is strongly linked to a biocentric worldview. People tie their identities to nature in many different ways. Fishers, bird watchers, gardeners, and geologists all fashion a large part of their self-perception from the natural environments within which they work and recreate. Because almost all extreme sports take place in the outdoors, it follows that participants would also feel a strong affinity for nature.

The list of extreme sports athletes who speak out about environmental issues is further testament to the ways in which these activities connect one to nature. Climbers Doug Thomkins and Yvon Chouinard, backcountry snowboarder Jeremy Jones, and big-wave surfer Laird Hamilton are only a few examples of those who both work and play to experience and preserve nature. These people devote huge portions of their lives to spending time in the outdoors. Furthermore, their experience of nature is intense and often puts their lives in danger. It makes perfect sense, then, that the preservation of these places is important to them. It is heartening that certain psychological research now backs up the strong connection that these sports foster with the natural world.

As someone who loves both nature and rock climbing, I have always felt a clear connection between the two. I climb because it gets me outside, and when I climb I end up feeling closer to nature. Research such as Brymer's is exciting because it validates my own experience. In addition, it has the potential to change the larger conversation about extreme sports—making it clear that they foster freedom and connection and sometimes even spirituality. The shift in rhetoric opens up new ways of viewing these sports that highlight both their true diversity and their naturalistic tendencies.

—HANNAH GARTNER

"I was able for the first time to control my anxiety."
Joe Fox, SFC, Ret. US Army

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Untitled 1
Cara Carmina



6 SECRETS OF HAPPY RELATIONSHIPS

BEFORE THE BATTLES BEGIN, WE START OUT BELIEVING THAT BEING WITH THIS PERSON WILL MAKE US HAPPY. **IRONICALLY, THAT'S THE CRITICAL MISTAKE...**

"This isn't working. Let's just get a divorce," Caroline said, as she stormed out of their new house. Wally stopped in the midst of unpacking a box. What was the point? They'd just moved to Colorado the day before, but every week had brought a new argument. Now at least they could agree on something.

An hour later, Wally ventured outside to their motor home and found his wife crying. "I think what we had better do is resolve this permanently," he said softly. Caroline agreed. But their solution didn't involve lawyers or divorce—and the turning point of their relationship took all of an hour. During that time they each made a list of what they had learned in a happiness program created by spiritual teacher Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of the Art of Living Foundation (see Box, 7 Steps to Happiness, page 46).

Instead of looking at each other's shortcomings, Wally and Caroline each wrote about their own attitudes and behaviors. "When I saw my list on paper, I realized I had flunked," laughed Wally. "And I did, too," said Caroline.

While they may still disagree, they haven't had a blown-out argument since that night in 1995. "We've learned to catch ourselves," said Caroline. "We now look at ourselves rather than point the finger at each other." Caroline and Wally Zeman are now celebrating 40 years together.

BY **MONA SHAH JOSHI**

CREATE MORE LAUGHTER THAN TEARS

Studies show that married people tend to live longer, feel more secure, and enjoy better health, including decreased risk of cancer, dementia, heart attacks, and pneumonia. While reducing your risk of pneumonia is certainly a good reason to get hitched, you may have more romantic notions in mind.

But have you really thought about why you want to be with someone? Whatever our reasons may be, underlying these reasons is a feeling that being with this person will enhance our happiness. Yet, despite the best of hopes and intentions, about 40–50 percent of marriages don't survive life's challenges. As American humorist Sam Levenson noted, "Love at first sight is easy to understand; it's when two people have been looking at each other for a lifetime that it becomes a miracle."

So how can you create a happy, healthy, lasting relationship? As I have learned from both teaching the Happiness Program and working with couples, the greatest challenge to creating lasting happiness in a relationship is your own mind. When you can manage your own mind, your smile and your relationships can become unshakably strong. Bringing your smile back is the purpose of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living Happiness Program.

I stumbled into my first Happiness Program as a university student. I knew then that I had found the keys to understanding my own mind. I've now been teaching the Happiness Program and various advanced-level programs across North America for 20 years. While I've been meditating for over two decades, each passing day unfolds a new dimension on my spiritual journey.



Untitled 2
Cara Carmina

Sixteen years ago, I embarked on another journey of self-discovery. I got married. While I once thought marriage involved learning about my partner, I came to understand that it's also—and perhaps ultimately—about discovering oneself.

Maybe relationships aren't all bliss and chocolate kisses, but each one can still be filled with moments of unbridled laughter and deep contentment. When wisdom couples with love, these moments of pure joy multiply. Here are six "secrets" to making it happen.

1. Take Responsibility for Your Own Happiness.

Recent studies indicate that about 50 percent of your happiness is likely set by your genetics and environment; however, the other 50 percent is within your control. So how you see any situation determines whether your happiness level goes up or down. In other words, whether your glass is half full or half empty is up to you.

Do you see your disagreements as stepping stones for growth or steps toward the exit? Do you focus on your partner's positive qualities, or on all the times you've tripped over your partner's wet towel left dripping in the middle of the floor? Memories are neural networks that are stored and retrieved by association. Whatever you choose to focus on—positive or negative—is what shapes your present mind and your future perceptions.

Also keep in mind that when you make someone else responsible for your happiness, you also make them responsible for your disappointments. Who can live under that pressure? Inevitably, they'll fail to meet your expectations because, gosh-darn-it, we're human. You'll start blaming them for their shortcomings and create distance. So take responsibility for the inner workings of your mind, rather than fault the people in your life.

But if you've found ways to make yourself happy despite your partner's behavior, haven't you just given them a free license to take advantage of your good nature? No, argues psychological researcher Raj Raghunanthan, author of *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Happy?* "You can simultaneously not blame others for how you feel and still hold them responsible for the consequences of their actions."

When you introspect on the reason for your unhappiness rather than blame your partner, you're able to be more honest and self-reflective about your own needs. It enables you to take a less emotionally charged approach to communication with your partner, which allows them to be more receptive and open.

2. Accept Your Partner.

When they first met, Marla Franks, a pathologist raised as a Southern Baptist, asked Susan Zoller what she did for a living. Susan replied, "I'm an independent metaphysical minister." Marla thus discovered that Susan's beliefs were both essentially different from hers and an essential aspect of who she was. That was 18 years ago and they are still happily together.

When love is so strong, acceptance is a given. "Marla once pointed out that I'm like the kite in the wind and she holds the string," Susan recalls with a grin. "She keeps me grounded and I keep her looking up." When Marla points out potential problems and pitfalls in a situation, Susan counters each argument with examples of what can go right.



Untitled 3
Cara Carmina

Acceptance is a powerful antidote to anger and is the key to creating peace in a relationship. Let's face it: no one has ever changed by your not accepting them (nor probably would you). They just dig in their heels and become more stubborn. Shifting your perspective to understand your partner's viewpoint enables you to have acceptance. Even if you don't agree with your partner, you can still love and accept them.

After completing a 75-year longitudinal psychiatric study on Harvard students, George Vaillant is convinced that "warmth of relationships throughout life has the greatest positive impact on 'life satisfaction.'"

Vaillant said, "the secret of good relationships is an empathetic connection and positive emotions: faith, home, joy, love, compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, and awe." Acceptance is the key to peace of mind. When you're in non-acceptance of your partner, you're emotionally disturbed. But when you're not fixed on reshaping your partner, you can appreciate and celebrate the differences that make yours a unique partnership.

3. Accept Their Love.

They were married for three years and dating for nearly seven, but Cynthia Gomez-Silva and Mauricio Castro's relationship almost never happened. After meeting at a party, Mauricio called Cynthia three times trying to set up a date and had decided to give up when Cynthia called to inquire why he stopped asking her out. After rescheduling multiple times, their first date was at Taco Bell over breakfast burritos.

Then came the romantic dinners, walks along the beach, and talking for hours. But despite their "magic moments," Mauricio still found himself spending the first 30 minutes of each date breaking through Cynthia's emotional reserve. "I was afraid of getting hurt," Cynthia confessed. "Mauricio was kind, social, and friendly to everyone. I was afraid he was a player, whereas I really wanted a long-term relationship." Cynthia's reticence did not deter Mauricio; he knew this was a relationship worth pursuing.

Fast-forward two years: Cynthia was offered a position in South Carolina. Meanwhile Mauricio was setting up his own accounting firm in Puerto Rico. He couldn't move with her, but he didn't want her to miss this opportunity. She asked him to meet every two weeks either in Puerto Rico or in South Carolina. This would be a measure of the success of our relationship, Cynthia thought. She asked Mauricio, "Are we willing to make the sacrifices to make this work?"

"I believe in you and what we have," he assured her. "Most of all I believe in what we can become."

Their time apart required a "lot of demonstration of my love, so she would believe in it," Mauricio revealed. He realized her insecurities stemmed from being alone in a new environment without a support structure. After they were married and living together, his work still required Mauricio to be in Puerto Rico during tax season. So during those four months, they continued to meet every two or three weeks.

Meanwhile Cynthia also learned to relax and have faith in their love. "I trust Mauricio unconditionally," she said with a smile. "I've changed a lot in the last several years. Our relationship has made me a much more balanced and patient person. I know that he loves me. I treasure our time together, knowing that quality matters more than quantity." Their time together is no longer a demonstration of commitment, but a celebration of their love.

Can you imagine how nerve-wracking it would be to constantly prove your love to someone? All your energy would be spent in cajoling and reassuring them. Instead, do your partner a favor and take it for granted that they love you. Sure, we all screw up sometimes. But when you see negative intent behind your partner's mistake, you muddle your own mind and distance them from your heart. Once you stop doubting their love, the love between you deepens.

4. Show Your Kindness and Generosity.

Studies show what women have known all along: Women find men who vacuum more sexually desirable. Flower petals in the boudoir are great, but it's the kindness in daily interactions that makes your partner feel valued and loved.

"In the past 30 years, Brenda and I have had different relationships with each other; we've had ups and downs and difficult phases," observes John Strickland, senior minister at Atlanta Unity Church. Soon after they were married, his wife, Brenda, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, which put an unexpected twist on their budding relationship. They suddenly became aware of the significance of *living in the present moment.* This often-stated advice became a vivid reality as they realized the importance of fulfilling their dreams.

Recently, Brenda decided to leave teaching after 35 years, write a book, and go on the speaking circuit. The established routine of their lives was upturned as Brenda would stay up late writing and then travel out of town for speaking

7 Steps to Happiness

IF AT FIRST YOU FLUNK THIS TEST, SMILE!

1. MAKE YOUR SMILE CHEAPER

Is being stressed a sign of prosperity, growth, or dignity? Do you give anger freely and smile rarely—as though a smile is costly? In ignorance, anger is cheap and smiling is costly. In knowledge, a smile is free like the sun, air, and water and anger is extremely expensive, like a diamond. Make your smile cheaper and anger expensive! You are here for a greater cause. Just remember that. Take a challenge: "Come what may, I am going to smile today and be happy!" Smile more.

2. BE ENTHUSIASTIC AND PRAISE OTHERS

Take every opportunity to praise others and support their enthusiasm. How would you like to see yourself? Happy and bubbling with enthusiasm or dull and difficult to please? Often, you like to be pleased, appeased, and cajoled. So you put up a tough, upset face and act difficult to please. If a person has to appease and please 10 people all the time, it will be so tiring. People who keep a long face and expect others to cajole and appease them make others run away. Lovers often do this. They expend a lot of energy in cajoling, and this brings down the joy and celebration of the moment. If you feel down, appease and please yourself.

3. MAKE MEDITATION A PART OF YOUR LIFE

The higher goals in life can only be realized through a few minutes of meditation and introspection. Meditation is letting go of anger from the past and of planning for the future. Meditation is accepting this moment and living every moment totally with depth. Just this understanding, and a few days of continuous practice of meditation, can change the quality of your life.

4. COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

If you are faced with someone who knows more than you, be like a child and keep your ears and eyes open for learning. If you are faced with someone who knows less than you, be humble and strive to make them as good as or better than you. Play with a small child as you played when you were a child. Talk with an elderly person, remembering that one day you will be like that. Communicate with a person of your age group like you are his or her best friend. This world is varied beyond our imagination, and there's always something to share, learn, and teach. When you are centered, you become a powerful communicator. And when your communication improves, your life improves.

5. ACCEPT IMPERFECTIONS

If you are a perfectionist, you're bound to be an angry person. In this world, everything cannot be perfect all the time. Even the best, the greatest of actions, performed with the noblest of intentions, will have some imperfections. It is natural. Unfortunately, the tendency of our mind is to grab the imperfection and hold on to it. In the process, we end up making our minds imperfect and our souls reel with nonsense. It is imperative to get out of these cycles, and to become strong and courageous from within.

6. HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR

You were endowed with a certain naughtiness as a child. Keep it alive. Humor will grease all tough situations. One who has humor can sail through any conflict. Humor is the buffer that can save you from humiliation. If you refuse to be humiliated, you become invincible. Humor brings everyone together, while humiliation tears them apart. In a society torn with humiliation and insult, humor is like a breath of fresh air. Humor should be coupled with care and concern.

7. DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE

We are all born in this world to do something wonderful and unique. Don't let this opportunity pass by. Give yourself the freedom to dream and think big. Have the courage and determination to achieve those dreams that are dear to you. Many a time people who dreamt big were ridiculed, but they remained strong to achieve their goals. Do something creative. Not a year should pass without doing something creative.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, adapted from *25 Ways to Improve Your Life.*



Untitled 4
Cara Carmina

engagements. Meanwhile, John missed not only his wife, but also the things she used to do for him. So what do you do?

"I encourage her and let her know how proud I am of her," John affirmed. "I don't drag her down by saying I miss you fixing meals and doing the laundry. I can see she's so much happier now." John and Brenda's thoughtfulness toward each other underscores the importance of being considerate of your partner.

Married psychologists John and Julie Gottman cite kindness and generosity as the traits most critical to a successful relationship. Do you respond and acknowledge your partner when they make an observation or share something about their day? Or do you mumble an incoherent response and continue staring at the television? Deliberately ignoring your partner or minimally responding makes them feel insignificant and invisible. Not surprisingly, people who are focused on criticizing their partners miss 50 percent of the positive things their partners are doing.

While it's great to receive a car with a big, red bow on it, the next day the courting begins afresh. "The wooing doesn't end," notes John. "However hard you work to get something, you have to work to keep it."

5. Relieve Your Own Stress.

Most of us lead intense, hectic lives. Yet when we don't have ways to handle our stress, we end up taking our anger and frustration out on those closest to us.

Johann Berlin and Uma Viswanathan recently relocated to Michigan after Uma embarked on a promising new career. Navigating a new role, managing demanding responsibilities, and moving to a new place without an existing social network would be enough to stress out anyone. Add to this Johann's nonstop travel as a CEO and their combined hours volunteering for an international service organization, and you've got a recipe for simmering marital discord.

"We've only been married four years," says Uma, "but sometimes Johann and I don't see each other for a month."

"When you spend so much time apart, one of the hardest things is having intentional time together," agrees Johann.

So on a daily basis, Uma and Johann practice Sudarshan Kriya, a breathing meditation that enables them to release their stress and bring their minds to the present moment. Uma likens her daily meditation to a Reset button: "All these experiences and stresses pile up and make me less nimble, less responsible, and less able to listen to my partner. My practice is like clearing my cache on the computer. It creates more fluidity in my mind."

"You can't offer anything to your partner if your mind is distracted and your energy is depleted," notes Johann. "Because we have these practices, whether we're going for a walk in nature or just having tea and talking, we're fully present with each other. We're creating real, intentional space."

Meditate, dance, paint, skydive out of airplanes. Make time to get rid of your stress on a daily or weekly basis so it doesn't end up spilling over on the people you love. By restoring and replenishing yourself, you can offer more depth of connection in the moments you spend with your partner.

6. Explore Your Spiritual Dimension.

The common factor in each relationship you have is. . . you. When you look at yourself you start becoming aware of the patterns and issues you carry into different situations and all the different roles you play: lover, partner, parent, child, employee, and so on. When you look within—and you start asking yourself Who am I? or What is my purpose?—you become aware that you have a deep source of love. Then you can start relating to people from a space of fullness rather than lack or need. As this happens, you also develop the skills to handle yourself in any relationship.

As Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said, "Know that the highest flowering in life is being in love. Love is not an emotion, it's your very existence."

So while you search for your soul mate, don't forget to discover your own soul. So often we forget the spirit and focus only on the material body; it's like playing with the wrapping paper and throwing away the gift. Recognizing the spirit within yourself and others is what love is ultimately about.

Mona Shah Joshi is Director of the Art of Living in Georgia and has facilitated more than 50,000 hours of programs in mind–body wellness on four continents as a personal development expert and meditation instructor for the Art of Living Foundation and the International Association for Human Values (IAHV). Artofliving.org

what to do with the Stories That Haunt You...

for reasons you don't understand

I am at a meditation retreat at Vallecitos Mountain Refuge in northern New Mexico with a Zen teacher from Boston I have been working with. I'm on the board of this remote enclave deep in the national forest. Tired of flying across the country, I've arranged for him to teach here. I've driven him in on the 12-mile dirt road past aspen groves and an old, abandoned original settler's log cabin, through green meadows and along sheer cliffs. We're in my sturdy 1978 Land Cruiser, an old hippopotamus of a truck with thick tires, rattling doors, and a fierce engine replete with a choke to get it going on cold mornings.

I want to impress this teacher in the hope he'll want to return. He's smart and astute, and I'm taken with his teachings. I've already studied with a Japanese teacher for 12 years and then a Vietnamese teacher for six. He's American, and we come from the same cultural context—for once, at the very least, I can clearly understand the language.

TEXT AND ART BY
NATALIE GOLDBERG



Trees and Stars



The first day, he tells a story about seeing the hairs around a horse's mouth when he spent a year in silence in the woods of Maine. I settle into deep, still sitting in this rural Southwest setting that I love so much.

The next day he presents us with a koan, a short teaching story from eighth- or ninth-century China that is designed to cut through conditioned ways of thinking, enabling a person to experience one's true nature. My usual response to hearing a koan is stunned silence. My mind stops dead center, full of hesitation. Some truth is sitting right there, but I can't touch it. Like meeting a whale in a huge fish tank. We don't know each other, but the whale is magnificent and is contained in too small a space—the limits I've put on my mind.

But I am feeling frisky and alive—the morning is crisp—and I'm ready to tackle anything. I'm listening closely, but after the first line of the koan, I am lost—I've been tossed into a swamp and I can't get out. I can't even hear the rest of it. And no matter how many times he repeats it in the lecture, I can't follow it. All I get is "flowers are falling" in the ending.

Suddenly suspicious, I separate myself. These Zen people are nuts. My father's voice comes to me: This is ridiculous. I've met a chunk of stone from Mars and there's no communication.

The rest of the week we work on this single koan. I count the days, the hours, till I can hop on my faithful hippopotamus and gear through rocky dirt roads out of here.

The teacher tries so hard to make us see. On Wednesday afternoon he has us marching around in circles in the noon sun, imagining we are falling blossoms. It has something to do with becoming the thing, with embodying . . . blooms? Buds? Floral designs? The repetitious bouquet print on my childhood wallpaper? Does it mean spring, youth, vigor, decoration, ornamentation? Should I become an interior decorator? I give up.



Self Portrait 2014

I'm listening closely, but after the first line of the koan, I am lost—I've been tossed into a swamp and I can't get out. I can't even hear the rest of it. And no matter how many times he repeats it in the lecture, I can't follow it.

All I get is "flowers are falling" in the ending.

In an hour I'm supposed to present the koan, demonstrating my understanding to him in a one-to-one interview.

I am a long-practicing Zen student. Mostly in a nonkoan tradition, but I have my pride. I want to show something, yet I'm dumbfounded—and he's also half a friend. You don't want to appear this stupid in front of a friend. And I'm going to. I don't even have a clue. Maybe if I'm 100 percent stupid, that will do the trick. But I'm not 100 percent anything. I just want to go home.

I remember a story Joseph Goldstein told in this very place at a retreat the year before. In Burma and Thailand he had practiced hard under difficult conditions in small rural huts. In 1972, when he returned, he was about to bring a whole fresh lineage of Buddhism to America.

A year or two later he went to a weeklong sesshin with the Zen teacher Sasaki Roshi at Bodhi Mandala in Jemez Springs, in my very own New Mexico. Sasaki knew of Joseph's experience and so gave him an advanced koan. In Sasaki's lineage, each student presents the answer three or four times a day. The practice hall heats up as each practitioner strains to figure out the appropriate answer that Sasaki will give sanction to and then pass him or her on to the next koan.

It is the middle of the week and Joseph has humiliated himself over and over in the small meeting room with Sasaki. He can't answer the koan—not even close—and each time, Sasaki quickly cuts him off and rings the bell, signaling Joseph to leave. Finally Sasaki takes pity on Joseph and changes the koan for him to one of the most obvious and elemental: "How do you manifest your true nature when chanting?"

Joseph smiles. This one is easy. He knows the answer even before he leaves the room. You just chant. Nothing else. So in the few hours before he returns to Sasaki, he practices in his head four lines from the Heart Sutra.

When it's his time again, he settles himself on the zafu opposite this Zen teacher. He is about to chant his heart out when suddenly what flashes before him is his fourth-grade music teacher, Mrs. Snodgrass. "Goldstein, when the class sings, you mouth the words. You're tone deaf." And all at once Joseph's voice cracks and he croaks out half a line of a chant and falls apart, naked, exposed.

He looks up. Sasaki is smiling. "Pretty good. Pretty good," the teacher says.

Now I'm sitting opposite *my* teacher and I'm a squashed duck in my fourth-grade seat. "I don't get it. I just don't get it."

In a flash he jumps up on top of me and pushes me to the floor. I'm lying on my back and he's staring into my eyes. I shrug like a dead horse and say, "I still don't get it."

"No?"

"No." I shake my head.

He clumsily crawls off.

Finally, the week ends. After many good-byes I'm at the steering wheel. The old car has been sitting idle for seven days. I pull out the choke and the motor vrooms. We are on our way. Thank God.

He is next to me. I'm driving him out to Taos. Teacher/student roles have been suspended. We are chugging along when the engine stops dead right in the middle of the dirt road.

I start it up immediately. It chugs along for another ten minutes and then dies. People who will leave later will be coming up behind us if we need a lift, but I want out. Besides, what would I do with the old Land Cruiser if I have to leave it in this remote place? I start it up again and it darts forward for another mile. Then another. Each time I have to start it again.

We decide on a plan. Get it to the main road and bank it. Hitch a ride to Tres Piedras, which consists of a gas station on the corner, a diner next door, and a hot-pink adobe across the highway that always says, "gallery open" and never is. The gallery has some mean Dobermans behind a chain-link fence, so no one would think of shopping there anyway. The gas station has mostly empty shelves, but they usually sell Tootsie Pops in a cardboard box. I know because I stock up on cherry ones before I head for retreats at Vallecitos. I'm pretty sure there is a mechanic and a garage too, but it's Sunday. Maybe I can ask them to tow the Land Cruiser on Monday. I have it all thought out.

We finally get to the blacktop. I park the Toyota on the shoulder and we hitch a ride.

The woman behind the counter at the gas station points next door. "They're in there. Working on a car. Go ahead in."

What luck.

I step over the threshold. Two burly men, shirts off, bellies hanging over their pants, grease to their elbows, are under the hood of a Chevy pickup. One skinny man missing three front teeth is to the left, mostly giving them advice and also looking under.

"Excuse me," I say gingerly. "My car died on the road. I'm wondering if you could tow it to Taos."

"Sure," the big man on the right says, but none of them looks up. "Leave the keys over on the table." He juts out his arm in the table's direction but still does not look up.

"But wait," I say. "How will you know where to take it? I want it to go to Doc's on Pueblo Sur. Do you know where that is?"

The same big man slowly stands up and turns his greasy hands in a rag. "You mean, Doc is out of jail?"

"Doc in jail?" I've been bringing my cars to him for 20 years. When I'm stuck he even comes up to the mesa to get me. He was brought up in Taos, married his high school sweetheart at 16, lives a few blocks from his shop, and now his son Wendell works with him. Last time he was sick, I bought him a subscription to an auto mechanics magazine. I consider him, with his gentle steady ways and soft smile, a guru of sorts.

The big man sees the horror on my face. "Nah, I'm only kidding. Sure, we'll bring it in to Doc's in the morning."

Then he leans over under the hood again and reaches for some wires.

"But wait, don't you need to know who I am?"

"We know who you are."

He must be kidding. "Who am I?" I ask.

"You're Natalie Goldberg. We've read your books."

"You've—read—my—books?" My mouth hangs open.

"Yeah, whatya think? We were illiterate? New Mexico is one big family."

I place the keys on the table and back up, bumping right into the Zen teacher, who is standing in the doorway. He has seen the whole thing.

"Now I'm impressed," he says.

He nods, his forehead creased with two lines, and he laughs.

But maybe the tip of the pen on this spiral notebook, midsummer, sitting out on a chipped, red-painted Algonquin chair on this portal in Santa Fe, early Thursday morning, is enough.

The next time I see the teacher is two days later. He comes over for chicken soup. A large bottle of sake a friend gave as a gift is on the table. I don't drink, so it is full. He drinks the whole thing. I think, It must be hard to be a Zen teacher.

Six months later, I hear that he has slept with several of his female students, and his whole spiritual community has fallen apart. For a moment I flash on our interaction in the meeting room. "Do you get it?" he asked, lying prone on top of me. I wonder if he meant something other than the flower koan? But then I decide no. I'm naïve, but I trust myself in this case. Sometimes you have to hedge your bets. I'm a teacher myself, and I know the true effort one can make. We all can fail miserably.

Now I'm left suspended between the koan, my broken car, and my cry to the mechanics: "Who am I?"

That small troop of practitioners marching about in the high July sun, trying to imitate blossoms, the light off the ponderosa needles, and the two spring-fed ponds where beavers swim still haunt me. It's a long time later and I still carry the whole situation, with no resolution.

But maybe the tip of the pen on this spiral notebook, midsummer, sitting out on a chipped, red-painted Algonquin chair on this portal in Santa Fe, early Thursday morning, is enough. Maybe the clay birdbath 10 feet across the way, where a fat robin bathes every morning, fluttering in the high-desert water like a beached skunk, its feathers drenched and close to its body, is enough. Maybe, just maybe, it's enough to give this story over to you, not to hold on to it any longer. To know that spring is robust and fall is the beginning of the colored descent, and there is nothing you can do about either but receive it all and surrender to no perfect answer and allow no conclusion.

What do you think?

—NATALIE GOLDBERG

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Backyard

"*What if you*
agreed to believe that

you have more power

than you think you do?"

– Elizabeth Gilbert



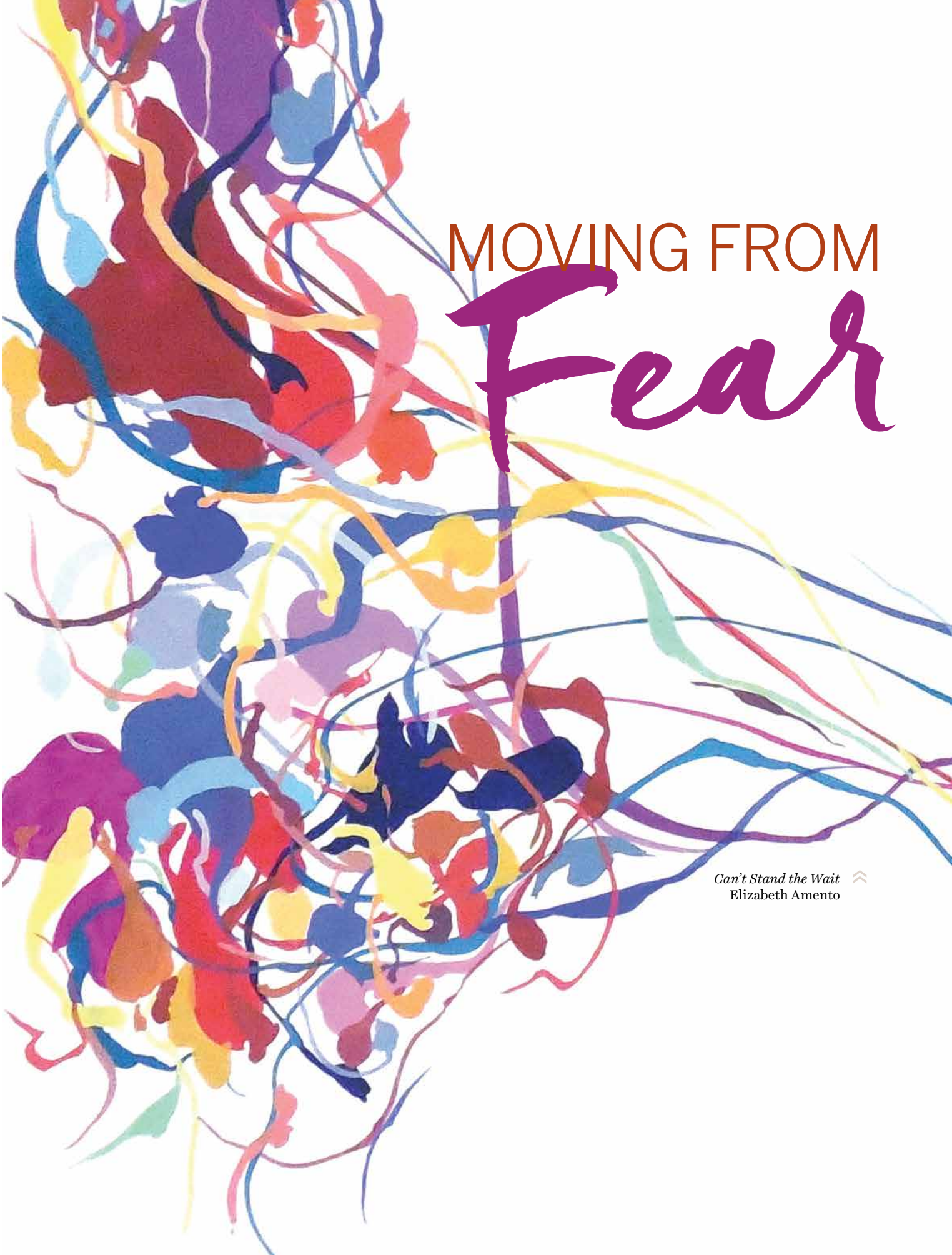
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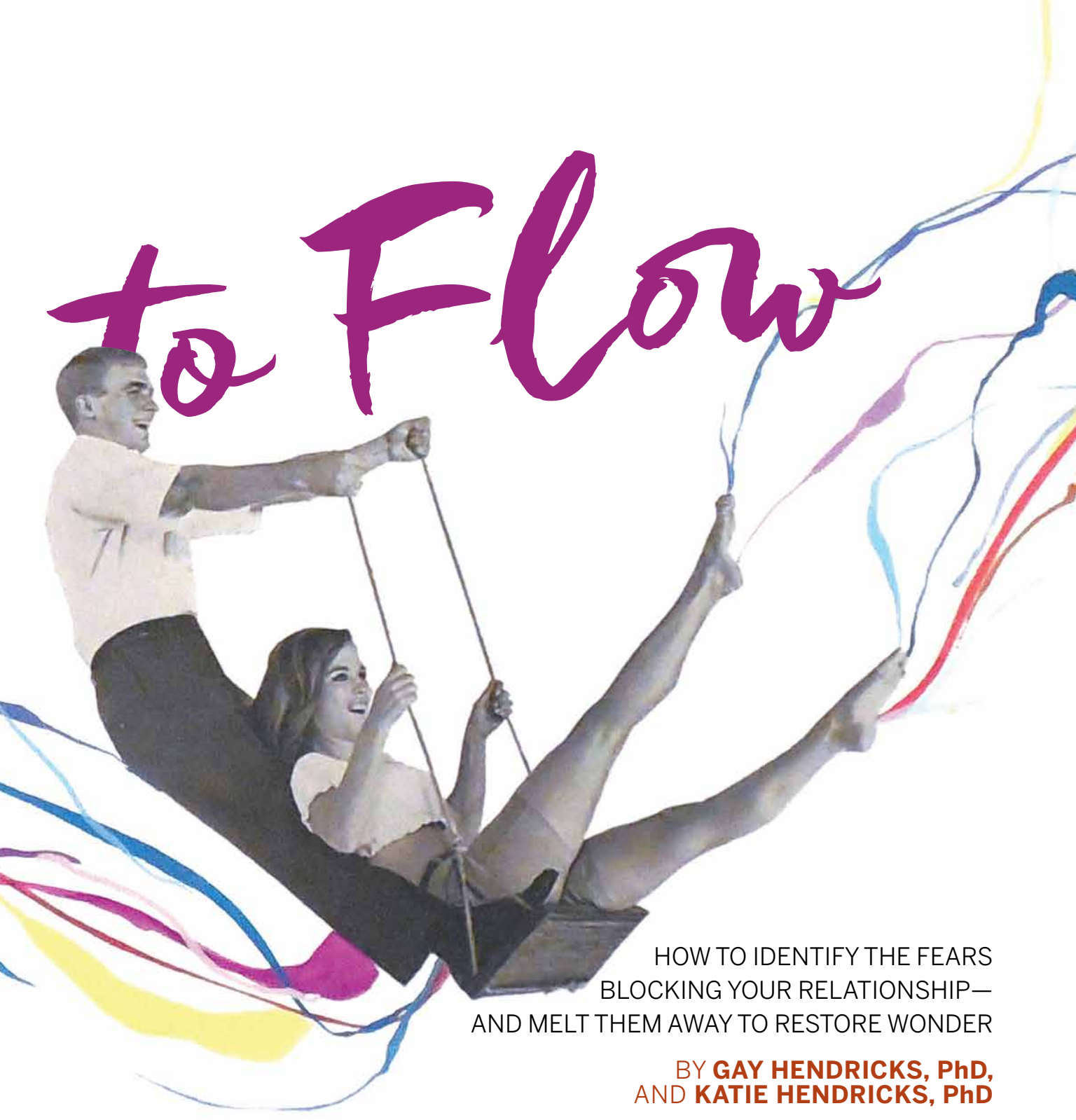
Spirituality & Health

MOVING FROM *Fear*



Can't Stand the Wait
Elizabeth Amento

to Flow



HOW TO IDENTIFY THE FEARS BLOCKING YOUR RELATIONSHIP—AND MELT THEM AWAY TO RESTORE WONDER

BY **GAY HENDRICKS, PhD,** AND **KATIE HENDRICKS, PhD**

Starting at midlife and accelerating thereafter, time seems to go by in a blur—and many of us feel an increased pressure to bring our relationship lives into harmony before it all runs out. Unfortunately, people typically respond to this pressure by trying harder to do more of what already isn't working. We believe, however, that the roots of chronic relationship problems—the problems that recycle without getting resolved—are usually hidden from both people in the relationship. Most often the root of our problems is fear.

In fear, your partner looks like the enemy, you must defend yourself from the perceived threat, and you don't see any possibility for change. But here's the really good news: You can learn to shift from fear to flow quickly, easily, and reliably. In flow, you can choose new responses that deepen your intimacy. In flow, your partner becomes your ally and your companion on the path. In flow, solutions abound!

We don't recognize fear because it fills the invisible fishbowl that most of us have been swimming in unconsciously for decades. It gradually permeates the moments of life, making us fear-logged and bogged down. Unnoticed fear reactions that distance us from our mates, such as cringing or holding our breath, gradually fade from awareness, leaving only the repetitive startles, freezes, faints, and fights echoing through the day. A lifted eyebrow, a certain tone of voice, the newspaper rattling, or the quick controlling reach create a coating of fear that gradually dulls presence and dampens creative connections.

In our culture, people don't typically name fear outright. Instead, we call it anxiety or stress. Stress is simply long-term, habituated fear coursing through your nerves, muscles, blood, and organs. There are lots of statistics about the destructive results of stress, and they usually point to long-held fear.

Your muscles tense, and over time this reaction can become chronic. You produce more blood flow to your muscles, up to 300 percent more, depriving skin and organs of the nutrients they need for ongoing health. Your adrenal system secretes increased amounts of cortisol, which cues your liver to produce more glucose, the blood sugar that feeds more fear responses. A host of cascading effects leaves you more at risk for cardiovascular and respiratory issues, including asthma and heart attacks.

As one of our clients said, "Fear makes you stupid." Chronic anxiety can adversely affect the areas of the brain that control long- and short-term memory, as well as constantly activating your nervous system. Pervasive and habituated fear fuels prejudice, promotes labeling, and leads you to box your partner into a Not-Like-Me package you try to control or fix. When you lose connection through fear, you are much more likely to see the other as the source of what's wrong and drop into the conflict pit to duke it out.

This leads to another big problem with fear in close relationships. We cannot talk ourselves out of fear. And our partners have even less success in telling us, "There's nothing to be scared of—just relax." When you are scared, you don't have access to your logical brain. Period. Think of the gates that drop with a loud boom in a security lockdown—that's your brain in fear.

If you look back at any destructive relationship interaction you've experienced, you'll find fear at the root. Unacknowledged, unexpressed fear runs conflict, power struggles, miscommunication, broken promises, and discarded dreams.

Here are some examples of how fear shows up in common relationship patterns:

- You criticize your mate, either out loud or in your mind.
- Your partner starts to look boring.
- You have things you withhold from your partner.
- You don't easily share your feelings when they arise.
- You imagine that your mate is hiding things from you.
- You experience regular bursts of disdain or contempt for your partner.
- You're not sure you really love your mate as much as you did.
- You monitor your partner's activities and play Time Cop, Money Cop, or Sex Cop.
- You compare your mate negatively with others.
- You put a lot of time into improving your lover in some way.

Fear devolves into boring, tedious, dreary, and numbing interactions. But that's not even the worst of it. Fear gushes through your body with adrenaline, but the rush fades quickly and fatigue sets in. Then most people escalate the conflict so they can ride the roller coaster again. Then conflict and power struggles become the norm, alternating with the despair and boredom of stressed-out bodies and repetitive arguments that go nowhere. "Here we go again" dims any possible bright horizon.

We can learn to get off this roller coaster but first we have to recognize which ride we're on.

The 4 Flavors of Fear

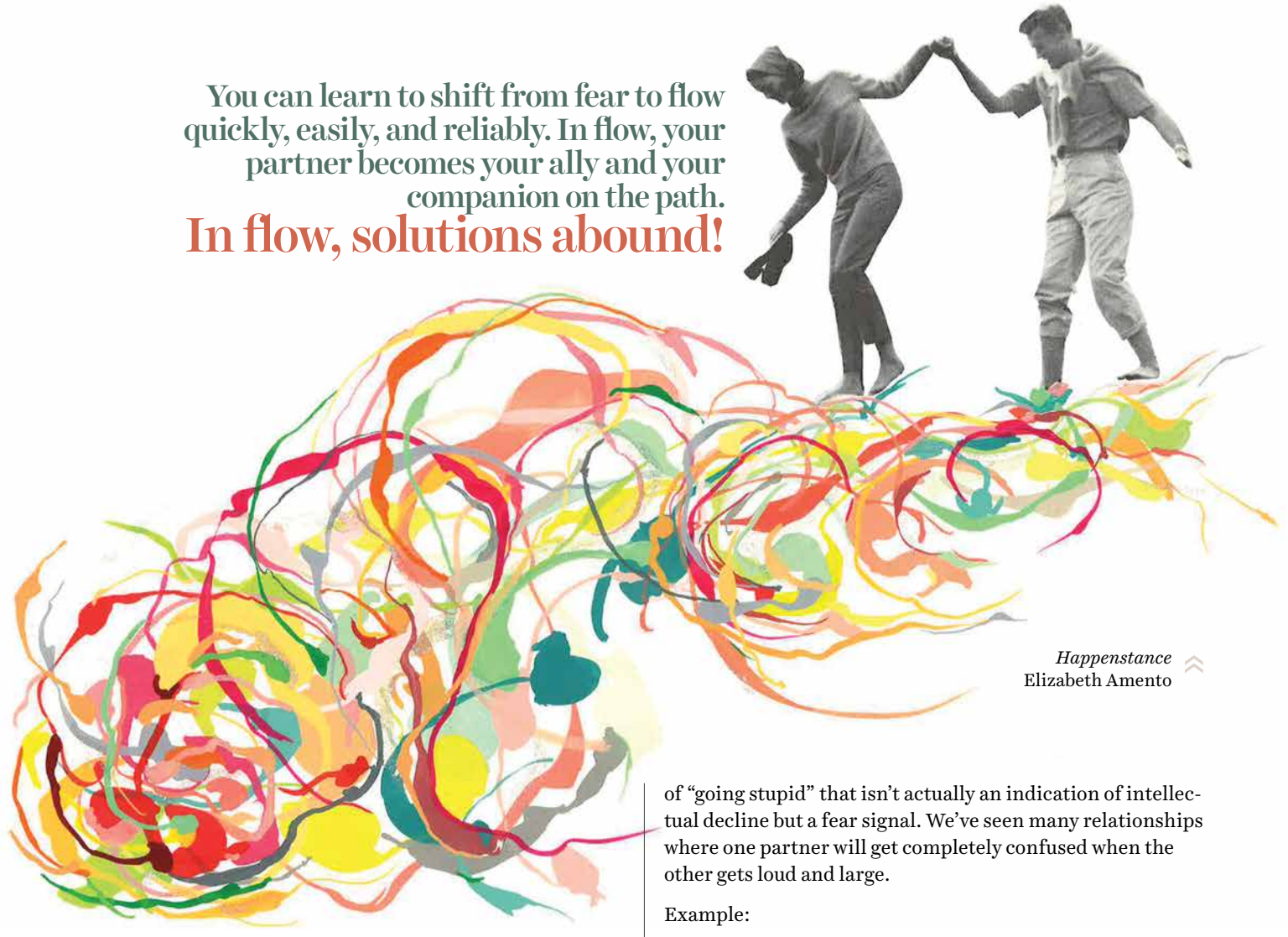
Most people recognize the phrase "fight or flight" but don't realize that fear comes in four flavors that can be blended into many combinations.

The Fear-Fight Reaction often gets mistaken for anger. Imagine making fists, jutting your chin out, and barking "Oh yeah, oh yeah!" as you thrust your body forward like a boxer. That in-your-face instant aggression most often masks fear, not anger. Fear-fight fuels blame and criticism, the reflexive attack that partners often use to defend themselves.

The Fear-Flee Reaction. In modern times the tigers you're fleeing may take the shape of loved ones demanding time or attention, and the fear-flee reaction may look and feel as if some of your awareness stays put in your body and some of you starts to leave. Imagine a shoulder moving away, or your head backing up, or your foot edging toward the door. Breath for flee-fearers diffuses and deflates like a pinhole puncture in a balloon. A fleer can disappear while his or her feet are still in the room. Relationship interactions caught in fear-flee often involve automatic nods and "uh-huh"

You can learn to shift from fear to flow quickly, easily, and reliably. In flow, your partner becomes your ally and your companion on the path.

In flow, solutions abound!



Happenstance
Elizabeth Amento

instead of conscious listening. In extreme states of defense, fear-fleers make the "I'm outta here" move of literally heading out the door. Fear-flee can also move people toward the "high ground." Under attack, they try to analyze fear away or "transcend" the issue by fleeing body sensations altogether.

The Fear-Freeze Reaction may be the easiest to recognize: Just tighten your whole body while holding your breath. Imagine a loud noise and the startle that jolts your body. Or think of coming into a dark house at night and hearing a strange sound. Notice the whole-body halt that focuses your senses intently. That's fear-freeze. In relationships, fear-freezers often pair with fear-fighters. Imagine a hawk mating with a mouse and you can get a sense of the interplay. One partner gets louder and in the other's face, or barks critical demands, while the other freezes into invisibility until the storm passes. Each relationship partner brings a learned fear pattern into their current relationship that will repeat and escalate unless they shift into flow.

The Fear-Faint Reaction is often overlooked, but also has a powerful impact on relationships. Imagine your life energy draining out of your body through your feet, puddling beneath you. You might also experience a brain fog moment of "going stupid" that isn't actually an indication of intellectual decline but a fear signal. We've seen many relationships where one partner will get completely confused when the other gets loud and large.

Example:

Don: "Where are the keys?! I gave them to you when we came in."

Lisa: "I. . . uh, don't you have them? . . . You always keep them."

Don: "Jeez, can't you remember *anything*?"

Lisa: "Umm (swallowing and looking down), I'm pretty sure that, um. . ."

Don: "Oh, never mind. I'll find my spare set." (stomps off)

Your own favorite flavor of fear is probably a long-standing preference. For example, imagine a scenario where Dad often came home from work angry and frustrated and Mom tried to make him feel better. One of the children may have learned how to become invisible by freezing or fleeing so the wrath would land on someone else. Another sibling may have found that a preemptive fighting strategy would distract Father long enough to make an escape. The invisible strategist formed a quiet, compliant temperament over time, whereas the fighter's aggression morphed into a rebellious attitude toward life. As adults, both are afraid of anger but have generated completely different, successful strategies for protecting themselves.

Alas, all these unloved fragments we bring to our partners—the anger about an old injustice or the sadness of a loss that hasn't been grieved—are cocooned in layers of fear. They may even seem to be the cause of yet more fear. Here are some of the most common forms emotional fear can take:

I'm afraid of my anger.

I'm afraid my sadness will go on forever.

I'm afraid of your anger.

I'm afraid of all my feelings, that I'll just run amuck.

When fear mixes with the primary emotions of anger and sadness, it creates some of the stickiest feelings that glue people in conflict and disharmony. Fear plus anger creates guilt. Fear plus sadness feels like an endless pit of despair. Fear plus judgment and anger feels like hot shame in your gut. When fear grips these other feelings, it blocks the free flow of energy and prevents constructive responses. But there is a solution. By "presencing" fear, we can melt it away and open the gateway to authentic connection.

The 4 Fear-Melters

Here's the good news: You can easily learn to discern your own fear signals and use simple movements called Fear-Melters to break the blockage and shift into flow. When you use our Fear-Melters, you literally connect body to breath and breath to brain so you can respond creatively rather than react from a sense of perceived threat. These moves are deliberately simple to make them easy to access even in the hottest moments of defending.

The Fear-Fighter's Ooze. Imagine your hands and arms moving as if they were hot fudge over ice cream. Or let your shoulders, head, and spine undulate like seaweed in gently rolling waves. Oozing melts the fight response, wakes up your whole-body breath, and dances you out of attack mode. You can shift an argument into a slow-motion fight scene à la *The Matrix* or *Batman*. The slow motion adds fun and creative thinking, instills listening and responding, and eventually gets both your bodies oozing. Totally fun.

Meg, married more than 30 years, describes how oozing has changed long-held fights with her husband, Tim, the battles that typically started when she heard the car door slam—before he had even walked through the door. This time, when she heard the car door slam and felt her fear rise up, she greeted him, saying:

"Hi, I'm going to turn on the music and ooze and move while you talk to me. Say anything you want, and I'll keep moving and oozing and listening. But don't talk to me unless I'm oozing."

So the two moved and oozed together for 30 minutes while he told her what he'd been up to. At the end, she had created her own safety through oozing and her perception had widened to see a larger, safer landscape. Choosing to conduct a conversation while oozing greatly increased her feeling of being response-able.

The Fear-Fleer's Sumo. While standing, spread your legs wide, place your hands on thighs, and sink into the support of your bent knees and solid pelvis. Now feel the urge to flee melt into full-frontal presence.

Harry, a single man in his 50s, describes how valuable sumoing has become to him:

"When I notice my flee arise, which shows up as a physical spin around or sometimes as an inner spinning feeling, the first thing I do is name it to myself—I want to flee. Then I use sumo to support me in staying with the situation, and in combination with ooze, I slow down. Then I add breath as part of my sumo stance, imagining the weight of my breath going all through my body down to the ground and anchoring me. I imagine it as a sticky glue where I can move and place myself and stay connected. This has been very helpful to me. No more slamming down the phone or leaving the room with a slammed door."

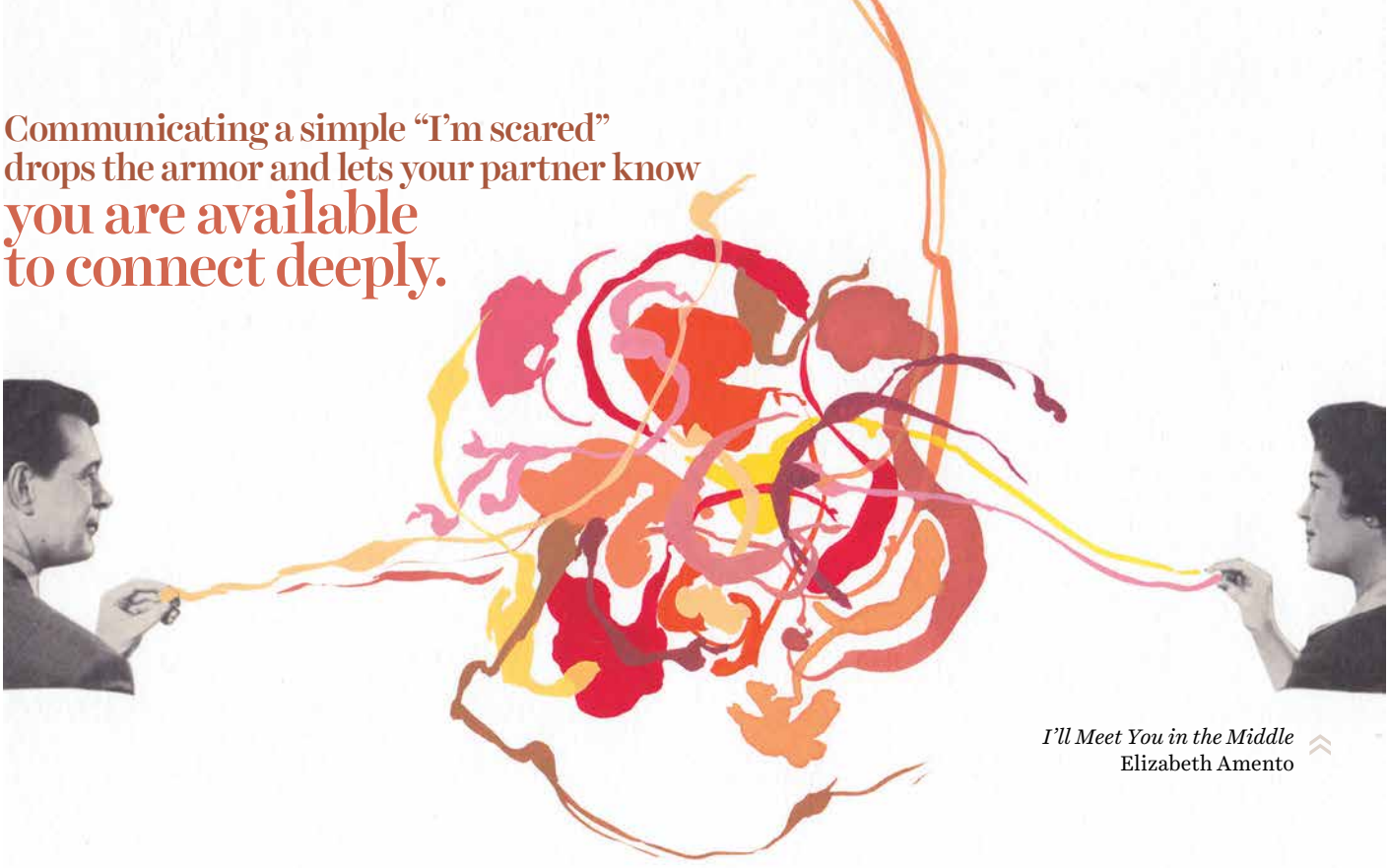
The Fear-Freezer's Wiggle. If you're really frozen, you can't "just relax." But you can wiggle. Begin with fingers and/or toes and let the wiggling gradually expand to thaw out the frozenness in the rest of the body. Here's a story one of our clients told us as an example of how the fear-freeze can be thawed:

"Post-dinner, we decided to take a walk together. (We have been prioritizing evening walks lately, noticing how simply taking the time to walk together generates so much more connection in our relationship.) During the walk John casually asked me, 'Hey, Linda, do you think you are in "Freeze" right now? Is there something you are feeling afraid about? I notice you are walking but you look rather frozen and I notice I don't feel connected to you.' I paused, noticing I felt immediately defensive (a great indicator that he was probably spot on).

"In that moment, I didn't have any awareness of feeling afraid. John then invited me to breathe and wiggle. I followed his suggestion, wiggling and shaking right there on the sidewalk. Using full-body breaths and wiggling, I was able to come back into presence, and soon enough I began to notice a tension in my jaw and shoulders. I was angry and I didn't even know it! My sense is that at some point during the day I had felt angry and then gotten afraid of my anger—thus, I went into freeze. I said out loud, 'Mmmm. . . I feel angry.' Each time I said this I felt myself come more fully into presence. John and I continued walking, exploring my anger with curiosity and feeling deeply connected as a result."

The Fear-Fainter's Love Scoops. If you go all noodles-in-a-puddle and lose a sense of actually being in a body, you can welcome yourself back with what we call love scoops. When fainters use their arms to reach out and embrace

Communicating a simple "I'm scared" drops the armor and lets your partner know you are available to connect deeply.



I'll Meet You in the Middle
Elizabeth Amento

themselves, circling in to touch heart or belly, they come back home to right now and can choose consciously again. Here's an example of using welcoming love scoops that came from one of our students, a female single pastor:

"I had noticed a strong attraction toward a wonderful man on our board, but I assumed he was married until I was approached by another pastor who wanted to set me up with him. My immediate response was a deflection. Oh, no, I can't, he's a member and on the board, etc. Pastors shouldn't date members, etc. Then I went to my office and realized I was afraid. I reached and gathered in, welcoming and scooping love especially to my heart area. Then I returned to her office and admitted that I was really scared. He was too handsome; I was too large; I'm not pretty enough; not his type; he wouldn't be interested. She was surprised, shared her perspective of me and more about him, and said she thought we would truly meet each other. Two Sundays ago, I was preaching. I stepped into that big high pulpit, did my introduction about humor in church, and looked down to see him in the second row, grinning from ear to ear."

Restoring Wonder

Recycling old relationship hassles doesn't end until someone taps into and communicates the underlying fear. Communicating a simple "I'm scared" drops the armor and lets your partner know you are available to connect deeply. You're uncovering your soft parts to your mate, and that move disarms the reptilian brain and sparks the emotional, connecting brain.

Fear-Melters provide that opening, a breath of possibility that you can expand with new choices. When you melt fear with these simple movements, you wake up new connections in your brain and new choices through your body. Follow a Fear-Melter with a few breaths and an appreciation, or a simple statement of something you notice in the moment, and you've presenced yourself and turned toward connection and intimacy.

Releasing fear can open magic portals in your relationship where the formerly impossible becomes entirely imaginable. Here are some "wonder questions" to try. Think of these as powerful pebbles to drop into the open pool that Fear-Melters provide:

Hmmm, I wonder how we can both have what we most want?

Hmmm, I wonder how we can easily resolve this issue?

Hmmm, I wonder how I can continue supporting you in expressing your deepest creativity?

Hmmm, I wonder what wants to emerge right now?

Hmmm, I wonder how I can express love in new ways?

Hmmm, I wonder how we can generate enough space for both of us to feel connected and fully engaged in our own creativity?

Hmmm, I wonder how I can most easily return to harmony and flow?

Gay Hendricks, PhD, and **Katie Hendricks, PhD,** are best-selling authors on a mission is to teach singles and couples everything they have learned in their combined 80 years of counseling and teaching, as well as what they practice within their own 30-year marriage. heartsintrueharmony.com

Adapted from *Conscious Loving Ever After: How to Create Thriving Relationships at Midlife and Beyond,* by Gay Hendricks, PhD, and Katie Hendricks, PhD. HAY HOUSE, INC. hayhouse.com

Learning to say, "Here's a story I've been telling myself all my life—that actually isn't really true anymore."

And other secrets of wise aging.

NOT WRITTEN IN STONE

AN INTERVIEW WITH **RABBI RACHEL COWAN**

Our later years are our best opportunity to develop our spiritual lives, says Rabbi Rachel Cowan in her new book, *Wise Aging: Living with Joy, Resilience and Spirit*, written with Linda Thal, PhD. Rachel Cowan was twice named by *Newsweek* magazine as one of the 50 leading rabbis in the United States. For many years she was executive director of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality and then became a senior fellow there to develop the Wise Aging program. She recently spoke with *S&H* about how to shift our culture's "declinist paradigm of aging" to see the aging process through a lens of opportunity and growth.

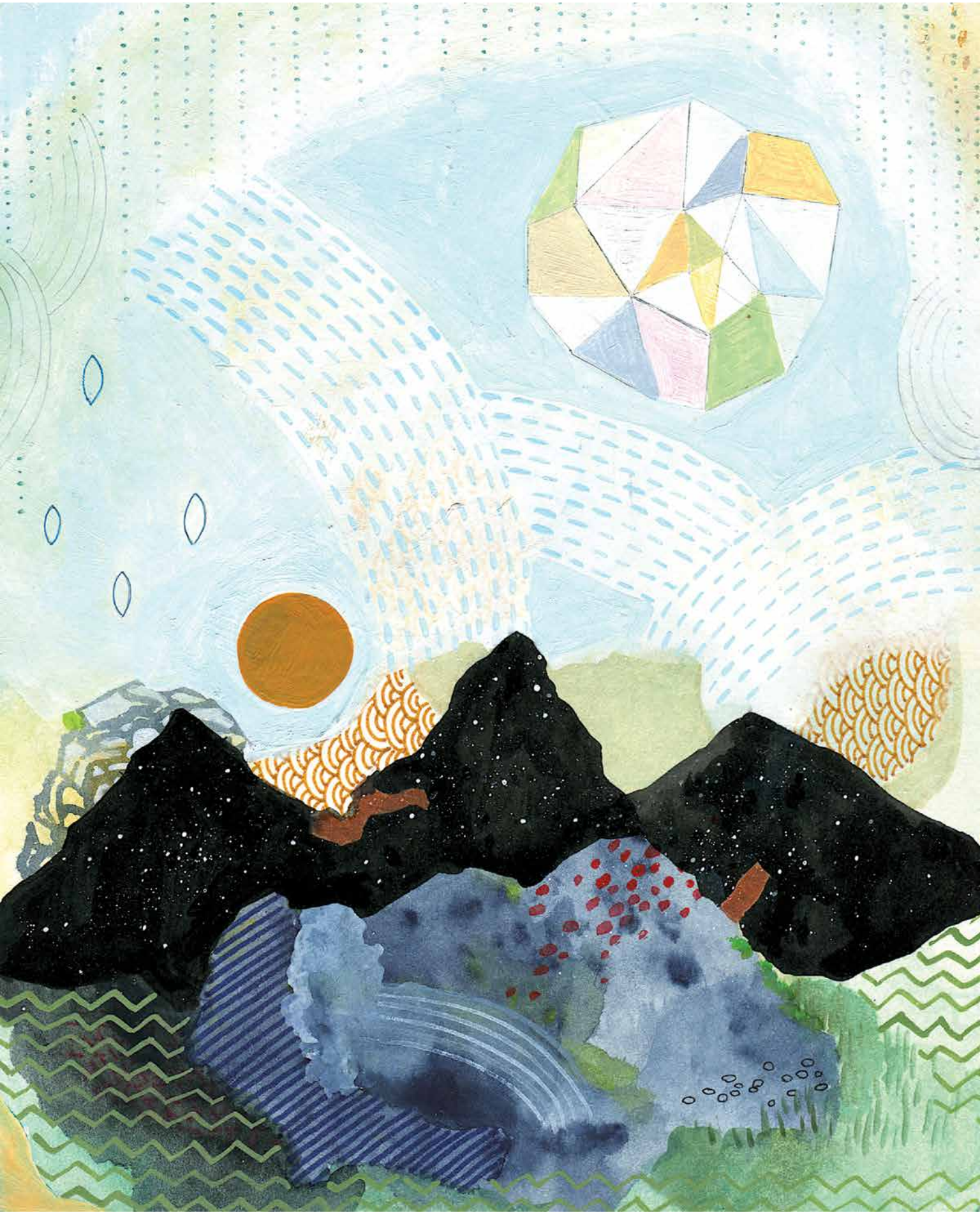
BY **SAM MOWE**



Cascade
Cathy McMurray

You've written that our culture "promotes a declinist paradigm of aging." What do you mean by that?
Our society doesn't really like old people. People tend to deny that they're getting older because, as they age, they feel more invisible, irrelevant, and insecure. Our culture is based on productivity, ambition, succeeding, and getting ahead. So when you are no longer productive in a career, then others see you as having less value and as a kind of hindrance.

So old age is a time for something other than productivity?
As you get older, the questions you ask yourself are less about *what* you want to do and more about *how* you want to be and *who* you want to be with. These are questions of meaning that are



much harder to ask yourself when you're younger because you're caught up with the pressures of family and livelihood.

Older age is a time when you get to cultivate different aspects of yourself, especially spiritually. This is when you have time to work on things that have been problematic in your life, to find peace and greater equanimity.

I like the idea that old age provides an opportunity for spiritual growth, but isn't there some truth to seeing aging through a declinist lens? The body and mind start to slow down.

But your spirit doesn't. So the question is how do you develop your spirit so that when your body slows down—when you can't do some of the things that used to give meaning to your life—you have other ways of finding meaning? There's no doubt that things get harder. You will experience loss and grief. In addition to the loss of things you used to do, there is the loss of people that you love.

What advice would you give someone living with loss?

I have a group of older women that has been meeting for quite a while, and now some of their husbands are beginning to fail, either mentally or physically. There's a huge amount of sadness about that. There's also a fair amount of feeling trapped and limited—and even resentful of the situation—because they feel like they also don't have lives now. How on earth do you work with that and the guilt that comes from admitting that you feel that way?

I think that learning to open the heart, learning to be more loving, and learning to see one's own individual suffering as part of a much larger identification with suffering in the world can help with these situations. You can't cure the suffering. You can't make it not happen. So the question is: How do you live with it?

To live with loss, it's really important to balance it with a sense of purpose and meaning. How can you make new friends? How can you think about yourself in a way that you're not trapped by your circumstances? It's possible to do these things.

Along similar lines, what would you say to someone feeling as though they haven't accomplished what they hoped to during their lives?

For many old people, there is this terrible sense of regret, or "if only." I think you can begin to change your perspective on that, so that you can say, "At that time, I didn't know how to do otherwise." You can reframe your life. You can forgive yourself.

The whole question of cultivating self-compassion is at the heart of wise aging. You can cultivate a contemplative life so that you can catch the stories that you're telling yourself that actually are no longer true. Maybe they were true once, but they might not be anymore. With mindfulness you can always start again.

You talk about the past as if it isn't written in stone. Can you say more about reframing our narratives about things that happened in the past?

The main thing is that you have to be willing to look inside. You can't just say, "Oh well, that's over. I don't want to visit it again. I don't really have time for this." Many people are afraid. They're afraid of guilt, pain, or shame. It takes courage to do this.

There's a study that was done at Harvard that showed that one of the characteristics of people who age well is the ability to reframe their life story—not to cling to the stories of themselves as victims, but to be able to make new stories where we are able to make meaning in situations that were difficult.

HOW NOURISHING IS OUR INDEPENDENCE?

We live within the natural world and with each other. Yet our society prizes individualism. As we grow older, fear of dependence causes many of us to struggle, sometimes unreasonably, to maintain our sense of independence. Being able to do things for ourselves can provide a feeling of control and normalcy; it affirms our strength and continued vitality. We imagine that so long as we don't rely on others, we can fend off feeling helpless or irrelevant.

Stories abound of people whose denial of aging extends to refusing to take medication, wear hearing aids, or stop driving. The wisdom of age teaches us to let go of these bids for false self-sufficiency.

As difficult as it may be to accept a seat from a stranger on the subway, we may struggle much more with accepting the help offered by those closest to us. And even more problematic can be asking for help.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

When do you find yourself reluctant to accept offers of help?

Is it easier or more difficult for you to be dependent on family members, on friends, or on people in helping professions? Why?

"I'm not proud of what I did. But if I could have done otherwise, I would have."

We can see ourselves as people capable of significant change, able to learn and grow from past experiences. It's very optimistic. It's so gratifying when you hear people say, "Here's a story I've been telling myself all my life and, actually, that story isn't really true anymore." You can acknowledge that something was horrible, but maybe now you have a little perspective on it. Maybe now you can see that the other person actually didn't know how to be better then. Or you can see that you didn't know how to be better then. You can say, "I'm not proud of what I did. But if I could have done otherwise, I would have."



Glacier
Cathy McMurray

We've been talking about old age as a time to cultivate spiritual qualities. Can you give me some more specifics about how to do this?

There are a variety of ways to do this, but mostly it's having the idea that there are ways to grow. There is a way to be more open, a way to learn more things, to learn to enjoy solitude without feeling lonely, and a way to make new connections. The worst things are loneliness, depression, and despair. It's been said that one of the last stages of life is to find a sense of integrity in your life so that you're not sunk in despair.

How do you do that? I think being engaged in some spiritual tradition or organization where you can connect with other people who have a goal of exploring this time of life can really help. Finding such places is really important, but unfortunately there aren't many of them.

Do you have ideas for how we might create places like this?

Ideally, younger people could be involved with it so that it could help shift the entire culture around aging. It could be dynamic and intergenerational. Younger people often don't have older friends. And older people really want younger friends. How do those kinds of relationships develop?

If those kinds of relationships could develop, younger people would not feel pity and dread when they look at older people. They would say, "Wow, look at the courage of that person going down the street. I wonder what's going on in that person's life?" You move from seeing older people as pathetic to seeing them as potentially interesting.

In some ways it sounds like getting older is something to look forward to, but I imagine you do more and more looking back once you're there. Can you talk about legacy and stewardship?

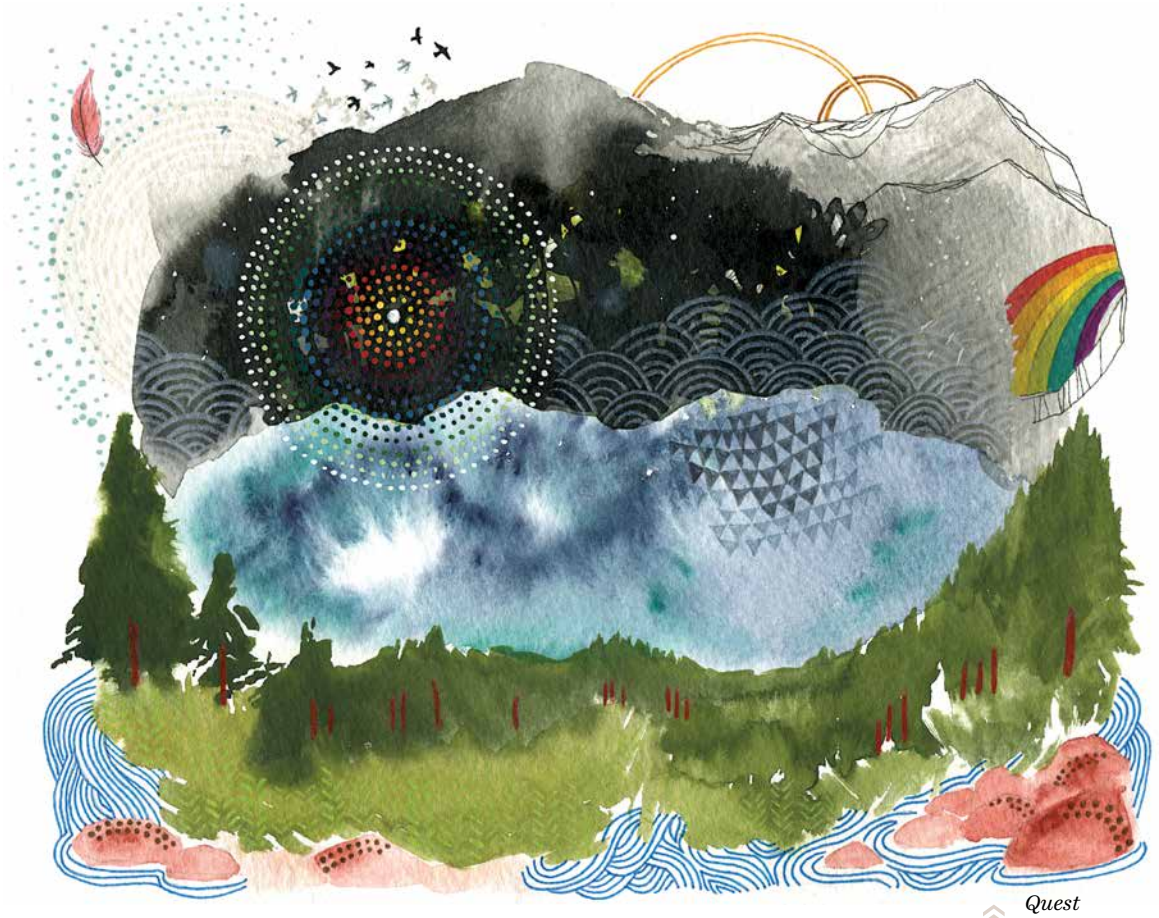
One of the things that we do in our workshops is called "life review." It's a whole exercise of looking back at the events of your life and then reviewing what you see as the important events and what you see as the hard times. When you look at the times that were very positive, what was it about them that made them so special? What were the characteristics of that experience? Is there a way to think about doing more of those in your life going forward?

When you review the hard times, what helped you get through them? What strengths did you have back then that you can call on if something gets really dangerous or scary in the future?

These questions can help provide direction for moving forward into old age.

As you look forward to the next five or 10 years of your life, how do you think you'll demonstrate what wise aging looks like?

For me, my contemplative practice is extremely important. I'm on the board of an incredible, Harlem-based youth organization, and how to help those kids get access to contemplative practice in a way that is relevant to them is one thing I want to focus on. The other is finding ways to help people experience contemplative practice in nature and how to help more people have profound experiences of nature. I have things I'm excited about.



Quest
Cathy McMurray

You start to get older the moment you're born. So why not start to prepare yourself for living a life of cultivating wisdom and insight?

If you could, would you switch places with a younger version of yourself?

Yes and no. On the one hand, that would be great. I wish I could still run as fast as I could before or recall names a bit more quickly, but it's not serious. On the other hand, I honestly feel that life just has its course. To go back 20 or 30 years, I don't think there's something I would've wanted to learn back then that I didn't learn. It would be nice if I had a living husband, but I just feel that this is a stage of life.

There's less stress around needing to prove that I'm somebody. I care as much about politics and social justice as I ever did, but I don't have the sense that I need to run out and make everything better. Now I have to think about the ways in which I, personally, can actually make a difference. So I still have concerns similar to those that I had when I was younger, but the modalities are different.

Do you think that younger people could benefit from the wisdom found in your aging workshops?

The work of aging well is not just for older people. Younger people grow up without a model, really, of what wise aging looks like. Children now are so quickly put into the framework of doing instead of being. They have to start reading earlier and worrying about getting into college by the time they're in fourth grade. It's very stressful. Older generations can show everyone how to live life in the present and how to spend time cultivating an inner life.

It just so happens that the keys to aging well are also the things that are important all through your life: really paying attention to relationships, working on forgiveness, letting go of resentment, and working on developing an inner life. Many older people get caught up because they don't have an inner life. Because they also didn't have good models, older people now also don't know how to be in any mode other than the doing mode.

You start to get older the moment you're born. So why not start to prepare yourself for living a life of cultivating wisdom and insight? You're going to want to have a spiritual life in place when things get hard. And things get hard when you get older.

Sam Mowe is the Communications Manager at the Garrison Institute in New York, a nonprofit dedicated to exploring the intersection of contemplation and social action. Rabbi Rachel Cowan will be coleading a retreat at the Garrison Institute on April 8–10.



I AM NOT MEDICINE

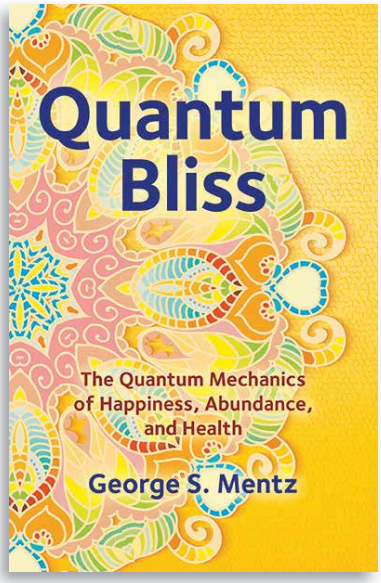
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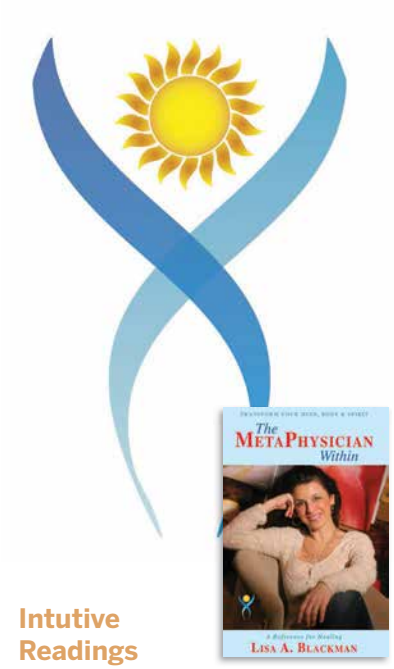
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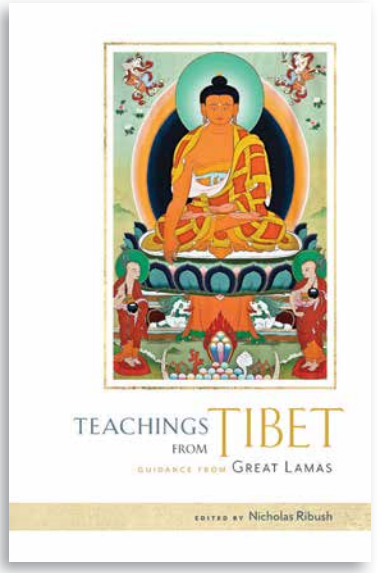
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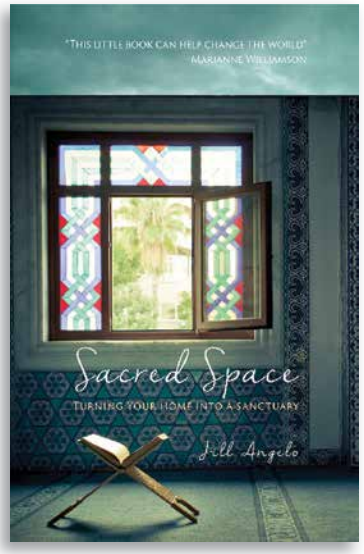


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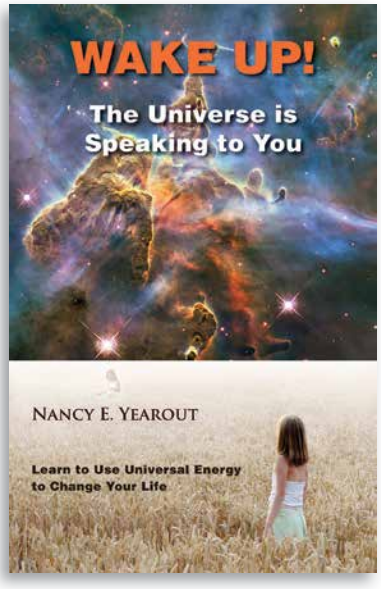


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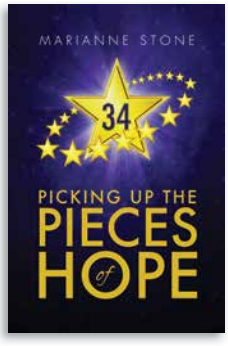
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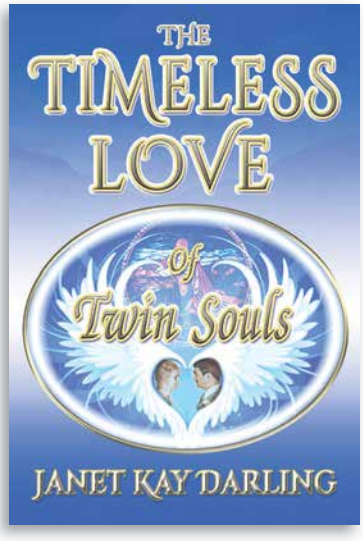


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> "Springtime flowers bloom like colorful arrows piercing their way to the sun."
> —Terri Guillemets



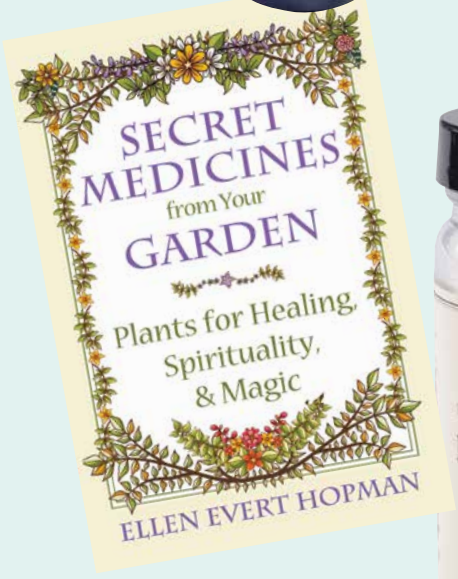
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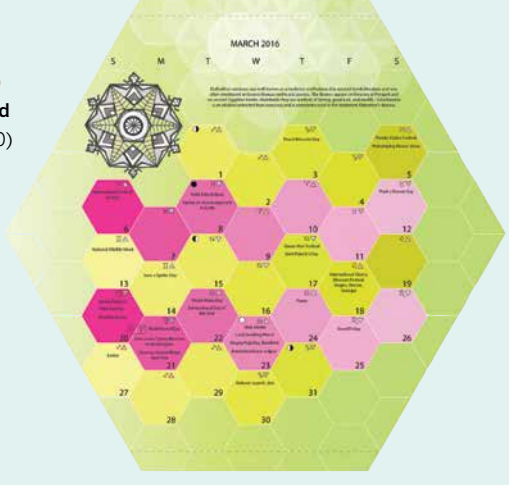


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—KALIA KELMENSON

REVIEWS

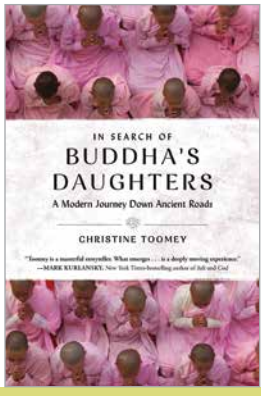
books // music // film

ENHANCED PERCEPTION

Explore new perspectives with *S&H* top picks for awakening this spring.

In Search of Buddha's Daughters

A Modern Journey Down Ancient Roads
by Christine Toomey
THE EXPERIMENT



THE BUDDHIST NUNS encountered in Christine Toomey's *In Search of Buddha's Daughters* are not the quiet and gentle women that one might imagine. In chapters that trace the author's journey around the world, Toomey tells readers of nuns in Nepal practicing kung fu, a Zen Buddhist nun in Japan who has won literary prizes for erotic fiction, and other surprising and inspiring stories that shed light on what is for many the unfamiliar world of Buddhist women.

> THE SIGHT OF A WOMAN WEAVER MAKES HER THINK OF **BUDDHISM AS A THREAD OF RESILIENCE AND GENEROSITY** IN THE COUNTRY.

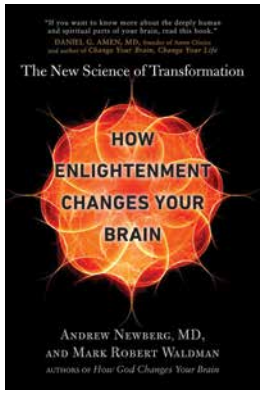
"In this rapidly changing age, which is forcing many of us to question what is meaningful, the path these women have chosen is not just different but somehow defiant," Toomey writes. This sense of defiance is brought to life through interviews the author conducts with nuns in Nepal, India, Burma, Japan, North America, and Europe while living alongside them in monasteries, temples, and meditation centers.

After more than two decades working as a foreign correspondent and feature writer for the U.K.'s *Sunday Times,* Toomey is at her best when bringing her journalist's eye to describe scenes and her investigative skills to portray the women she meets. While reflecting on the oppression of the Burmese people over the centuries, the sight of a woman weaver makes her think of Buddhism as a thread of resilience and generosity in the country. "As she throws a giant bobbin back and forth to create a weft, sunlight catches a glint of golden thread running through the fabric," she writes, "bringing the rest of the colours alive."

Part travelogue and part Buddhist history lesson, *In Search of Buddha's Daughters* is also part memoir as Toomey reflects on the recent loss of both her parents as motivation for embarking on the journey. Searching for a way to heal, she observes that "those who choose to become Buddhist nuns make it their business to deal on a daily basis with some of the most profound and intractable problems of human existence." —SAM MOWE

How Enlightenment Changes Your Brain

by Andrew Newberg, M.D., and Mark Robert Waldman
AVERY BOOKS



ALTHOUGH CULTURES all over the world have long spoken of enlightenment, the concept can seem fuzzy: You know it only if you've experienced it. For some, it may come after decades of stringent ritual practice; for others, it arrives out of the blue, an unexpected, transformative thunderbolt.

In an attempt to get more specific about what enlightenment is and how it works, Andrew Newberg M.D. and his coauthor, Mark Robert Waldman, conducted a worldwide survey of over 2,000 people who claimed to have felt it, as well as fascinating studies of Buddhist meditators, Brazilian psychic mediums, whirling Sufi mystics, and Christian Pentecostals who speak in tongues. They identified five common elements: "a sense of intensity, unity, clarity, and surrender, and a

permanent large-scale change in our awareness, behavior, or belief system."

Because he's a medical researcher with access to advanced brain-scanning equipment, Newberg has taken things a step further: He argues that these experiences can be neurologically "real," and connects their traits to activity in two specific regions in the brain, the frontal and parietal regions. What's more, the book provides readers with exercises designed to activate or deactivate these centers in enlightening ways.

This approach might risk making profound experiences seem merely mechanistic, yet it never feels reductive. The authors show interest in and respect for a great variety of ways of training the mind, both religious and secular, and—like the Dalai Lama, who has expressed a similar interest in neuroscience—they point toward an exciting new joining of science and spirit. **—GABRIEL COHEN**

Clearing Emotional Clutter

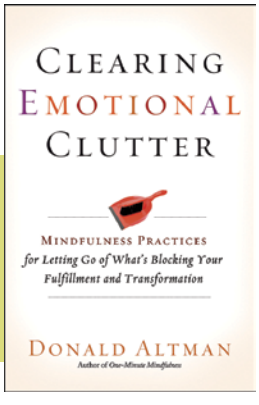
Mindfulness Practices for Letting Go of What's Blocking Your Fulfillment and Transformation
by Donald Altman
NEW WORLD LIBRARY

YOU COULDN'T SWING a book bag around last year without knocking over a copy of *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up,* Marie Kondo's international best-seller on home decluttering. It started a fad for the concept of "tidying," downsizing, and folding one's T-shirts into neat little bundles. But just as physical belongings can accumulate and molder, so, too, can towering heaps of emotional baggage, and to our rescue rides Donald Altman, author of the new book *Clearing Emotional Clutter*.

Altman is a practicing psychotherapist, a former Buddhist monk, and an adjunct faculty member of the Interpersonal Neurobiology program at Portland State University. In his book, he shares how our bodies and minds are vessels through which our consciousness is either clarified or hindered, depending on how much "sticky" emotional debris we're carting around with us. Some emotional clutter is obvious—painful family histories, past abuse—yet some isn't. Think you yourself have no emotional clutter? You might be surprised what falls under that banner, including anxiety, road rage, lack of self-acceptance, and a slew of communication and relationship issues. "Oh," one soon realizes, "I *do* have some emotional mopping up to do."

Altman's strength as an author is that he blends his mindfulness teachings with information culled from research conducted by psychologists, cognitive scientists, and neurologists. So breathing techniques, meditation tools, and inspirational stories combine seamlessly with such concepts as how practicing compassion can literally change our brain function. The result is a useful guide to living our lives in a lighter, less burdened way, releasing ourselves and those around us from unnecessary "stuff." If that's not simplifying, what is? **—KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER**

JUST AS PHYSICAL BELONGINGS CAN ACCUMULATE AND MOLDER, SO, TOO, CAN **TOWERING HEAPS OF EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE.**



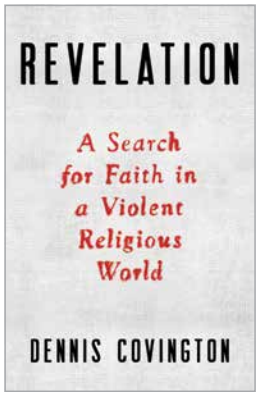
Revelation

A Search for Faith in a Violent Religious World
by Dennis Covington
LITTLE, BROWN

GROWING UP in Birmingham, Alabama, during the heart of the American civil rights movement, writer Dennis Covington is alert to the lasting sensory impressions that violence makes on people.

Early in *Revelation: A Search for Faith in a Violent Religious World,* his latest book, Covington recalls leaning over the casket at a funeral and touching noses with a neighborhood boy who had shot himself in the head while playing Russian roulette with his father's revolver. "I'd been told he was in heaven with God and the Angels," he writes. "But the physical sensation of my nose against the dead boy's never went away." Shortly after this, he recounts a night of racial violence in September of 1963 when a classmate stuck her arm out of a school bus window and her arm was slashed by a young black kid. "I still remember the vivid contrast of blood against the sleeve of her white button-down," he writes.

Much of *Revelation* is filled with these kinds of personal stories from Covington's life. He tells readers of his childhood, his failed marriages, and his brother's history with mental illness, as well as his own. Covington interweaves these stories into his accounts of travels to violent places—in Mexico, Syria, and the American South, among others—where he searches for signs of faith and hope. What he mostly finds, and describes vividly, is religious strife and brutality. Small moments of grace occur—when the author observes the innocence of children, say, or tells of people convinced that life has meaning despite the terror around them—yet they seem incommensurate with the violence that Covington encounters. **—SM**



George Fest

A Night to Celebrate the Music of George Harrison
Various artists
BMG RECORDED MUSIC/HOT RECORDS

ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2014, singer/multi-instrumentalist Dhani Harrison united several of his musical heroes at Los Angeles' Fonda Theatre to pay tribute to his father, the late George Harrison. The eclectic assembly of musicians who turned up for the event included Ben Harper, The Cold War Kids, Heart's Ann Wilson and members of The Flaming Lips, Weezer, Jane's Addiction, The Beach Boys, The Killers, and The Strokes. The resulting album and DVD will be released on February 26th of this year, the day after Harrison's birthday.

Hearing Dhani himself perform George Harrison's songs is a memorable experience. He not only bears a strong visual resemblance to his father, but also sounds eerily like him when singing tunes like "Let It Down," "Ballad of Sir Frankie Crisp," and "Savoy Truffle." Adding to *George Fest*'s familial feel is the presence of Norah Jones, daughter of Harrison's close friend and mentor Ravi Shankar. Jones' presentation of "Something" is a standout, accentuating the innate beauty of one of Harrison's finest works.



While *George Fest* has its share of light moments, not the least of which are performances by "Weird Al" Yankovic ("What Is Life") and Conan O'Brien ("Old Brown Shoe"), due respect is also paid to George Harrison's more serious, devotional side. The Cult's Ian Astbury pulls off a heartfelt performance of "Be Here Now," and in the hands of Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, the underacknowledged song "The Art of Dying" takes on a churning, murky feel. Brian Wilson's rendition of "My Sweet Lord," while somewhat strained, is nevertheless a touching offering from a man who has long shared Harrison's desire to impart a sense of the sacred through music. In conjunction with an all-star encore of "All Things Must Pass"—with Dhani once again sounding much like dear old Dad on the song's first verse—these offerings serve as loving reminders of the role that Harrison played in bringing spirituality to popular music and to Western culture at large. **—DAMON ORION**

Into the Silence

Avishai Cohen
ECM





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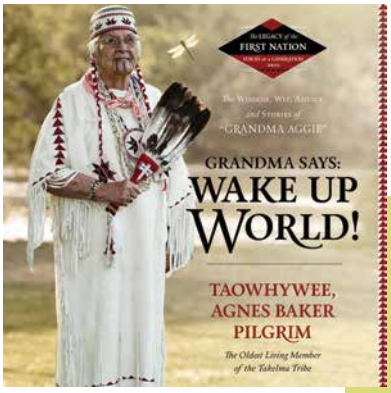
MUSIC CAN BE MOTIVATED by new beginnings and inspirational experiences. Music is also an ideal language for expressing loss. The tender jazz tunes of *Into the Silence* were composed by Israeli-born trumpeter Avishai Cohen during the six months following his father's death in 2014. Indeed, the title song began taking shape as Cohen composed it on his parents' piano just after his father passed away, when Cohen naturally found melody, harmony, and rhythm the ideal tools for expressing grief and gratitude.

> COHEN NATURALLY FOUND MELODY, HARMONY, AND RHYTHM THE **IDEAL TOOLS FOR EXPRESSING GRIEF AND GRATITUDE.**

Cohen's muted trumpet is graceful and pure on songs like "Life and Death," "Quiescence," and "Behind the Broken Glass." His sensitive playing is enhanced by exquisite harmonies and interplay with a talented quartet of Yonathan Avishai (on piano), Eric Revis (double bass), Nasheet Waits (drums), and Bill McHenry (tenor saxophone). *Into the Silence* was recorded in July of 2015 in the south of France by ECM record label founder Manfred Eicher, who was impressed by Cohen's trumpet playing during earlier recording sessions for Mark Turner's 2014 album *Lathe of Heaven*.

Into the Silence has a dynamic and tuned-in feeling that comes, at least in part, from the fact that the album represents the first time the group played the songs. "We were all discovering the potential of the music as we were playing," writes Cohen, who is currently touring North America, including dates in New York City (April 27) and Oakland, California (May 4). **—JOHN MALKIN**

Grandma Says: Wake Up, World!
Agnes Baker Pilgrim
BLACKSTONE AUDIO, INC.



AS THE OLDEST LIVING MEMBER of the Native American tribe known as the Takelma, Agnes Baker Pilgrim has been named a "Living Cultural Legend" by the Oregon Council of the Arts and a "Living Treasure" by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz. On her MP3 CD audiobook *Wake Up, World!,* she shares the wisdom she has accumulated over the course of her 91 years on the planet. As well as telling stories from the days when various establishments in Lincoln County, Oregon, bore signs proclaiming that "Indians and dogs" were not allowed, "Grandma Aggie," aka Taowhywee (Morning Star), offers her perspectives on subjects like child rearing, drug and alcohol abuse, racial prejudice, ecology, and the use of plant medicines—including *ayahuasca* and peyote, which she discusses as casually as if she were talking about dandelion tea.

Although she makes numerous references to the "Creator" and to the "Star Nation," where she believes she will go after physical death, Aggie stresses, "I'm not talkin' church or Christianity; I'm talkin' about the freedom of each and every one of us to reach out to our Creator. There's only one beloved Creator, but there's many paths." Pilgrim keeps her spiritual discourses light and often humorous: "It's amazing how Creator bosses me around. Sometimes I have to argue with Him, but I still do it. So He's got a cauliflower ear, 'cause I'm always badgerin' Him about stuff"; and "My sky pilot works for me and is with me all the time, so if yours don't work, you can borrow mine."

> I'M TALKIN' ABOUT THE FREEDOM OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US TO **REACH OUT TO OUR CREATOR.**

Throughout the 25 stream-of-consciousness discourses in *Wake Up, World!,* Pilgrim imparts her messages with humility, kindness, and a touch of playfulness, coming off as every bit the friendly, familial figure that her nickname suggests. —DO



Shelter

Directed by Paul Bettany
SCREEN MEDIA FILMS

IN THIS GRITTY, nerve-wracking look at life on the streets of New York City, Anthony Mackie plays Tahir, a homeless African immigrant, who meets up one day with Hannah (Jennifer Connelly), a beautiful, troubled heroin addict, when he finds her wearing his stolen jacket. Their world is one of immediacy and anxiety, but little by little they find some solace in each other's arms. Both of them, however, are holding something back about their pasts. Tahir is a devout Muslim desperately trying to stay on the straight and narrow, and we learn eventually the harrowing circumstances that led him to religion, to America, and to the streets. Hannah, the widow of a U.S. serviceman killed in the Middle East, has a family looking for her, but her shame and resentment are too great for her to face her past.



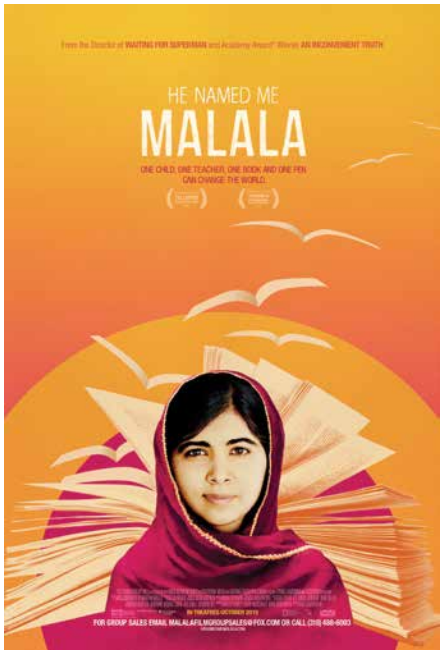
The homeless drama subgenre isn't exactly new—these past couple of years have seen some exceptional ones, such as *Time Out of Mind*, starring Richard Gere—but *Shelter* is distinguished by its two excellent leads. The film was written and directed by the actor Paul Bettany, Connelly's real-life husband, who elicits a vulnerable, haunted performance from her. Mackie, an actor very good at playing it close to the vest, emotionally speaking, is ideal for a character who is constantly trying to maintain his distance from the world. It's unfortunate that the story itself doesn't go in more unexpected directions. A certain boilerplate sameness can come over these stories of desperation, with each story trying to up the ante in terms of how much its characters are humiliated. *Shelter* unfortunately falls into that trap a little toward the end, but for much of its running time, it's a sharply observed, sensitively acted, moving little film.

—BILGE EBIRI

He Named Me Malala

Directed by Davis Guggenheim
FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

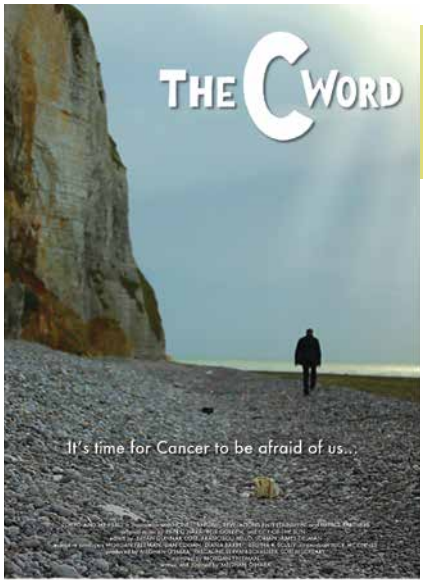
THE TERRIFYING PLIGHT of Malala Yousafzai, the teenaged Pakistani girl shot in the face by the Taliban in 2012 for daring to try to get an education, is now well known in the West. Part of the reason, of course, has been Malala herself: Her recovery and subsequent global activism on behalf of girls' education (which garnered the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize, making her the youngest person ever to win) has revealed her to be an unusually brave, articulate, inspiring young woman.



Davis Guggenheim's fairly conventional documentary benefits a great deal from Malala's central presence, even if it reveals little about her life. At its best, the film offers glimpses of Malala's new life in England—where she frets over her exams, marvels at the free-spiritedness of her classmates, and is playfully and lovingly teased by her younger brothers. The film also fascinatingly delves into the history of her father, Ziauddin, himself an advocate for education and a politically active figure in their homeland. Animated passages that depict Ziauddin's and Malala's stories are elegantly rendered, though not particularly revealing. We see much of Malala's current travels, as she visits girls' schools in Africa and elsewhere. Throughout, we get the sense that the film is trying to juggle a number of strands, and not always doing it effectively.

I do wish that Guggenheim had portrayed more of the fear and urgency of this young woman's story; what happened to her is liable to get the blood boiling, but *He Named Me Malala* feels so placid and even-keeled. Yet perhaps that says more about the subject than about the film itself: Malala herself is a surprisingly calm figure, a person who expresses forgiveness and thanks at every turn, and who doesn't appear to have a spiteful or vengeful bone in her body. Maybe, ultimately, this gentle documentary is less interested in the typical needs of drama and more in the patient, accepting demeanor of the remarkable young woman at its heart. —BE

The C Word
Meghan O'Hara
ZORRO AND ME FILMS



THE "C WORD" IS, of course, "cancer," and Meghan O'Hara's well-produced documentary offers a look at the ways that our unhealthy diets and lifestyles, combined with the collusion of big pharma, are contributing to our increased vulnerability to the disease. O'Hara follows David Servan-Schreiber, the French physician and writer who, after a brain cancer diagnosis in his 30s, spent nearly 20 years fighting the disease and promoting preventive measures based on exercise, diet, antitoxins, and stress management. We all have cancer cells in our bodies, he notes; the weaker we allow our bodies to become, the easier it will become for those cells to start growing. Along the way, O'Hara, herself a cancer survivor, not only looks at the benefits of better lifestyle choices, healthier diets, and reduced stress, but also discusses the ways that the industrialization of food and medicine has harmed our ability to fight disease.

Although Servan-Schreiber's work was grounded in research—both his and others—many in the medical community initially rejected his approach. So did lots of ordinary people. After all, as is pointed out in the film, it's hard to tell people to do things that will benefit them in 30 years or so, particularly in a consumer-oriented culture focused on convenience and instant gratification. Of course, the arguments offered in this film won't come as a shock to anyone who has spent a reasonable amount of time looking at healthier living and alternative medicine choices.

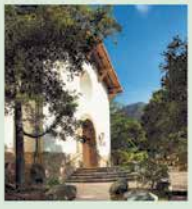
IT'S HARD TO **TELL PEOPLE TO DO THINGS** THAT WILL BENEFIT THEM IN 30 YEARS OR SO.

Still, this is a compassionate, touching film. Servan-Schreiber himself died in 2011. *The C Word* opens with his voice, barely a whisper, at the edge of death, discussing his journey. Despite that, there is an optimism here, too: This man lived almost 20 years with an illness that was supposed to have killed him within several years of his initial diagnosis. In many ways, his very life—simply the fact that he was allowed to have it—stands as a testament to his work. —BE



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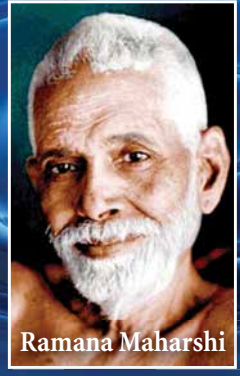
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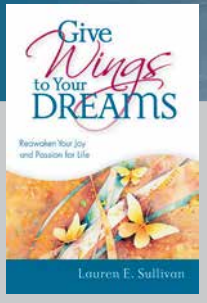
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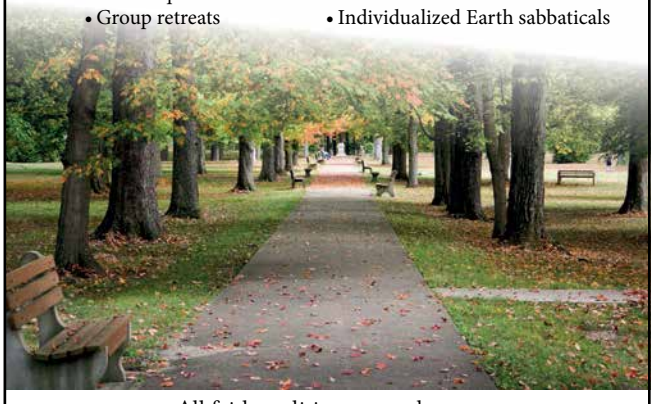
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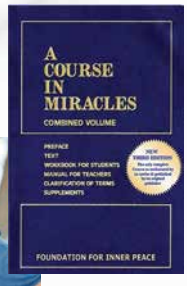
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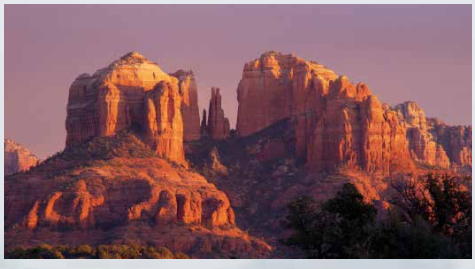
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New Horizons

Spring Forward into Global Weirding

"IN LIKE A LION, OUT LIKE A LAMB," we crowed when March rolled around in New York City, where I grew up. Weary of gray skies, relentless cold, and soot-blackened snow hills along city streets, we lived for the lamb-end of the month.

The earth isn't only heating. It's thrashing with fever.

Now, four decades later, the lamb, apparently lost, was found nosing around the Northeast on a 72-degree Christmas Day. The lion, meanwhile, bounds erratically across continents, heedless of the season or traditions that every culture has built around the basic rules of weather. It's not just hot–cold extremes, either. Last spring in Oregon, where I moved partly for the mild weather, a tiny tornado touched down without warning on an ordinary, meteorologically ho-hum afternoon and—like a finger from heaven—flipped four cars around a college parking lot. Mind you, tornadoes *don't happen* in Oregon.

That's what we keep getting: Unheard-of weather. Never-before-seen heat in Antarctica. Nonexistent snow packs for the first time ever. The world's driest places suddenly awash. Epic ice storms. Super-typhoons. Wildfires turning normally sodden British Columbia into a smokehouse.

The earth isn't only heating. It's thrashing with fever, wracked with teeth-chattering chills one day and sweat-drenched the next. Exactly as climate scientists said it would be. Every major study predicted not just warming, but *weirding*.

Which also means new phenomena like rogue jellyfish. The leggy blobs flourish in our acidifying, overfished oceans, and "blooms" of them—millions in miles-wide swarms—decimate fish farm stocks, and, now and then, clog water-intake pipes of nuclear power plants. And sting everything within their gelatinous reach.

Let's Not Cook the Kids

We *can* cut our atmospheric carbon count down from 400 parts per million to the safe upper limit of 350 ppm, says an 18-member team of top scientists led by Dr. James Hansen, former director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. Though past inaction has locked us into more heating, bold efforts now will pay off for our kids:

> "To reduce global atmospheric CO_2 concentrations to 350 ppm by the end of this century would require. . . a global reduction in CO_2 emissions of at least 7% per year, alongside. . . global reforestation and improved agriculture.
>
> "If. . . reductions had begun in 2005, only a 3.5% per year global reduction would have been necessary to reach 350 ppm by 2100. If such reductions are delayed beyond 2020, it might not be possible to return to 350 ppm until 2500 or beyond."

So what is our species, which craves order and predictability, to do with such chaos?

How do we manage the fear that accompanies uncertainty?

We might begin by taking a deep breath and expressing gratitude for the gift of life itself. If we enjoy the fulfillment of basic needs—warm hearths, good meals, loyal companions, adequate clothing, modern dentistry, and medicines to ease illness and death—we can add uncertainty to our gratitude list.

We might then ask, "How can I meet my needs without destroying the natural world?" and join the shift to smaller homes, less stuff, and diets based mostly on plants grown sustainably. Until we convince politicians to fund superefficient bullet trains, we could skip the jet-fueled spring fling and instead explore what's closer at hand. Or at least buy carbon offsets.

Yet if we really want to soften humanity's collision with our own life-support systems, there's a far more effective way than shrinking our personal carbon footprints: Shrink our collective one. Scientists assure us we can avoid baking the planet, but only if governments break off using dirty energy and fling themselves into the arms of the clean and renewable. And plant trees like crazy. And invest in the brilliant energy innovations of the last two decades. *Quickly*.



Still the Sky Was Blue
Michelle Kingdom

The good news is that there's a global movement afoot to, well, lead our leaders. Using art, music, and peaceful protest that affirms our interconnection with both one another and the natural world, ordinary citizens are speaking up, revitalizing democracy so as to reclaim the future.

Out in front are religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama and Pope Francis, aiming their moral authority at governments. They remind politicians of their obligation to safeguard both the earth and those on the front lines of climate chaos—the world's poor, who contribute the least to the problem, as well as the world's children, who must inhabit whatever future we now create.

The pressure, finally, is beginning to work. After the pontiff's call for "a bold cultural revolution" to address our social and ecological crises, leaders at the December 2015 global climate talks in Paris signaled a willingness to end the fossil fuel era—a milestone accomplished, in part, by the presence of tens of thousands of citizens clamoring outside the conference center's front door. Indigenous leaders, modeling carbon-free transportation that has served humanity just fine for millennia, even paddled up the Seine to get there.

Of course, in Decembers past, that river has been frozen. In 2015, the hottest-ever on record, it looks like the lion was on the lam.

—MARY DEMOCKER

WHAT **YOU** CAN DO

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Meditate on Aristotle, who said, "Where your talents and the needs of the world cross, there lies your vocation."

If You Have **AN HOUR**...

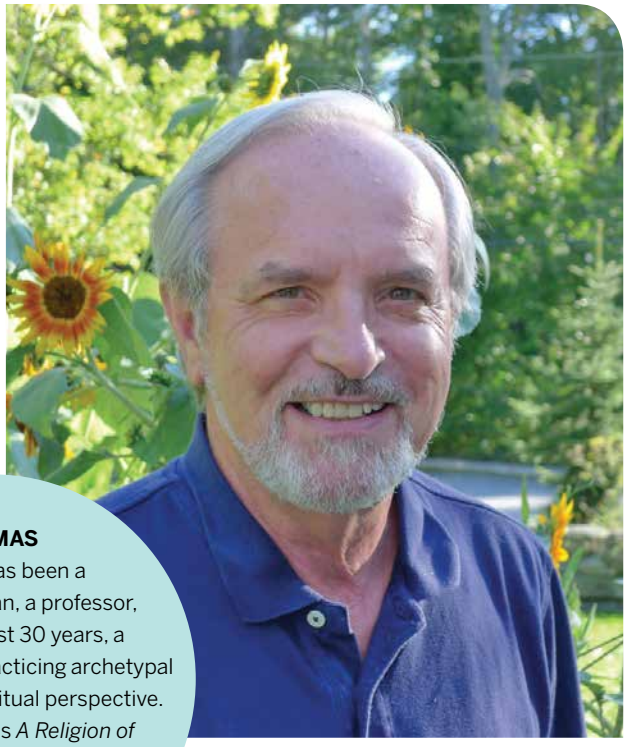
Tell leaders to go fossil-free and invest in wind, solar, and wave energy and conservation. Advocate carbon fees and incentives for energy efficiency.

If You Have **$0**...

Climate blues? Hang out with toddlers. Often the best spiritual teachers, kiddies remind us to hug tightly, laugh until we cry, and protect what's beautiful, miraculous—and dependent on us.

If You Have **$0–$1,000**...

Support climate recovery groups. Commission starving musicians to write new songs for the planet and to lead us in singing them together.



THOMAS MOORE has been a monk, a musician, a professor, and, for the past 30 years, a psychotherapist practicing archetypal therapy with a spiritual perspective. His latest book is *A Religion of One's Own: A Guide to Creating a Personal Spirituality in a Secular World*.

Spiritual Complexes

WHEN IT COMES TO DIETING, my willpower buckles when I'm faced with mashed potatoes and gravy. I may have just read a book on eating only green veggies, and I've resolved to go the Spartan route, but I can't pass up the basic food that I associate with my mother and grandmother and cozy dinners with beloved family members in my childhood. It probably doesn't help that I left home at an early age for a boarding school. My diet problem is not so much that I lack the willpower but that my "Warm Irish-American Family" complex is so strong and deeply planted in me.

A psychological complex is a set of emotions, memories, anxieties, desires, and habits focused around a theme—my need for family comfort, for example—that urges a person in a certain direction that may or may not fit his or her conscious and rational purposes. For example, you may do certain things automatically, desperately, and compulsively in spite of yourself.

Most of us have a certain collection of complexes that shape our lives and identity. They are not bad things, yet they cause trouble when they get out of hand. It helps to get to know them and tame them and get them in tune with your values and ideas. I'm not telling you to repress these complexes and imagine that you have to create a perfectly healthy self by controlling them. The goal is more to befriend them. C. G. Jung said that they're like separate people inside us and that we can dialogue with them and give them some acceptance and containment. James Hillman advised not "feeding" them, and thereby not increasing their hold on you. He once told me to put my depression in a suitcase and carry it with me—close but not dominating.

We are beset not only by psychological complexes, like my mother–grandmother theme, but also by spiritual ones. We may be driven, controlled, or guilt-ridden because of a spiritual complex. I once knew a young man who believed he was the reincarnation of Jesus. He had to save the world and maybe one day be executed. If you tried to talk to him, you discovered that "he" wasn't there. The only "person" at home was this Jesus complex. This is an extreme example, but maybe you can see how anyone might be susceptible to this kind of deep-seated fantasy, though in a less-crazy way.

You can learn to distinguish between passion, which is usually a good thing, and being taken over by an anxious and demanding idea that makes you rather crazy and out of synch with the people around you.

Fanaticism, close-mindedness, self-denial, guilt, proselytizing, excessive devotion to a teacher or a teaching, and moralism—all are signs of a spiritual complex. Try to talk to well-intentioned people caught in these complexes, and you can't reach the human being. The complex is too strong. Often, like-minded church members or leaders support the complex by maintaining a closed system and encouraging extreme positions.

You can be passionately spiritual and not fall under the sway of a complex. But if your dedication diminishes your life, your complexes are probably at work, and you may need to deal with them thoughtfully. Here are my own guidelines:

- Get to know your complexes and where they come from.
- Don't feed them, especially when they are acting up and want attention.
- Don't try to get rid of them but instead befriend them. Understand that at best they are the positive building blocks of your person and your life, but that they can get out of hand.

Spiritual people have special trouble spotting their complexes because extreme emotion may seem appropriate. You're supposed to be dedicated and passionate about your beliefs and bold in your practice. All right, but you can learn to distinguish between passion, which is usually a good thing, and being taken over by an anxious and demanding idea that makes you rather crazy and out of synch with the people around you. This kind of self-awareness is one of the most difficult to achieve, yet it can keep you from flying off into the spiritual void.

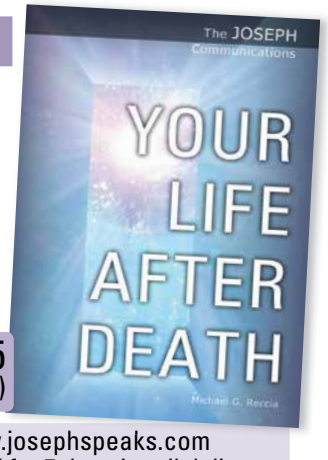
I have a strong mother complex that I always defend as a gift. It has made me sensitive and allowed me to write *Care of the Soul*. The word "care" comes right out of my mother complex. But it can get out of hand, as when I take care of other people at my own emotional expense. Your spiritual complex may urge you to deny yourself in the name of some version of perfection. Or it could be something else entirely. Whatever your complexes are, appreciate their gifts but be aware of how they can grow and interfere with the tranquil unfolding of your life. **S&H**

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EMMA SEPPÄLÄ, PhD, is the author of *The Happiness Track* (being published March 26th) and Science Director at the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research at Stanford Medical School.

Are We Really Worlds Apart?

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT creating a conscious relationship with someone, we tend to think of ways to bridge our differences. We want to allow room for both of us to be our different selves, we want to be able to openly communicate about the ways in which we see things differently, we want to learn to see and even appreciate the world from the other's perspective. Especially when that relationship is between a woman and a man, we want to allow ourselves to revel in the vastness between us. We are, after all, worlds apart: Venus and Mars have different orbits, different gravities, different wavelengths of light. Negotiating this vastness seems so gloriously inclusive. But now scientific observations using new scanning technology suggests something even more fascinating: That view simply isn't true.

In a recent brain-imaging study out of Tel Aviv University in Israel, scientists found that the brains of men and women are highly similar. In fact, they had a hard time finding areas of the brain that were *not* similar.

Probing further, the scientists tried to find men who tended to be stereotypically male and women who tended to be stereotypically female. Again, the scientists came up short. By these new scans, only 0.1 percent of the male population proved to be stereotypically male or female. The rest of us—essentially *all* of us—are a combination of male and female characteristics. Think about it. If you were to describe yourself, you would probably readily admit that you have both male and female qualities in your personality, as well. And so would just about everyone else.

If you dig into the literature on our human needs and wants, you'll find the same story: We are all extremely similar. After food and shelter, our greatest need is for social connection, a sense of belonging. Whether you are a man or a woman, and no matter what your age is, having positive relationships with other people is incredibly important for your health, well-being, and longevity. Presumably, that's why we seek each other out and build relationships in the first place.

Yet we also see that there is a growing epidemic of loneliness. One in four people say they have no one to talk to about personal problems. That's enormously sad and unhealthy. The helpful news, however, is that social connection doesn't come down to the number of relationships a person has. Rather, it stems from inside. If you take care of yourself and are happy from within, you will find that you feel connected to others.

Having self-compassion doesn't mean not taking responsibility for yourself and your actions, or letting yourself be a lazy sloth; instead, it simply means that you don't berate yourself harshly at every turn.

Stress and anxiety, for example, make us self-focused and less empathic. No wonder you have a hard time connecting when you are on edge. So the first secret to having better relationships is for you to learn to reduce stress and anxiety—to have a better relationship with yourself.

Granted, the hardest thing we can do is to love ourselves. There are a million other things on our list ahead of self-care. Yet it is when we exert self-compassion, research shows, that we become happier and more resilient; that we have less anxiety, depression, and stress; and that our relationships with others improve.

Having self-compassion doesn't mean not taking responsibility for yourself and your actions, or letting yourself be a lazy sloth; instead, it simply means that you don't berate yourself harshly at every turn. The self-compassionate person will bounce back more easily from setbacks and have a ready smile. The self-compassionate person will know when to take a break from work so she can be energized and full of life. The self-compassionate person knows how to have good boundaries due to self-respect. The self-compassionate one will teach you how to love yourself.

How do you exert self-compassion? It's simple: Treat yourself as you would a friend. When you make mistakes, comfort yourself. When you fail, remind yourself of what you would tell a friend: "Everyone makes mistakes." When you're overwhelmed with sadness or emotion, observe these emotions as you would those of a friend, and hold yourself with love. Kristin Neff, a self-compassion researcher, even advocates giving yourself a physical hug. Try it right now.

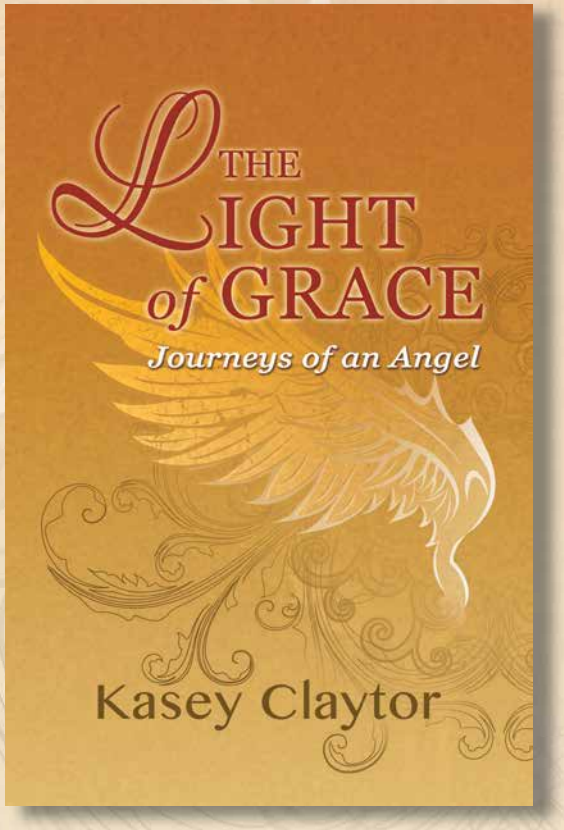
Now think about the hug you just gave yourself in light of these new brain scans. Was your Mars hugging your Venus? Or was it the other way around? Since we have both inside us, go ahead and switch roles. Which feels better? Ask yourself which aspect of you is more huggable, and why? Share this experiment with others. S&H

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PAUL SUTHERLAND is chief investment officer of the FIM Group and founder of the Utopia Foundation, which sends volunteers around the globe through utopiavolunteers.org.

Wrestling with a Question of Inheritance

I'm wrestling with an inheritance question: whether to pass my parents' money to my kids. I don't think I need it, and it could give them a good boost. It could go into a trust or something, though that seems controlling. I want my kids to be free. Down the road, I also don't want to be worth too much more dead than alive. Any thoughts?

Paul Sutherland: Many thoughts run through my mind as I consider your question, but the first thing I want to share is a story that was told to me years ago. I don't remember it exactly, but the story came from one of the first books on sociology, published in 1897 by a Frenchman named Emile Durkheim, who studied change in social status. The world really seemed to be speeding up back then!

Durkheim had asked people to picture a tall and handsome prince riding through the countryside on a beautiful horse, wearing his finest and looking for a lovely maiden. Next, he asked them to visualize a young maiden who sleeps on the ground with the chickens and pigs and often gets by eating grubs. The maiden gets swept up by the prince. She's washed and gloriously dressed, fed fantastic foods, and given a warm, safe place to live. No more sleeping with pigs, no more bugs to eat! Suddenly she's living the dream in a fairy-tale castle—and that all sounds great. But, shockingly, the title of Durkheim's famous text is *Suicide.*

It seems that many people who get rich all of a sudden because of a prince, a wealthy grandparent, or a winning lottery ticket become prone to depression and eventually even suicide. You probably knew that, but maybe you didn't realize it was part of your question.

I also think about this sudden change of status when I consider the current suicide epidemic in our military. Imagine going from a normal life here in America to a modern war zone like Afghanistan, where your sergeant or your superior officer tells you what to say, how to react, where you will live, what you will do—all in an environment where so many of the normal rules of life have broken down. You come home again, and then are rotated into the front lines of battle, and then return home for good. That cycle alone could be stressful enough to trigger depression, all kinds of self-medication, and even suicide.

Now that you are wishing you hadn't asked the question, I will tell you that how you handle your parents' inheritance money is up to you and should be guided by *your* values—not mine. Speaking for myself, my estate (after educating my children) will go to charities and other endeavors designed to serve the

most vulnerable in the world. My advice for you would be to do the following:

1. Go see a good, fee-only financial advisor and ask her or him whether, in fact, you yourself might need the inheritance to sustain you through the rest of your life. You probably don't want to become a burden for your kids in your later years.

2. Contemplate the first of Gandhi's Seven Social Sins: "Wealth without work." Consider whether it applies to your children's possible inheritance.

3. Contemplate your own spiritual values around wealth and money. Do you believe that money, wealth, and things over which you have control are actually yours to use as you please? Or do you feel a karmic or even God-given responsibility to help other people, the plants and animals all around us, and the earth itself?

Contemplate all these things, and then answer one question only for yourself: "What is the responsible thing for me to do with my parents' money?"

The fact that you are wrestling with this question is wonderful. That you are thinking of others (your kids and grandkids) and pondering how they could benefit from the money is also wonderful. Just enjoy being in the uncertainty of what to do. You will figure it out, and a lot of good will come out of this wrestling with moral and financial choices. Thank you for the question! S&H

The fact that you are wrestling with this question is wonderful. That you are thinking of others (your kids and grandkids) and pondering how they could benefit from the money is also wonderful.

To ask Paul a question, email him directly at paul@spiritualityhealth.com.

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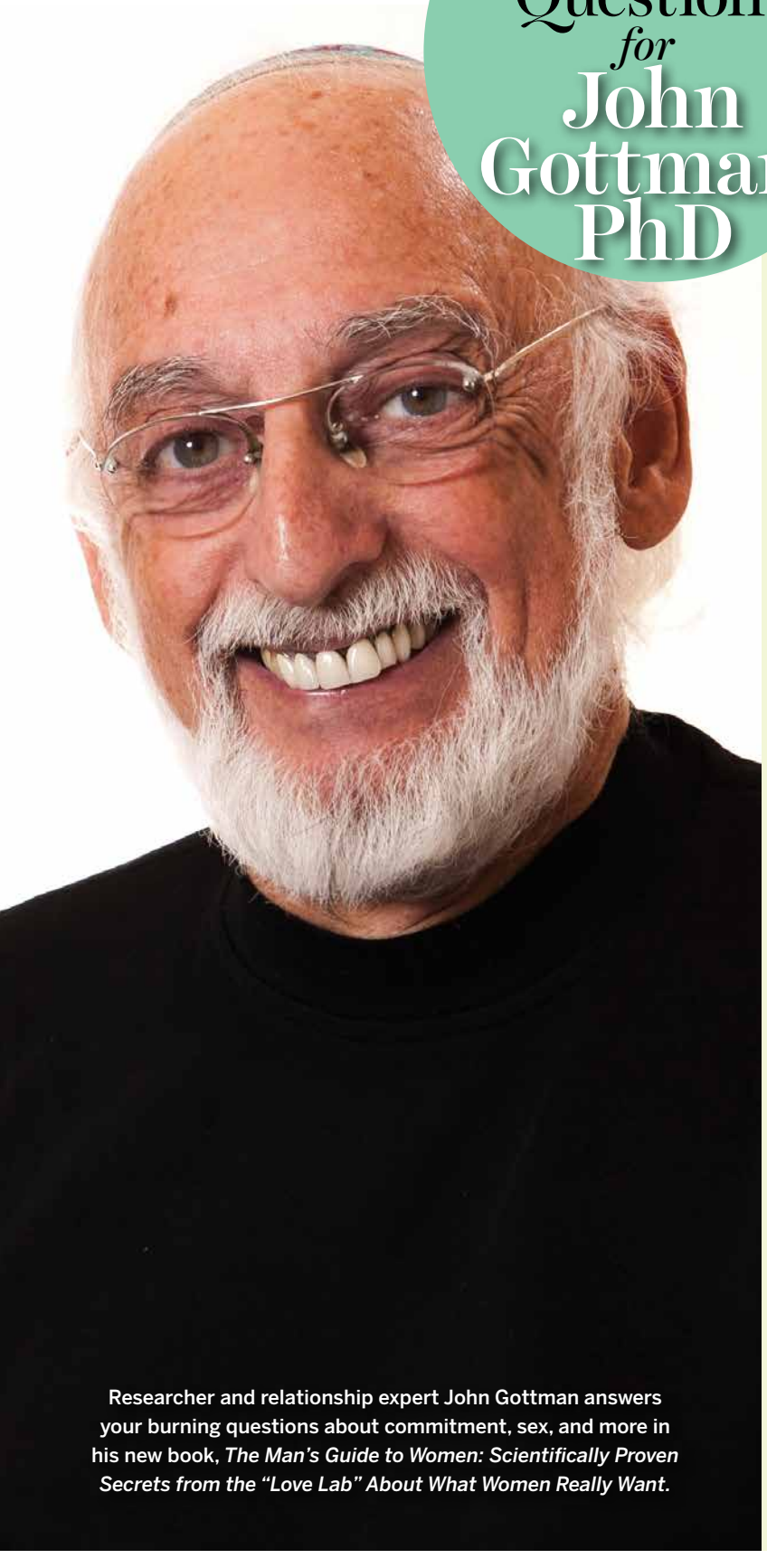
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5 Questions *for* John Gottman, PhD



Researcher and relationship expert John Gottman answers your burning questions about commitment, sex, and more in his new book, *The Man's Guide to Women: Scientifically Proven Secrets from the "Love Lab" About What Women Really Want.*

1. Essentially, what do women really want from men?

The number one thing that women want when they are seeking a partner to date is trustworthiness. First, she needs to know that she is safe, that she can rely on you. Trust simply means that one can be sure that in all decisions one's partner is thinking about what's good for you as well as what's good for him or her.

2. After 40 years of relationship research, have the rules of dating changed?

In some ways nothing has changed. Instead of personals ads, we have the Internet, and the big matching sites. There are some secular trends: A segment of young people want to live alone, and are not seeking an intimate relationship at all. Some young people in our country are doing things in friendship groups rather than conducting one-to-one dating.

3. How is commitment good for your health?

It depends on how you define "commitment," but the data on being *married* shows that married couples accumulate more wealth, are physically and mentally healthier, recover from illness more quickly, have children who do better in every developmental domain, and live longer (four to 15 years longer) than cohabiting (that is, less committed) couples.

4. In what ways does a man differ from a woman when it comes to conflict?

Women bring up the issues in the relationship 80 percent of the time. Women have better memories than men, especially for conversations. During conflict discussions, women are more critical than men, men are more easily overwhelmed by negative affect (the experience or feeling of emotion) than women are, men stonewall more than women, and men are less likely to accept influence from women than women are from men.

5. What's your best tip for sex she'll remember?

The one thing that a woman wants most in sex is to be desired by her man. Every now and then she wants to think that he finds her irresistible.

—ALMA TASSI

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