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# **Entering Your Own Heart** **A Guide to Developing Self Love,** **Inner Peace and Happiness**

**Carole J. (Meisner) Morton**



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*With heartfelt love  
for my grandson Andrew, my son Terry,  
my brother Wayne and my parents  
Annette and Jack Meisner.*



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## Caveat

**T**his book was written to better the lives of all people. However, if you are challenged with mental illness, a *physical* condition that affects the brain and creates symptoms such as psychosis or severely imbalanced thinking, then it is important that you focus on healing your brain before doing the active psycho-spiritual healing work suggested in this book. While I believe that learning the concepts presented in *Entering Your Own Heart* will provide you with positive support for your healing process, please consult directly with your physician, naturopath, osteopath or other healthcare practitioner if you are experiencing a mental illness caused by genetic malfunctions, deficiency of needed central nervous system nutrients, neurotoxicity or a combination of these.



## Introduction

*Just as rivers flow from east and west to merge with the one sea, forgetting that they were ever separate rivers, so all beings lose their separateness when they eventually merge into pure Being.*

—Chandogya Upanishad

*Namaste: I honor the place in you in which the entire universe dwells. I honor the place in you which is of love, light, peace and joy. When you are in that place in you and I am in that place in me, We Are One.*

—Definition of Namaste

***E****ntering Your Own Heart: A Guide to Developing Self-Love, Inner Peace and Happiness* is a journey, a journey to the center of your own heart where you can see, understand and appreciate the fact that you always have loved—and still do love—yourself . . . way more than you imagine. Once you truly know this, you will not only treat yourself with the love and appreciation you deserve

but you will accept no less from anyone else and offer no less to others.

The love for self I am addressing is a love that maintains peace rather than hurt, anger, anxiety or depression in the midst of disappointment, betrayal or failure. The depth of love we allow ourselves to experience, toward our self and others, ranges from conditional to unconditional. When we reach the deepest state of love for our self, we experience unconditional love that never dies even if a loved one dies or leaves us or we leave. When we love our self unconditionally, it means the end of inner conflict, self-hatred, depression and anxiety—and it allows us to experience our true inner peace.

Entering your own heart means taking a journey through your outer self into the very center of your being where the actual loving truth of you resides. It's often said that it is very important to love our selves. How many of us truly understand what that means? Over the years, I've asked many people I've met socially if they love themselves. Their answers were usually yes. When I asked them how they knew they love themselves, most answered that they bought themselves massages, a nice car or attractive clothes. These very same people would often feel angry, upset, insulted and indignant; they would become boastful and judgmental of others and were not truly peaceful inside. Unfortunately, we have not been taught how to treat

ourselves with unconditional love. In fact, much of our training has actually taught us the opposite—but we can still learn. My hope is that *Entering Your Own Heart* will increase your awareness of self-love and guide you to create a richer, happier life experience for both yourself and for those you touch.

The journey is three-fold, with each aspect being inextricably linked. The first aspect of this journey is to become aware of and be able to hear a part of you that is sometimes referred to as “the still small voice” that resides within your heart. The second aspect of this journey is to actively listen to that voice, to “check-in” with it, and to fully understand its importance in your life. The third aspect of this journey is to arrive at a state of total identification or oneness with this voice, to realize that it is your true self, and to completely drop all identification with your personality or ego self.

My personal belief, and the belief of many others, is that “the all and the everything” provides us with more than one lifetime to complete this journey, but this belief is not required to walk the path to self-love. Based on where you are on your path, *Entering Your Own Heart* will guide you through the first two aspects and lead you to the door of the third aspect. When you attain self-love, you will live pain-free: confident, happy, peaceful, accepting, patient and loving.

## **My Journey**

I'd like to share with you a little about how my life and this book evolved.

When I was very young I spent most of my days alone in my room, rocking and crying on my bed. One day, I just got up, climbed out the window, slid my small body to the very edge of the ledge five stories above the ground and tried to find the courage to jump off. It wasn't the thoughts in my head as much as the feelings in my body that drew me out that window. The rocking would ease those feelings some, but, on this day, for whatever reason, the rocking wasn't enough. As I sat on the ledge, with one hand raised above my head, clinging to the bottom of the open window for security, the other hand pushed down on the red brick in an attempt to eject myself over the edge. I was ten.

At that age, I didn't know how to ease my pain, and I sought relief the only way I could imagine. Luckily, I was too fearful to end my life, and, even though life was very difficult, I managed to stay alive until I could find a better way to ease my pain. My search took decades, but I learned that sometimes it takes profound pain to bring us to profound peace, and I did find the inner wisdom that enables me to have a peaceful, fulfilled life today. If you aspire to peace, it is within your reach as well because peace is within you.



No matter how alike or different we might seem, we all have the same core needs and can all achieve a fulfillment of those needs. My life perspective developed into what I call psycho-spirituality. This is an understanding of the human experience being connected and whole with no separation between mind/body/spirit/other. I've attempted to put into words the complexity of what I know and to organize my message in such a way that the miracle of who we each are becomes clear and evident. My desire is that my words will spark in you a great love and appreciation for your self.

My childhood was riddled with scary experiences, and I wound up feeling great doubt, even hatred, of both myself and the world. The world looked upside down to me. I remember thinking that everything that was important wasn't, and that everything that wasn't important was. I felt very alone.

Even though I climbed back in the window and didn't end my life that day, the years ahead were troubled with anorexia, battered-wife syndrome, prostitution, near-death from a self-induced abortion at a time when abortions were illegal, and more misery than anyone deserves.

A few days after I climbed back from the ledge, I had an experience so strange that I'll never forget it. I was sitting on my bed rocking, crying and thinking that I was not loved. As a steady current of tears ran down my cheeks, for

some unknown reason, I turned my face toward my mirror. Seeing my reflection, I remember thinking, “How ugly!” I got up and slowly moved toward the mirror, my face appearing larger and larger as I got closer. “And uglier!” I thought. I remember again thinking that nobody loved me. Then immediately, out of nowhere, came a very distinct voice. It spoke fiercely to me, “If nobody is going to love you, then I’m going to love you!” The voice was loud, clear and sounded almost angry. I turned around, trying to make sense of it, looking to see who could have said these words, but no one was there.

My family was not religious, so I never considered that it could have been a higher or spirit voice. Confused, I pushed the whole experience to the side and forgot about it until the voice reappeared strongly for me years later when I was 21 and in an abusive marriage to a troubled man who was threatening to kill me, our child and then himself. Though I then remembered my experience at age ten, I still did not understand the implications of it and, again, dropped it from my memory.

By the time I was 34 I was attending psychotherapy regularly. I defined myself as an atheist because I simply would not believe in a god who allowed such misery—my own and all that I saw in the world. Then, through a very slow process, I became aware that there was something that kept me going, something that seemed to value my life.

My personal journey led me to psychotherapy and eventually to exploring spirituality. As I continued to grow, I discovered that I loved providing support to others. I eventually went back to school to earn a degree in clinical psychology and a state license. I also trained as a non-denominational, metaphysical minister. I've been in private practice for over 33 wonderful years.

The information I share in *Entering Your Own Heart* is not intended to lead you down any religious road. If I had to say where this book will lead you, it is to the very center of your heart—where you are connected to everyone and everything, to where peace and joy reside.

No doubt, age ten was a profound year for me. Despite my urge to find peace through the only way I could think of at that young age, paradoxically, I also had a vision of me as a grown up. I remember it very clearly. I would see myself speaking to groups of people and each person would come away from listening to me loving themselves more. Because I was a child who was severely belittled, it's not difficult to understand that I was not learning self-love or self-respect in my home. I needed to love, or at least like myself, but due to having a mother with extremely low self-esteem and a horribly abusive father, I only heard words that made me distrust, dislike and even hate myself. I felt like I didn't deserve better.

Yet even at the young age of ten, I understood a bigger picture. I knew that if my mother loved herself more, if the President of the United States loved himself more, if the “bad guys” in the movies loved themselves more, the world would right itself and the crazy abuses would stop. It seems my life has been about finding that internal loving and supportive voice for myself and to help others find it for themselves.

Entering our own heart is the way we consciously connect with peace and joy, which then spreads from within to without, creating a better world for ourselves, our children, our families, our friends, our co-workers and strangers. Joy and peace are truly already within us, and we are all entitled to it. We are also entitled to feel the confidence needed to move toward our dreams. Each one of us has the right to know this and to love ourselves unconditionally. I know, first-hand, the strength of the human spirit to heal and overcome adversity, even terror. It is in touching our pain that we gain the gifts within us.

One important aspect to entering your own heart and connecting with the peace and joy inside is to learn how to touch and overcome emotional pain. Emotional pain is caused by mistaken beliefs, both conscious and unconscious. These beliefs are not the truth no matter what evidence you believe you have for them.

Think of your emotional pain as residing in a room that holds all of the mistaken beliefs that you need to correct. Walking through that room, touching and accepting all that is in it, is what will get you through to where your peace and joy reside.. This journey, to the core of your being, will lead you to your pain and your power, your fear and your joyful heart.

In *Entering Your Own Heart*, we will look at the mechanisms for connecting and disconnecting from our spirit self, who resides at the center of your heart. I will explain, in detail, how the key to entering your own heart is found in the unconscious and conscious ways we relate to our self and allow others to relate to us. You will see how all behavior begins within your mind, a mind that is actually a relationship—a relationship that creates the energy that you experience as *you*.

## **The Psycho-Spiritual Journey**

Our spiritual self, as others and I understand it, is the experience of oneness and connectedness. It is the experience of being connected with our self, with others, with the animals, with the earth and with “the all and the everything.” As we connect deeper within ourselves, our spirit self, (higher power, still small voice, god, universal energy – whichever name you want to call it) becomes a

conscious part of us and strengthens us, bringing us closer to the experience of unconditional love, peace and joy. For the purpose of simplicity, I will refer to “the all and the everything” as “the spirit self.”

As this book progresses and you begin to do the necessary work to connect to aspects of your self that you have not, as yet, met and embraced, you will find that, through this process, your sense of being connected to everyone and everything will expand as well.

Our whole physical being is made up of our bodies, our brains and our minds. This mind, which I call the personality self, is the part of us that reasons, understands, wills and experiences emotions, whether on a conscious or unconscious level. Our physical body affects our brain, our brain affects our mind, and, in reverse, our mind affects our brain and our brain affects our physical body. Your body/brain/mind is a single unit working together to maintain your being. Your socio-political and physical environment plays a large part in influencing your body/brain/mind. We are molded by every aspect of our existence.

There is a strong correlation between physiological and psychological flow, health and well-being. Flow and health are synonymous. When I work with clients, I acknowledge and treat their whole being, working toward opening up the flow of thoughts, beliefs and emotions as well as their body's physical flow so that they can break through their

blockages, stuck places or contractions. As we open up, we are more capable of hearing our spirit self – directing us to greater self-loving decisions and behaviors.

It was over 30 years ago that I traveled to southern California to study with Dr. O. Carl Simonton, a pioneering medical doctor who is now known as “the father of psychosocial medicine.” Dr. Simonton stated, “You can learn to follow the inner self, the inner physician that tells you where to go. Healing is simply attempting to do more of those things that bring joy and fewer of those things that bring pain.”

Most industrialized countries, like the United States, are so fast-paced that people are dissuaded from being mindful of their emotions and physical sensations. It can be difficult to find time for tending to both our outer and our inner life. In order to “keep up” within these societies, many people dampen their feelings and mask their pain with various numbing substances so that they can keep up with the pace. The result, for all of us, is that we are less in touch with our selves, especially our truest selves, and with the joy of our aliveness. We miss out on knowing someone very wonderful ... our self!

Your life need not be a struggle. Ease, peace, love, health and joy are yours to experience—even if you have little money or physical comforts. We might say that the school of life with its lessons are offered to you as you

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travel this path toward the center of your heart. It is your path, therefore your choice if or when you do the work. The opportunity will always be there for you when you want it and are ready for it.

The universe is unconditionally patient. In the beginning of *A Course In Miracles*, a spiritual teaching sometimes referred to as the Vedanta in Christian language,<sup>1</sup> it states: “This is *A Course In Miracles*. It is a required course. Only the time you take it is voluntary. Free will does not mean that you can establish the curriculum. It means only that you can elect what you want to take at a given time.”<sup>2</sup>

The path to self-love, inner-peace and happiness also leads you to the realization of your connection and sense of oneness with everything. This is the process known as awakening. Awakening is always available to you, along with self-love, inner-peace and happiness, as long as you choose to walk forward and not give up when you encounter difficulties.

## **Your Journey**

The journey to the center of your heart is for the brave of heart because there are often many pains to face, hurts to heal and mistakes to correct. Allow me to be your guide as you travel this path. *Entering Your Own Heart* is a guidebook, explaining in detail how to dissolve the fears,



beliefs and concerns that bring you pain and how to listen to and hear your feelings as they guide you to peace and joy.

Allow the thoughts presented in this book to strengthen you for the journey and offer you a way through the rough spots so that you can embrace pain whenever it appears and not let it block your way. Allow this book to show you how to become strong in the face of self-judgment and how to enjoy and appreciate your self and each individual who appears on your path as your mirror. Most of all, allow *Entering Your Own Heart* to bring you to experience an unconditional love and peace that extends itself effortlessly.

Throughout *Entering Your Own Heart*, I will use the term *pain* to mean any emotion that is the result of believing that you are less than innocent, less than loving, less than magnificent.

In the upcoming chapters, you will learn the tools to become a spiritual warrior. I promise that, as you travel this path, you will become stronger and the process will become easier. The length of the journey is much less important than the amount of loving experiences you gather along the way.

Throughout *Entering Your Own Heart*, I refer to a variety of spiritual teachings and quote wise people from all walks of life. We have the ability to learn from our inner wisdom and be inspired by the wisdom of all other teachings. Allow your self to be inspired by others and

allow your self to open up to learning from your own inner wisdom.

I have chosen to use all lower case letters when referring to both the personality self and the spirit self. This is to point out that your personality self is not less than the spirit self, but actually one with it. Where appropriate, I also use the two words, “your self” rather than the grammatically preferred “yourself” to refer to the true, inner, whole and holy being that is you.

Because the concepts I offer build on each other, I strongly suggest that you read the chapters in order.

Your work and your rewards lie ahead. Let’s begin.

## Chapter 1

# The Relationship That Is You

*In all the great spiritual traditions, at their heart is tenderness—just to be kind inside, and then everything rights itself. Fear rests. Confusion rests.*

—Pamela Wilson

**F**or your journey, it is important that you have a core understanding of who you truly are. This will help you to feel centered and strong. You are, in fact, a relationship—within your self. You think, feel and behave toward your self just as you do toward others. Though many of your beliefs about your self are conscious, your strongest beliefs and the ones that have the greatest influence on your emotional feelings and behaviors are in your unconscious mind.

Your emotions and behaviors are the result of your beliefs even though you might be more in touch with the emotions than you are aware of the beliefs that cause them.

I will refer to this aspect of you as the *personality self*. Most of how you choose to move in the world is the direct result of the beliefs that make up your personality self.

Alongside your personality self resides your *spirit self*. Your spirit self is the energy of unconditional love, acceptance, joy and peace. When the energies within your personality self—your beliefs and emotions—cause a vibration that differs from the vibration of the spirit self, that dissonance causes you to experience pain. When the energy is harmonious, you experience peace.

We have two types of beliefs: beliefs about our self and beliefs about the world. Our beliefs about our self include whether we believe we are smart enough, good enough, loving enough and acceptable enough. Our beliefs about the world include whether it is safe or dangerous, supportive or rejecting, fair or unfair, and so on. These beliefs set up our expectations, our anticipations and our sense of what is possible. All of these are learned beliefs through which our sense of reality is created.

This inner relationship, which I call the personality self, begins to form in infancy. Some would argue it begins in utero, and others would even say it begins in a previous life. In essence, though, it doesn't matter when it begins. What matters is the state of your relationship right now, in this present moment. Is your inner environment conflicted or peaceful, confident or fearful? The quality of your life,

the choices you make, and the love you allow in is all influenced by this inner relationship.

Let's start at the beginning: to be an infant is to be in a state of outrageous vulnerability. If, as infants, we were aware of just how powerless and vulnerable we actually were, we would have suffered extreme and physically destructive anxiety. So life offers us a way not to feel this immense anxiety; life gives us an outrageous egocentricity, an all-powerful sense that we control everything.

When we cried and the bottle was brought to us, we believed we created that experience. And when it was not brought to us and we were hungry, we believed we created that experience as well. If we were yelled at, ignored or hit, we believed that we were the cause, that the pain was our doing, our fault. In this way, we were able to continue to believe that we had some power.

We believed that if we created everything, then we could create something different when we felt the need to. If we were hit or shaken or ignored, believing it was our doing gave us the sense that we could change our selves and therefore have some power in our situation. This sense of control allowed us the freedom to not live in dire fear. We believed that, if we needed to change in order to please those in the parental role so that they would continue to love, feed and take care of us, we could.

The quality of the relationship we have with ourselves started at the very first moment we experienced our bodies, our environment and others. From the very beginning, we believed that we caused what happened to us and around us. This is true for everyone. There are no exceptions. To develop and grow during this outrageously vulnerable time of life, each one of us was given this overblown sense of power. Unfortunately, some of the self-blaming beliefs did not get resolved, and they became a part of our unconscious self-concept, that is, the set of beliefs we hold about our selves.

How we were parented became the message of who we are, what we deserve, and what we are capable of getting in life. That early environment, especially the influence of those who parented us, formed the relationship we have with our selves. As an infant, we had no way of believing otherwise,

*Our parental figures, through their actions—whether conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional—provided us with a mirror by which we correctly or incorrectly determined who we were.*

no awareness of outside circumstances that affected how and why we were treated as we were. We had no other way to come to a different conclusion about our selves. At this early stage of life, including babyhood and toddlerhood, we had no alternatives, no way to understand

our selves differently. Our parental figures, through their actions—whether conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional—provided us with a mirror by which we correctly or incorrectly determined who we were.

That reflection from our parental figures and our circumstances determined our self-concept, which is the accumulated beliefs we have about ourselves that we've been gathering since this early stage of life. The predominating parental behaviors we experienced then became the predominating beliefs we each hold about ourselves now—unless somewhere along the way we've been able to change them.

Let's look at this example: if 50 percent of the time a child is treated well and 50 percent of the time the child is treated badly, that child will be quite confused about his or her identity. I often say to my clients, "We parent ourselves the way our parents parented us... until we change." That is, we are now our own parents, allowing ourselves the experience of being heard or not heard, cared for or not cared for, protected or not protected, nurtured or not nurtured, understood or not understood; we are the ones who are allowing or not allowing ourselves to receive empathy or indifference for our pains and fears from within or from others.

Through our early experiences, we come to believe what life, for us, will be like; and from this, our expectations

are born. How we treat our selves, how we allow others to treat us, or how we treat others are all reflections of our self-concept. We might be angry, fearful and punishing or generous, forgiving and kind. It all depends on what we believe about who we are.

The journey to the center of your heart is a journey through the hills and valleys of your self-concept and its resulting self-esteem. Our *self-concept* is the set of beliefs we hold about ourselves. Our *self-esteem* is based on our self-concept, and is the set of feelings we carry about ourselves. This journey, in a way, is like an ongoing, internal counseling session not unlike those among couples—with the “couple” being you and your self. This journey will resolve inner-conflict and lead you to a beautiful state of peacefulness.

We might or might not be conscious of our beliefs and emotions, but the buried beliefs and emotions are the ones that have the upper hand in influencing our moods and our behaviors. Beliefs, whether conscious or unconscious, lead to emotions. The only exceptions to this are emotional responses that are physically connected to certain medical conditions and/or reactions to pharmaceuticals.

If I said to you, “Don’t go on a boat because the world is flat, and you can fall off the edge,” you would not believe me and you would not feel any fear of falling off the edge of the world. However, if for some reason, you did believe



me, you would experience great fear and not get on a boat. In this example, it is clear to see how your emotions are directly related to both your beliefs and behaviors.

Beliefs, plus their corresponding emotions, whether conscious or unconscious, are the energies that lead to behaviors. The previous example shows that the person's behavior of choosing not to get on the boat was directly related to the emotion of fear. Here's

*Beliefs, plus their corresponding emotions, whether conscious or unconscious, are the energies that lead to behaviors.*

another example: if I am a chair designer and I design a chair that I really believe is beautiful plus very comfortable, I will feel excited about building it and I will proceed with my project; but if I feel no real excitement about the design, I will not be moved to build it.

The emotions behind our beliefs are instrumental in moving us toward action. We are not always aware of why we believe, feel or behave as we do, but as we travel our path, all of that becomes clear and we become empowered to change any dis-empowering beliefs that lead to emotional pain and the lack of self-supportive behavior.

Our self-concept and our self-esteem are instrumental in our emotional and behavioral experiences in every moment, from whether we experience emotional reactions such as insult, anger, compassion or joy to whether we take

an action, like applying to college, joining the military or becoming a parent.

Other influences on our life experience interplay with our self-concept and self-esteem as well. Those are the beliefs we hold about the world, such as believing hard work brings rewards, men don't cry and so on, as well as the beliefs we hold about the unseen world; our spiritual or religious beliefs.

Our inner relationship can be seen as a dance between our internalized parented being and our internalized parent, that is, between our inner child and our inner parent. I've worked with many clients over the years who had an overbearing inner parent and also with clients who had a rebellious inner child. Both caused the turmoil they were coming to therapy to resolve.

One of these clients grew up in a southern Baptist home with extremely strict parents. Once she was old enough to be on her own, she took off, moved to a big city and became a stripper. With few job skills and a pretty face, she was able to support herself while she rebelled against her upbringing in any and all ways that she could. Her inner child was running rampant, and she had a hard time taking responsibility for anything. She came to a place in her therapy where she understood that she held a belief and an accompanying fear that, if she stopped being rebellious,

her strict inner-parent would take over, blocking her from experiencing happiness.

I shared with her the truism that “We parent ourselves the way our parents parented us ... until we change.” She realized that, by shutting out the overbearing parent part of her, she created a situation in which there was no tolerable parent with whom she could be in partnership with. We looked at a different kind of parent, one who was sensitive and caring toward her need for play as well as responsible for her health and safety. I helped her develop an inner parent who her inner child could trust, love and relate to.

When the relationship between our inner parent and our inner child is cooperative and caring, the result is adult behavior. This client, who was also a talented singer but too undisciplined to give that talent the focus it needed, went on to create a successful singing career. Her story demonstrates that when the inner child receives compassionate understanding and acceptance from the inner parent, the inner child can fully begin to trust him or her self and grow. This growth stems from the process of these two separate parts merging into one ... that “one” being the adult self.

What you believe about your self, how you feel about your self, how you behave toward your self and others, and how you allow others to behave toward you is the bottom line in creating the quality of your life. This relationship,

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that is you, is your personal reality. It is yours to create or recreate.

Changing this relationship so that you can experience greater inner peace, less inner conflict and a happier and more confident self comes from bringing to consciousness those beliefs that block you from these positive feelings. I will present to you tools to help you with this as you travel your path, but first it will be helpful for you to understand that you are also an energy system. This knowledge, the subject of the next chapter, will help you strengthen your relationship with your self.

## Chapter 2

# You Are an Energy Experience

*You are in physical existence to learn and understand that your energy, translated into feelings, thoughts and emotions, causes all experience. There are no exceptions.*

—Seth

**E**verything is made up of energy. That includes you. Hindus refer to our life energy as prana, and Buddhists call it chi. The best English translation is vital energy, the mysterious life force that makes our brainwaves wave and our hearts tick. It's what keeps us functioning healthfully, slows down our system when it is blocked, and apparently leaves our bodies when we die. When we diminish our vital energy by using it to suppress emotional energy, our body becomes deprived of the energy it needs and this leads to depression, anxiety and physical illness.

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We know from the science of physics that energy vibrates at different rates and that these vibrations result in differences of appearance and experience—the denser the energy, the more solid the object appears. Similarly, each color has its own vibration, and the difference in the rate of vibration creates the distinction between red, green, yellow, blue and so on. Musical notes also vibrate at different rates, resulting in different sounds like B-flat, D-sharp, high C.

Each emotion also has a different rate of vibration, and that's how we can differentiate our emotions, such as anger from sadness and sadness from happiness. Emotional energy reverberates inside of us like a drum, making us conscious of our emotional feelings. The emotional energies of love, gratitude, appreciation, joy and happiness vibrate more quickly and strengthen our vital energy. Fear, worry and anger vibrate more slowly and, thus, can weaken our vital energy. Yet as long as these slower vibrating emotions are flowing, i.e. not being suppressed, but expressed, they do not cause us harm.

The vibrational rates of colors, sounds and emotions will sometimes match. That's why we have universal expressions such as "I'm feeling blue" or "I'm in the pink." It's why we are reminded of sadness when we hear a piece of music in B-flat minor while music in the key of C major can uplift us. The same is true of food items or substances that we ingest, each of which has a different energy and is

a major influence on our moods and health. For example, certain substances, such as sugar, coffee and cocaine, can cause anxiety because the vibrational rate or energy of these substances matches the vibrational energy of anxiety.

Understanding energy is important for your mental, emotional and physical health. Learning which emotional energies can strengthen you will help you move more easily into your heart while also helping you create the quality of life you want and deserve. Thaddaus Golas, author of *The Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment*, wrote: "The way you see the world depends entirely on your own vibration. When your vibration changes, the whole world will look different. It is like those days when everyone seems to be smiling at you because you feel happy."<sup>3</sup> Your emotional vibration is connected to and caused by your belief, and each belief and its accompanying emotion carry a different vibration: the belief that causes your happy feeling is also the belief that allows you to notice and accept good in the world. When this happens, you actually reduce your stress and strengthen your immune system.

Dr. Norman Cousins was a wonderful humanitarian who wrote *Anatomy of an Illness*, a book about how he used the energy of laughter to heal his body. I was fortunate enough to attend a lecture he gave in which he told us about an experiment he conducted while he was a professor at UCLA. After a full day of teaching, he went to a medical

lab and had blood drawn for a Complete Blood Count (CBC). Directly afterward, he went into a meditative state, focusing on thoughts and pictures of situations that made him feel very happy, and he stayed in that happy state until he could feel it throughout his body. At that point, he had the lab technicians draw blood for another CBC and the two were compared. His immune system, which produces various cells, such as killer T cells, hemoglobin and so on, had increased its production of these cells by 100 to 200 percent in the time it took him to meditate. The energy of happiness running through his body strengthened both his vital energy and his immune system.

## **Peristalsis of the Mind**

The flow of energy is required for both mental and physical health. So when there is a block to the flow of energy, illness can occur. Our bodies have a built in process called peristalsis, an involuntary mechanism that constricts and relaxes muscles in the intestines to help our body eliminate food waste and other substances that are no longer needed. When there is a block in the lower part of the body that is too strong for peristalsis to occur, the body attempts reverse peristalsis (vomiting) to eliminate unwanted or toxic substances.



I profess that the mind also has a mechanism of peristalsis, one that functions differently but has the same purpose. This mental peristalsis uses three feeling guides: interest, curiosity and desire. These guides steer us toward people and situations that trigger or elicit our conscious awareness of unresolved beliefs and emotions, thus providing a way to help us cleanse our non-nurturing and energy-depleting beliefs.

Remember that emotions are the result of beliefs, whether those beliefs are conscious or unconscious. Like physical pain, emotional pain serves a purpose. If we have a problem in our bladder, pain will let us know that something in our bladder needs correction. In the same manner, emotional pain lets us know when something in our mind needs correction.

Over my many years of working with individuals and couples, it has become clear to me that people are often attracted to others because they share a similar vibrational energy even when they are unconscious of this fact. It is said that opposites attract, yet it has been shown to me over and over again that like energy attracts like energy even when that energy is expressed in opposite ways. For example, the husband of one couple I worked with stated that he was attracted to his wife's assertiveness and sense of security when they met. It was a quality he aspired for himself but did not have. After several years of marriage,

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he found her assertiveness to be bossy, and she was unhappy with his lack of assertiveness.

Through an exploration of their childhoods, I learned that both his lack of confidence and assertiveness and her expression of confidence and assertiveness were rooted in childhood abuse and fear. By helping them to understand the deeper meaning of their behaviors,

*When two people are on opposite ends of a sphere, they pull each other into and toward center, toward balance and toward healing.*

that is, the fear-inducing beliefs behind their behavior, each was able to re-assess their beliefs and support each other and work out another way of relating to one another. Though both were unconscious of their own fears and the fear in their partner when they met, their attraction to what was seemingly opposite, combined with the love they developed for one another over the years, helped them to face their pain and bring to consciousness the fears that were similar in each. When two people are on opposite ends of a sphere, they pull each other into and toward the center, toward balance and toward healing.

Understanding your self-healing mechanisms allows you to use them to your benefit. Instead of being upset when you find yourself in a difficult situation, look for what, inside of you, was seeking resolution, acceptance or

appreciation. In this way, you will come to realize that each experience is a gift even when it doesn't seem to be.

## **Self-Healing Beings**

We are emotional beings because we are self-healing beings. As we see more clearly that everything we experience serves a loving purpose, we can make great strides toward inner peace and joy. Our emotional reactions, however strong or subtle, bring to us a message of healing. We have many activities to keep us busy each day, but when we can take the time to stop and pay closer attention to our selves, the messages are always there to offer support, healing and growth.

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Suppressed emotions cause depression, a lethargic, heavy feeling that can slow down our immune system. Depression is often confused with the emotion of sadness. Depression is not an emotion; it is, rather, the

*Depression is not an emotion; it is, rather, the suppression of emotions that occurs when we employ our vital energy to hold our emotions down.*

suppression of emotions that occurs when we employ our vital energy to hold our emotions down. Like depression, anxiety is also not an emotion but an energetic force that keeps the underlying, upsetting emotion at bay. In the case

of both depression and anxiety, the flow of unwanted or feared emotional energy is being blocked.

As self-healing beings, we are naturally “wired” to express or let go of our emotions. We laugh, we cry, and we have a variety of emotional expressions when faced with something that is frightening, angering, funny, frustrating, and so on. Our body/mind, through these expressions, allows our emotional energies to flow. This is similar to what happens when we eat a carrot. We receive the nurturing energy of the carrot and then let go of what is left. If part of the carrot gets blocked and remains stuck inside the body, we experience a tummy ache. When we have an emotion that, for some reason, we either don’t want to feel or are afraid to express, we use our vital energy to hold it down—or hold it inside--and wind up with a different kind of a tummy ache: anxiety or depression.

Every emotion, thought, belief, action and relationship, including the relationship with your self, is energy. Every physical body and every object or situation that surrounds you is also energy. How you dance with this energy and how you

*How you dance with energy and how you allow it to flow through and out of you makes walking the path to the center of your heart either an easy or a difficult journey.*

allow it to flow through and out of you makes walking the path to the center of your heart either an easy or a difficult

journey. Just as ditches and hills make a journey long and tedious, judging and resisting or refusing to express emotions stops the energy flow.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that you act out your emotions by bopping someone over the head with a frying pan. There is a distinct difference between an emotion and a behavior. Instead, provide yourself with a safe place and a safe means to let these emotions flow by simply expressing them, possibly in a journal or in conversation with a therapist, rather than holding them inside of you.

## **Personality Self and Spirit Self**

The personality self is one source of the energy that you carry inside of you. Another source of energy that resides within you comes from the spirit self. The personality self is split into two, the inner child and the inner parent, while the spirit self is already unified. The energy of the personality self is ever evolving, while the spirit self is already evolved, already whole and vibrating at the highest or fastest rate of energy.

Your personality self is the relationship between your inner child and inner parent. Within that relationship, the inner child might distrust and fear the inner parent, or the inner parent might distrust and fear the inner child. Sometimes the inner parent is accepting and loving toward

the inner child, and sometimes the inner child is accepting and loving toward the inner parent. Whichever the case, these beliefs and emotions make up the energy of the personality self.

The journey to the center of your heart advances as the vibrational energy of your personality self begins to match the vibrational energy of your spirit self. Learning to recognize the gift of your emotions will help you shift the vibration of the personality self to match that of the spirit self.

Catholics describe “The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost” as a trinity. Somewhat differently, I see each of us as a trinity made up of the parent, the child and the spirit self. The spirit self is a guiding energy to help the personality self become fully unified and loving. The spirit self guides the personality self in many ways; some people hear a voice of intuition they refer to as a “still small voice,” or they might experience intuitive dreams. But for most of us, our strongest voice is our voice of emotional pain. When the energy in the personality self does not match the loving energy of our spirit self, we experience the dissonance between these two energies. That pain is our guide to let us know when we are off the mark; it is our signal that lets us know when we need to correct a mistaken belief.

As we correct the beliefs within the personality self, our flow of energy strengthens. When these parts of us are at

odds and not yet unified, we are two Is rather than a We. The longer we remain as two Is, with conflicting and blocked energies, the more likely it is that we will set up an

*The longer we remain as two Is, with conflicting and blocked energies, the more likely it is that we will set up an inner environment for Illness, rather than Wellness.*

inner environment for Illness, rather than Wellness. Being in a state of true wellness and health requires that you make the time to listen to your pain and then correct the mistaken beliefs that are its cause.

The next chapter offers a deeper understanding of the specific role each of your emotions plays in your life. This will help you to use them to lead you through any rocky, pain-inducing obstacles on your path—straight to the center of your heart where your real and beautiful truth resides.

## Chapter 3

# Emotional Treasures

*Our deepest fears are like dragons guarding our deepest treasures.*

—Maria Raine Rilke

**L**ife gives us emotional challenges, and no one is exempt. Rich or poor, we all have the challenges of feeling painful emotions such as frustration, disappointment, grief, hurt, fear, anger, sadness, jealousy and envy to name a few. As I stated earlier, the words and deeds of the authority figures from our childhood, primarily those who parented us, are now the beliefs we hold in our conscious and unconscious mind. Our beliefs are what transform into emotions, and our emotions are what transform into behavior.

A painful emotion is a signal, letting us know that we are mistakenly holding a false belief and that we need to correct it. Emotions are a ringing bell, a gift of awareness



that provides us with the opportunity to correct our mistaken beliefs and take us closer to experiencing oneness with our spirit self.

*A painful emotion is a signal, letting us know that we are mistakenly holding a false belief and that we need to correct it.*

Unfortunately, our judgmental and mistaken inner voice tends to speak with the voice of authority as though it were speaking the truth... with a capital T! Even though it speaks authoritatively, do not believe it! Your power comes from questioning that authoritative voice. Ask it how it knows this “truth” about you, and you will see how little knowledge it has to back up its claims.

Next, realize how old you were when you determined those beliefs. Notice how believing what you believed at that time served you so that you could feel loved and cared for, safe and secure,

*You have never, ever been self-sabotaging.*

and therefore able to focus on the important task of growing up. Realize that everything you have done in your life was done with the intention of self-care and self-love. You have never, never been self-sabotaging. You are love, so there is nothing you have done or could have done that was not motivated by self-love. Even people who are mentally ill and hurt themselves or others act from an intention of self-love. Suicide is often the desperate act of someone trying

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to ease overwhelming pain and fear when no other option was conceivable to them.

When we identify with the beliefs that make up our personality self, we think, feel and behave according to the standards of those beliefs. For example, a story about an indigenous tribe reports that when one of their tribe members breaks the law, he or she is brought into the center of the village to face all of the other tribe members. One by one, each member of the tribe tells the wrongdoer all of the good qualities they know about him or her. This unusual tribe actually understands criminal psychology. When we truly believe we are bad, we will behave badly, and we will demonstrate goodness when we believe we are good. Our actions follow our emotions, and our emotions follow our beliefs.

It is a fact that the belief that is causing your pain is an incorrect or inaccurate belief. You might want to argue this point if you sincerely believe you are not good enough, or even believe that you are bad, because of this reason or that. The truth is that, no matter what you've done wrong or what you didn't or couldn't do, you are and you have always been much more than good enough!

## **Emotions in the Western World**

Many, many people in the United States suffer from bouts of anxiety and depression. Our Western medical establishment's answer to this is to offer prescription drugs. But while these drugs might be more cost effective than psychotherapy, they are merely "quick fixes" that suppress a person's symptoms rather than address the cause of their suffering. Anti-anxiety and anti-depressant drugs do not heal the cause of our problems, they only mask the symptoms and deprive people of the opportunity to heal and grow. When we come to realize the underlying cause of our symptoms, we will clearly see that an internal self-blaming voice is seeking correction.

There are some occasions when people can be helped by pharmaceuticals. These are individuals who are experiencing suicidal behavior or psychosis due to severe biochemical imbalances that result from a combination of psychological stress, nutritional imbalances, medical conditions and ingestion of either prescribed or illegal drugs. However, the majority of people who suffer from anxiety and depression are not severely biochemically imbalanced and are primarily in need of psychotherapy to help them develop higher vibrational beliefs and to learn to eat a diet of higher vibrating foods.

Plato, in his ancient wisdom, prescribed a holistic alternative to the current Western methodology when he wrote, “The cure of a part should not be attempted without treatment of the whole. No attempt should be made to cure the body without the soul, and if the head and body are to be healthy, you must begin by curing the mind.”<sup>24</sup> Our conscious and unconscious beliefs are the engine of our mind.

## **Expressing Parental Love**

Because parenting plays such an important role in a child’s developing beliefs about themselves, it is important to say that most parents do feel genuine love for their children. Unfortunately, many people raising children don’t know how to express that love in a positive and reinforcing way due to their own early experiences and unresolved, internal, mistaken beliefs. These parents are not premeditative in their mistreatment of their children, and they actually do the best they can—sad as that might be. Their inability to communicate love verbally and non-verbally results in their children not knowing that they are loved. These children go forward believing they are, somehow, not good enough to warrant their parents’ love.

Remember that the natural state of egocentricity causes children to take responsibility for their parents’ actions,

leaving them with a lot of mistaken ideas of being wrong, bad or a failure. It is only when we can listen to this pained voice within our self, when we can hear it with our compassionate heart that we have the opportunity to correct our mistaken beliefs and uncover peace within.

A client, “Barbara,” grew up with three older brothers, an angry alcoholic mother and a father who worked long hours and was uninvolved with his children. One of Barbara’s brothers was violent toward her. He also began molesting her when she was eight and impregnated her at age fourteen. Barbara had attended Catholic school since kindergarten and was indoctrinated with the belief of obedience and honor toward her parents. She was petrified to tell them that she was pregnant, so this very bright but terrified young woman went to the library and learned how to end the pregnancy on her own.

Because of these major emotional events, Barbara’s childhood was very difficult and fraught with many experiences that left her thinking mistaken, negative, painful thoughts about herself—the self-induced abortion being one of the more pain-inducing ones. She never discussed this experience with anyone until, at the age of forty-two, she shared it with me in the course of her therapy. In talking with me about this, Barbara realized that, for all the years between fourteen and that present moment, she had thought of herself as a murderer. This thought was not

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in her conscious memory but buried deep inside her unconscious mind. After delving into this matter, she was able to find compassion for her terrified little girl self. She was able to let go of the murderer identity and realize that she had actually taken care of herself in the very best way she was capable of—at the time.

I define beliefs as thoughts we have faith in. Thoughts, in and of themselves, are harmless.

*Beliefs are thoughts  
we have faith in.*

That's why thoughts such as "the world is flat" do not inspire us, create emotions within us or move us to action. But if we were given enough evidence that this thought were true, we would develop faith in the thought and it would transform into a belief. We would then follow this belief with emotions, such as fear of falling off the edge, and behaviors, such as avoiding boats, as I described in Chapter 1.

Here's another example that our emotions are the result of the conscious and unconscious beliefs we hold: Let's say I were meeting a woman for the first time and strongly hoping that she would like me. Let's also say that I was told by a mutual friend that this person frowned when she liked somebody and smiled when she didn't. If, as my new acquaintance shook my hand, she were frowning, I would feel happy because of my belief that frowning meant this person liked me.

## **The Gift of Emotions**

Emotional pain is a gift, leading us to an awareness of beliefs that cause pain and giving us an opportunity to correct them. Most of the time, our parents or those who raised us did the very best they were capable of. Sadly, some were quite incapable. Often unknowingly, they instilled self-doubt, dislike, or maybe even self-hatred in their child(ren). Beliefs we learn outside of our home can also cause self-doubt or self-loathing.

As a child, I was dyslexic and could not keep up when the class was reading something together. Because I went to a different school every year, my dyslexia was never diagnosed. My grades were poor and I grew up believing I was stupid, which resulted in me having feelings of embarrassment and shame. Believing I was stupid also led me to make choices based on my low expectations. How much more confident and happy I would have been if, at school or at home, I had been taught that my painful emotions were the result of a mistaken belief and that my slow reading had no connection to being less intelligent. What if we didn't have to grow up with beliefs that hurt us?

Children will dislike, reject and dissociate from the painful parts of themselves because they know of no other way to stop their pain. Considering all the mistaken messages with which children are raised, it is no wonder that

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so many people grow up riddled with anxiety, depression and addiction.

Whether we believe we are less than or better than others, whether we are fearful of abandonment and rejection or believe we are wanted and needed, it is the relationship that we have with our self—the self-hate or self-love that we feel—that will create our state of happiness or unhappiness, health or illness. In our journey to the center of our heart, we are learning to clear the path of mistaken painful beliefs and bring our self to the “doorway“ where it is possible to fully merge with our spirit self.

As our mistaken beliefs lessen, we more clearly hear the voice of our spirit self. Being fully engaged with our spirit self is described by psychologists as the state of being individuated, autonomous or authentic, fully integrated and whole. Spiritual thinkers would say that we have awakened or have become enlightened, fully merged into the identity of the spirit self, and that our personality self no longer exists. However you choose to view it, the result is wonderful.

When we fully enter into our own heart, we enter into the home of the spirit self. In this home, we find only peace, only love, and no other truth exists.



## Signposts

While traveling our path to truth, or to who we really are, we will see signposts that lead us to our desired destination.

*Our interests, our curiosities and our desires are signposts that will keep us on our path, or direct us back to it, if we stray.*

It is important to know how to read these signposts. Our interests, our curiosities and our desires are signposts that will keep us on our path or direct us back to it if we stray. Our feelings of hurt and anger are signals that tell us we hold a mistaken belief that something *about us* has caused the other person's upsetting behavior. Pain also pushes us toward growth and healing. For example, if someone is rude to us and we respond by feeling the painful emotion of hurt or anger, these emotions are telling us that we hold a self-blaming belief about our self. If we remain truly peaceful in the face of this person's rudeness, it shows that we already know that we are innocent.

These emotional reactions afford us the opportunity to recognize, explore and correct our corresponding belief. If we actually did do something that the other person reacted to, we then have the opportunity to look at our behavior and choose to change our actions in the future; we might even apologize. If we determine we did nothing to cause this person's rude behavior yet we still feel responsible, we

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might be holding an unconscious belief that we are not good enough to be treated better.

Both hurt and anger are signals of self-blame. Anger is a defense against hurt.

If you didn't experience feeling hurt, there would be no reason to feel

*Each time we make a correction,  
we come closer and closer to  
our innocence and to peace.*

angry. Life provides us with immeasurable opportunities to explore our deeper beliefs about who we believe we are and to make the corrections needed to know the truth of whom we truly are. Each time we make a correction, we come closer and closer to our innocence and to peace.

All of your beliefs are motivated by self-loving and self-protective intentions, even if they are incorrect. Because you chose them, you are now free to choose again, this time differently. Choosing to question and change your idea of your self will not only ease your own pain, it will ease the pain of your children, your significant others, your friends and even strangers.

Facing hurtful beliefs is sometimes a little like vomiting—unpleasant during the elimination process but once the negative stuff is out of you, you are much more relaxed and relieved, even happier. No matter how frightening the pain felt or how bad you believe your behavior was, you deserve to understand the fears that influenced your actions. You deserve to connect with your innocent being who was just

doing what he or she believed needed to be done to survive or thrive at that time.

Intellectually, it's easy to say, "I should have known better," or, "I should be past this," or, "I should not have gotten so upset." Find the being inside of you who didn't know better, who wasn't past this, or who was upset and offer yourself compassionate understanding. Let go of your judgments. Most of all recognize your innocence. In that moment, you will gain the greatest strength of all—self-love.

Should you find yourself unable to do this, imagine that you, the person having the issue, is a friend you care about and then imagine offering compassionate understanding to them. Sometimes we are more giving to others in this way than we are to ourselves.

## **Self-Reflection and Self-Responsibility**

Much of the time, we are so busy working and struggling to keep our heads above water that we don't have time to self-reflect. We suppress, depress, repress (numb out) and project our self-blame. This is a great tragedy for our nation. These defenses, which keep us from correcting our mistaken beliefs about ourselves, also keep us less in touch with the beauty and wonder of who we are.

The United States, for example, is also a very litigious society. I believe this is because people feel stronger when

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they are angry and blaming than when they are feeling hurt and disappointed. Feelings of hurt and disappointment tend to make us feel young, vulnerable and disempowered. This is usually because the mostly subconscious beliefs that we are reacting to originated when we were, in fact, young, vulnerable and without power.

Another reason I believe that the U.S. is litigious is that many people are burdened with unconscious and unresolved self-blame and find it hard to take self-responsibility for their actions. This realization came to me after I spent a great amount of time in Switzerland. There, for example, when a painter takes a lunch break and leaves a can of paint where he or she was working and another person trips over it, the attitude would be “Why weren’t you watching where you were walking?” In the U.S., the individual who tripped would sue, blaming the painter for negligence and not accepting his or her own self-negligence and lack of responsibility. My educated guess is that many Americans avoid responsibility because to do so would trigger their unresolved and painful self-blame. I strongly believe that we will stay a stressed and violent society until we create the supportive space needed to face and correct our painful beliefs.

Blamelessness does not mean irresponsibility. Here’s an example, if I accidentally knock over and break your antique Ming vase, I am responsible and I will write a check for a million dollars to compensate you, but I will

not allow you to yell at me, call me names or abuse me in any way. My accident does not make me a bad person, just a clumsy one. Even if I deliberately knock over your vase, I am still responsible and I am still not bad. I will still need to pay you the million dollars, and I will have to explore my true motivation for deliberately breaking your vase. You also have a responsibility to be wary, that is, until my troubled mind is healed, you should not allow me to come near your other precious belongings.

## **True Peace**

Many people view peace as the lack or absence of uncomfortable emotions; they often state, “If I stuff down these uncomfortable feelings, I can finally find some peace.” True peace, however, is not the nonexistence of pain and discomfort; it is its own feeling that reflects the belief of being innocent. In the U.S., there are what I call culturally predominant feelings: happiness or sadness, fear or excitement, anger or acceptance. But peace is not among these. The feeling of peace is, well, lost.

Peace is a feeling in and of itself. Until I could resolve my own self-hatred, shame and fear that came from my

*Peace is your birthright, a truth you will realize as you let go of your self-blame and come to know your innocence.*

troubled youth, I knew of no other way to stop the pain except to push it away. Though buried, it still upstaged any feeling of true peace inside of me. I thought peace was something I would attain when I was more financially secure or in a good relationship. I now know that we already “own” peace; it is already inside each and every one of us, waiting for us to be capable of choosing to connect with it. This capability comes from becoming conscious of, and then correcting, any beliefs that say we don’t deserve it. Peace is your birthright, a truth you will realize as you let go of your self-blame and come to know your innocence.

The ability to fully enter into your own heart means embracing all of your emotions, recognizing that pain

*Love holds you the way you believe you need to be held— maybe armored, maybe swaddled or maybe even caged.*

is only a signal for the need to correct mistaken beliefs. Sometimes using the services of a compassionate counselor or therapist can help you get to the deeper, unconscious places within you so that you will be able to see clearly that all your defense mechanisms have been motivated by love. Love holds you the way you believe you need to be held— maybe armored, maybe swaddled or maybe even caged. With compassion, correct the mistaken beliefs that have created the need for your defenses. When the inside of your heart—the home of your spirit self—and the beliefs in your

head are no longer in conflict, health and peace will not only be yours they will heal your world as well. As we let go of our self-blame and the fear that accompanies it, we begin to *believe* in our innocence, and that belief transforms and reverberates within us as the emotion of peace.

When we arrive at our heart's center, we have removed the power of self-blaming beliefs, and we are able to act with kindness, love, caring, patience and peace. We come to a place of acceptance as eloquently described by the wise mystic philosopher Jalal ad-Dfn Muhammad Rumpf in his poem "The Guest House."<sup>5</sup>

## *The Guest House*

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes

as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,

who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,

still, treat each guest honorably.

He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,

meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,

because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.



## Chapter 4

# The Outside as Mirrors

*Perception is a mirror, not a fact. And what I look on is my state of mind, reflected outward.*

—A Course in Miracles

**T**o succeed in your journey to the center of your heart, it helps to fully understand the terrain on your path. We've seen that vibrations reverberate like a drum within your body, sending out an emotional signal so that you can pay attention and then respond and release any slower or unsupportive belief energies. At first, these signals might make you stumble, but there is really only one thing that will actually stop you from going forward, and that is closing your eyes or going unconscious. Even when you are not looking, the path to the center of your heart is always there. Walking that path is just a matter of learning how to move forward, eyes open, so that you won't stray from your path or find yourself stuck.

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On your journey, you are given a feedback system, a mirror that lets you see what is going on inside of you. The concept of the world being a

*When people or situations appear in our lives, they provide us with experiences in which our beliefs and emotions emerge into our conscious awareness.*

mirror for self-reflection is often misunderstood. When people or situations appear in our lives, they provide us with experiences in which our beliefs and emotions emerge into our conscious awareness. In the Talmud, a central text of mainstream Judaism, it is written: “We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, the reactions or responses you have to experiences that happen outside of you are your mirror or feedback system, assisting you to become aware of the beliefs and emotions you carry within.

Often, these beliefs and emotions are so familiar to us that we aren't aware of them. As we look out upon the world, the people and situations we encounter hold up a mirror for us. For example, if a troubled person on the street comes over and yells at me, the mirror is *not* telling me that *I* am a troubled person inside. However, whether I respond to this yelling person by becoming angry, frightened, sad, indifferent and so on, allows me to view my response and show me something about myself. As I reflect upon my beliefs and emotions, I can use the information to connect

with my inner self, respond compassionately to my self, and then correct or release whatever belief is keeping me from peace. Through this process, I then take another step deeper into my own heart.

The closer the relationship we have with a person the less likely we can avoid the reflection. Several years ago, I heard an amusing statement from a client who had heard it from someone at a Twelve-Step Program meeting. She said, “Getting into a relationship is like putting Miracle-Gro® on your character defects.” All relationships have the potential to “pull up” or “trigger” our beliefs and emotions into our consciousness. Our closer and more intimate relationships provide us the greatest potential for growth. The universe abundantly provides us with mirrors to use for our healing, growth and change.

Living in a cave or shielding your self from different experiences can lead to feeling quite content and be unaware of unresolved emotions that lie below the surface. When people set their lives up with safe routines and limited exposure to new experiences, they can be caught off-guard when they start a new job or a new relationship and find themselves experiencing uncomfortable, unresolved beliefs and emotions of which they were unaware.

The challenge is to not blame the outside world and other people for our emotions but to understand that our reactions come from within. It always seems easier to say,

“He or she made me feel the way I do,” rather than to look at emotions as messages from inside, from our inner self.

No matter whether your mirroring encounters are casual or close, regardless if your experiences are new or repetitive, until you become conscious of what you are feeling, you cannot take the proper steps necessary to correct beliefs that are causing you emotional pain. In Chapter 6, titled “The Purpose of Pain,” we will look at specific pain-inducing beliefs and emotions, talk about what they are reflecting for you, and learn how to correct them.

Consciousness is the first step to change, and holding a judgment is what will keep you from creating that change. Dr. Phil McGraw, host of the *Dr. Phil* television series, often says, “You can’t heal what you can’t feel.”

We have the mirror, yet sometimes we don’t want to look at it because we will judge ourselves for having certain beliefs and emotions. Judgments can lead to very uncomfortable feelings of anger, shame and guilt. We need to build our strength to challenge our judgmental beliefs so that we can correct or change what we need to correct or change and move more powerfully toward the center of our heart.

Let’s look at this example to explore how to do that: Let’s say a teenager named “John” was raised, since birth, in a community and with parents who held racist beliefs. Because these beliefs were seen as true by his parents, his

neighbors and friends, John isn't aware that his beliefs are racist. Then, he goes away to college where he begins to make new friends who do not share his beliefs about racial differences. At first, he starts to pull away from them but soon realizes that he does not want to lose his friends. He looks at his uncomfortable feelings and realizes that maybe his long-held beliefs are incorrect. With this consciousness, John now has the opportunity to find compassionate understanding for himself as someone who was raised to believe a certain way and can now choose to re-evaluate his belief system. If John does not judge himself for believing what he had been taught as a child, he will not need to deny or suppress his old beliefs and he will be able to engage his power to choose his own new beliefs.

The mirrors into which you can choose to look are an important part of

*Compassionate understanding is the antidote to judgment.*

your self-loving support system, helping you to change disempowering beliefs. Consciousness is the step needed for you to advance on your journey, and judgment is what can create the pain and discomfort that can keep you from becoming conscious and taking that next step toward healing. Compassionate understanding is the antidote to judgment that will help you challenge your judgmental beliefs. Above all, remember that the mirrors presented to

you are your allies and that this level of self-discovery is available for you at any time.

## **Like Energy**

The concept of like energy attracting like energy is part of the mirroring process and it is an important concept to understand if you are to journey with as little pain as possible. Because we are each an amazing, self-healing miracle, part of our self-healing mechanism draws us to other people and situations that match our own internal energy or vibration. We meet mirrors of ourselves all the time. Though we might not be conscious of this fact at the time, there is always a loving reason that we are feeling drawn to another. The like-energy-attracts-like-energy mechanism is always at play. We are generally conscious of the positive qualities we are attracted to in another and we can also be aware of the similarities we share, such as both having a hurt inner child caused by the death of a parent at a young age or other experiences. This like-energy-attracts-like-energy mechanism attempts to bring our buried mistaken beliefs into the light where we can correct and heal them.

Over the years, numerous people have shared with me that they had absolutely no idea at the time they met their significant other that he or she had a particular quality that

turned out to be very challenging for them. The vibrational pull or attraction is often unconscious, but it is what brings us together for healing. Yes, there are other qualities that you appreciated and found attractive, but the unconscious quality was definitely an important part of the attraction equation as well.

As we learned in Chapter 2, “You Are an Energy Experience,” the phrase “opposites attract” is really a description of what happens on the surface. At a deeper level, two people who appear to be “opposites” are actually manifesting “like” energy. Here’s an example: Let’s say that both Person A and Person B carry within themselves an unconscious fear of intimacy. Person A rarely goes out, is quiet and prefers being alone. Person B is a socialite, always on the move and the life of every party. They appear to be opposites, but, in this particular case, they are simply manifesting the same fear in different and opposite ways. Please note that not all people who have these qualities are fearful of intimacy. If Person A and Person B were to develop a close relationship, they would each bring to light the fears in the other, providing each other with the opportunity for awareness and resolution of their fear.

Our mechanism of attraction to “like” energy is the result of having a self-healing psyche. It’s actually a pretty darn good mechanism because, as we form loving relationships with others who match our internal energy,

we are provided with a clearer mirror through which we learn about our selves, our beliefs and our emotions. The more love we have for another, the more likely we will be motivated to stay and work things through when painful emotions emerge.

Love also opens us up so that we are more vulnerable and in touch with our buried beliefs and emotions. When a situation or a relationship brings up pain, it is an opportunity to learn the truth about our own beliefs and correct the mistaken ones. Mistaken beliefs, let me reiterate, are any beliefs that create judgments rather than affirm the truth of your own innocence. Here's an example: if I am a batterer, my behavior is caused by the mistaken belief that I am not innocent, and my belief is then projected onto the other person.

The beliefs we hold are responsible for our behaviors, and, as adults, we are responsible for the beliefs we hold. If

*The beliefs we hold are responsible for our behaviors, and, as adults, we are responsible for the beliefs we hold.*

we walk away from situations or relationships without resolving our mistaken beliefs and emotions, they will only reappear in another situation or relationship. I like to say that spirit has unconditional patience and will continue to bring those feelings up over and over until we are ready to face and resolve them.



Should you find yourself needing to walk away from a relationship, it is important to hold on to the feeling of love in your heart. Through love, you gain a compassionate understanding for yourself as well as a compassionate understanding for others. This is why you need not stop loving a person even if it is no longer beneficial for you to remain together. If you can walk away with loving feelings intact, then you have used the mirror wisely and have had, at least, a brief visit into your heart.

If your partner walked away from you and you are filled with hurt and anger rather than love, remember that hurt and anger are signals of self-blame. Work toward bringing yourself back to innocence and you will then be able to reconnect to loving feelings.

Of course, when a relationship ends that you really hoped would work out, there will be feelings of sadness, grief and disappointment. But when you live in oneness with the spirit self within your heart, that sadness will not linger because it will be upstaged by the joy of birthing a new and beautiful future.

You will focus on your positive future and remember with appreciation the love shared in your past relationship. To be in this place of open-heartedness enables you to participate with your ex-partner in a loving and supportive friendship, but only if both of you are doing the work of using your

mirrors to grow beyond limiting and unsupportive beliefs and emotions.

Living with compassionate understanding allows you to see that everyone is somewhere on the path in their journey to the center of their hearts. You come to know that patience, acceptance and love help both you and everyone you care about move forward.

## Chapter 5

# Judgments and Pain

*If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.*

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

**J**udgments are beliefs, the thoughts in which we have developed faith. They are the bottom line cause for all emotional pain. “Good” judgments are as dangerous as “bad” judgments because they help run the engine of judging—and the engine needs to be turned off! Without “good,” there is no “bad,” and vice versa. Judgments must be turned into compassionate understanding.

Judgments also stand firmly in the way of peace. True peace comes from unconditional acceptance of *what is*, even while you also want to change *what is*. Judgments, therefore, block unconditional acceptance by making *what is* “wrong.”

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You might have heard the expression, “What you resist persists.” This is true because when we focus our energy on what we don’t want, we are actually focusing on what we are resisting and, thus, strengthening it and allowing it to persist. This is illustrated in a wonderful tale about an old Cherokee who is teaching his grandson about life. “A fight is going on inside me,” he says to the boy. “It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil; he is filled with anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.” He continues, “The other is good; he is filled with joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. The same fight is going on inside you and inside every other person, too.” The grandson thinks about this for a minute and then asks, “Which wolf will win?” The old Cherokee simply replies, “The one I feed.”<sup>7</sup>

What we focus on is what we strengthen. The Bible suggests that we count our blessings. This is why many people, such as television producer and host Oprah Winfrey, suggest that we keep a daily gratitude journal. It is very important that we consciously choose what we focus on. When we accept what is, unconditionally, we disperse the energy of resistance and

*Acceptance, paradoxically,  
enables change.*

allow ourselves the choice to focus on what we do want. Acceptance, paradoxically, enables change.

## **Gaining Compassionate Understanding by Releasing Judgment**

If you find it difficult to offer yourself compassionate understanding and yet you can offer it to others, you might ask yourself why you choose to be so hard on yourself. If you find that you are quite judgmental and have difficulty offering compassionate understanding to others, it is pretty much guaranteed that you do not have the ability to offer it to yourself either. One of the reasons why so many people will not take risks that can be potentially rewarding for them is that they are more afraid of their own self-judgment, self-abasement and self-punishment than they are of what others might think. Mother Teresa, a teacher of compassion, stated, “There is a hunger for ordinary bread, and there is hunger for love, for kindness, for thoughtfulness; and this is the great poverty that makes people suffer so much.”<sup>8</sup> Our judgments keep us withholding from others—but primarily from ourselves—the loving kindness that we are in need of to be happy and healthy individuals.

To reiterate: the antidote to judgment is compassionate understanding. Here is another example of this. Let’s say “Stephen” made a mistake and then judged himself

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harshly for it by calling himself stupid. For him to find compassionate understanding, it will be imperative that he stop and explore what was happening at the time he made the mistake. Had he heard something upsetting that was worrisome on his mind? Was he hungry or tired but too rushed to eat or rest? Was there some other distraction? Stephen must ask himself, “Am I treating myself fairly by judging myself as stupid? Would I treat someone else this way?”

It is important to look for the true reasons for our actions toward our self or others rather than making rationalizations. Rationalizations block us from having true understanding and compassion. True compassionate understanding is the healing energy needed for the resolution of the judgment. In this example, Stephen, by judging himself as stupid rather than knowing the true reason for his mistake, keeps himself from connecting to his true self. It holds him in a place of disappointment, anger and distrust toward himself and sets himself up to repeat the negative experience, which he will most likely do until he learns to be less self-blaming and more self-compassionate.

By taking a moment to allow himself to feel a heartfelt sympathy for his possible loss of time, money, and self-respect due to the mistake, and by understanding that the true reason for the mistake had nothing to do with being

stupid, Stephen will gain a stronger, more sensitive and more loving relationship with himself.

Each time we do this process of correcting self-judgment, we build greater trust within ourselves. We begin to believe we can depend on ourselves to be our own kind and caring friend. The more we like our selves, the more kind and caring we treat our selves, and the more we treat our selves with kindness and caring the more we like our selves. It's an upward-moving spiral.

In contrast, judgmental thoughts will always affect us negatively. Judgments lead to painful feelings of guilt, anger and shame because they are based in the ideas of right or wrong, of good or bad. These painful feelings lead to defensive stances, such as anger at others or at our selves, and possibly anger-induced behaviors, such as retaliation or self-punishment.

All judgments are learned beliefs that we—more often than not—carry within our unconscious mind. We then apply all our learned judgments to both ourselves and everyone else. If, for example, someone has learned a judgment that all poor people are inferior to rich people then, if that person should ever become poor, he or she will judge himself or herself as inferior. If a person was taught and believes that people who earn large salaries are greedy, then that person might consciously or unconsciously keep himself or herself from ever earning a large salary.

Judgments are not to be confused with observations. Say, for example, a person commits a robbery, which is caught on camera and played on the evening news. The news report is simply an observation that this person has committed a robbery. In this example, a woman might have a judgment that people who rob others are “bad” and, therefore, makes a judgment that the person on the news is bad. But then she looks closer at the television screen and recognizes the robber as the son of her good friend and neighbor, a boy she watched grow up to be a young man, who played together with her children, and who she always experienced as sweet and well behaved. Now her judgment feels shaky and she is confused. She starts to look deeper, seeking understanding of what might have caused him to rob the bank. She knows him. She knows he’s not “bad.” Because her heart is open to him, she realizes that something other than being bad caused this behavior. She feels compassion for him, and her judgment begins to dissolve.

What if we started offering compassionate understanding to children from the first time they misbehaved? I believe that when children are offered compassionate understanding coupled with a sense of responsibility for the consequences of their actions, without judgment or punishment, these children will grow up to be more sensitive and compassionate individuals toward both themselves and others.



Compassionate understanding is one of the most important tools on our path to the center of our heart. Understanding the real, underlying reasons for our mistakes or the mistakes of others allows us to keep our hearts open and sensitive to our selves, which also allows

*When we expand our compassionate caring within our selves, we automatically and effortlessly extend that caring to others.*

us the strength to stay open and sensitive to others. Just as the tribal villagers reminded the wrongdoers of their inherent goodness, we must remind ourselves of our goodness and stop to question the judgments that keep us from reaching the center of our heart. As we approach the center of our hearts, we also begin to be able to care more for the people we don't know, even for those who commit hurtful acts. And when we expand our compassionate caring within our selves, we automatically and effortlessly extend that caring to others.

Going back to the example of the bank robber, judging rather than understanding the wrongdoer leads people to treat him with retaliatory punishment, which will only lead the robber to experience additional fear, anger and despair as well as a closed and defensive heart. Embracing the idea of compassion plus consequences allows our hearts to remain open and allows for correction and healing.

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The Golden Rule is golden for a reason. It says, “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” Whether the robber is the son of our closest friend or someone we’ve never seen before, let’s treat him with kindness while we also hold him responsible for the consequences of his actions. Our kindness might not, at first, beget kindness within the robber, but it’s more likely to bring him closer to kindness than if we treat him unkindly. Once we learn to be kinder within ourselves, we can, as a society, practice kindness on a greater scale, including having kindness be a critical component within the judicial and penal system. Jail time would then, ideally, be a time for wrongdoers to heal while also keeping society safe from not-yet-healed persons.

The present intention of most prisons is not to foster rehabilitation but to punish wrongdoers. People become repeat offenders because prisons are not rehabilitation centers. If we, or someone else, does something insensitive or hurtful, healing and change will not come by doing something insensitive and hurtful in retaliation. That just helps the individual to identify himself or herself as “bad,” closing his or her heart in self-protection and continuing to act from a self-image as a “bad” person. For example: it makes no sense to hit a child for hitting his or her classmate. Children learn from what adults do, not from what they say. Adults learn in the same way.

## **Gaining Love by Releasing Judgment**

To offer love, we must know, in our hearts, what love is. If we find we are unable to offer love, we must look within, with a compassionate heart, so that we can uncover and change the beliefs that are in our way. It is in truly loving ourselves that we can truly love others.

As a society of people, we have slipped far from the center of our hearts. You are sure to meet people who don't know how to be sensitive to others, and people who don't know how to be open-hearted and sensitive to the people who haven't been sensitive to them. These are the people who keep the cycle of insensitivity running. It will take a lot of time, starting with a nonjudgmental, heart-oriented system of consequences for our youngest citizens, before this will be realized on a large scale. In the meantime, you can move beyond your judgments by becoming conscious of your judgments and questioning them.

As individuals, we can set aside our fear of being judged by others. This fear is only as strong as the amount of judgment we hold toward ourselves. Facing our judgments is the biggest and scariest challenge on our path to the center of our heart. To be a spiritual warrior, we need to face our judgments—our “shadow self,” our “demons”—and then embrace them with compassionate understanding.

Compassion is a component of love, and love is truly the only releaser, the only healer.

The loving words of poet and spiritual teacher, Hafiz expresses what I, too, wish deeply in my heart for everyone, “Fear is the cheapest room in the house. I would like to see you living in better conditions.”<sup>9</sup>

The way to release yourself from your learned judgments is to realize and remember that you are stronger than any of your beliefs, any of your judgments. Yes, you have

*You have beliefs, but you are not your beliefs, rather, you are the power behind them.*

beliefs, but *you are not your beliefs*, rather, you are the power behind them. Judgmental beliefs are like the wolves fighting inside of you; the belief that wins is the one you feed, the one you give your power to.

Though your beliefs feel real and might scare you, you must bring the belief firmly into your consciousness and question it—even if questioning it will have you thinking differently than those around you.

History is rife with examples. In fact, every new invention and every great human accomplishment has defied previously held beliefs. The Wright Brothers, for example, would never have gotten their “flying machine” off the ground if they had been swayed by the laughter and disbelief of those around them. On your path to the center of your heart, you will discover how truly powerful you are,

how you can choose the beliefs you want and how you can discard the ones you don't want.

You change your beliefs by:

1. Deciding, in your heart, that you deserve a happier and more peaceful life than the one you've been experiencing.
2. Choosing to become conscious of the beliefs that are holding you back from having this happier and more peaceful life.
3. Sincerely and thoroughly questioning those beliefs.
4. Choosing, instead, beliefs about your self that will support you in having a happier and more peaceful life.
5. Providing proofs for your new beliefs. This means that once you've chosen the belief, look for proofs of their truth. For example, if I were to choose the new belief, "I am capable of creating more friends," I can acknowledge all the qualities I have to offer as a friend and I can remember how I've made friends in the past.
6. Finding support for Step 5 if you are having difficulty. This means asking close friends, relatives or co-workers to help you find proofs for your newly chosen beliefs.

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On your path to the center of your heart, your judgmental beliefs can be boulders that block your way, but you are not a victim to these blockages. When you recognize that they are in the way of you being open-hearted and loving to yourself or others, you will also see that you have the power to remove them by changing your beliefs. As you travel your path, the terrain will become easier and more serene because you will have more peace in your heart and less conflict from the mirrors that your world holds up for you to see.

The truth is that you are innocent. When you fully, deeply believe that, not just in your thoughts

*The journey to the center of your heart is the journey to the knowledge of your innocence.*

but in the deepest recesses of your body/mind, you will walk in peace and be a light unto the world! The journey to the center of your heart is the journey to the knowledge of your innocence.

As you travel your path, you will see not only your innocent heart but the innocent heart of every being. You will recognize the mistaken self-identity that causes people to behave insensitively. You will understand pain, even when it's buried deep inside. And you will support others and yourself with kindness and compassion. You will adopt the wisdom of Hafiz, who wrote: "I wish I could show you

when you are lonely or in the darkness the astonishing light of your own being.”<sup>10</sup>

As you shed your judgments and face your pain-inducing, mistaken beliefs, the path truly gets easier. On your way to awakening, you become more peaceful, more accepting, healthier and happier.

## Chapter 6

# The Purpose of Pain

*Through love all pain will turn to medicine.*

—Rumi

*We find our power in the same place as our pain.*

—Aaron Shepard

**W**ith all the addictions we have in our society—shopping, gambling, sex and love, over and under eating, alcohol and drugs, work, television and so on—we need to look at what we are

*In actuality, pain is our ally that helps guide our steps on our journey to our heart.*

running away from so fast and furiously. For one thing, I think our society offers us very little true understanding, or time and space, for learning from and resolving our emotional pain. Society is especially hard on boys and young men who are told to “buck up” or “pull it together”



or else suffer the ridicule of being called weak and unmanly. Society also accepts many judgments about emotional pain as true, such as associating it with weakness, immaturity or craziness. Therefore, we've been taught that pain is a condition that we must avoid. In actuality, pain is our ally that helps guide our steps on our journey to our heart.

Almost all of our pain-inducing beliefs about ourselves began in childhood and went into our unconscious mind because we were too young to know how to handle or resolve them. At that time in our young life, shelving those beliefs was actually helpful to us because that allowed us to move forward, grow up and gain the strength and knowledge we'd need to eventually resolve them.

When we don't resolve our mistaken, self-blaming beliefs, they will create emotions such as hurt, shame, anger, jealousy, envy, greed and humiliation.

**HURT** comes from the belief that you have done something wrong. It can also be experienced as anguish.

**SHAME** comes from the belief that you are bad, less than, not good enough. It can also be experienced as humiliation or embarrassment.

**ANGER** comes as a defense against feeling hurt. It is self-blame projected outward, and it can also be expressed as hatred, hostility or vengefulness.

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**JEALOUSY** comes from the belief that what you already have will be taken from you because someone will be better or more deserving of it than you.

**ENVY** comes from the belief that someone has achieved something you also want to achieve and you believe that you will not be able to achieve it because you are not good or capable or deserving enough.

**GREED** comes from the belief that you are not enough within your self and that if you accumulate enough external material or other possessions your ownership and control over those items will prove to you and to others that you are good, capable and deserving enough.

**HUMILIATION** comes from the belief that you are bad, less than, not good enough. It can also be experienced as shame or embarrassment.

Generally:

If you believe ...	You might feel ...
... you have been betrayed or insulted,	... hurt, anger, shame, humiliation, hatred, hostility or vengefulness.
... you have done something wrong,	... self-anger, shame or humiliation.
... you are not adequately good, smart, loving, attractive, or other attribute you value,	... jealousy, envy or greed.

Your beliefs cause your emotions, and your emotions cause your behavior. For example, the emotion of envy can translate into behavior that ranges from self-abasement to robbery. Your beliefs are the basis for all of your emotions. A painful emotion signals to you that your belief needs correction. With patience and support you can correct any beliefs that cause you pain.

Other people's words and activities can trigger painful emotions within you, as well, but they will cause you pain only if these beliefs *are already inside of you*. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."<sup>11</sup> As you release these beliefs, other people's words and actions will no longer cause you to feel pain, and you will feel safer and freer to interact with your world as your authentic self.

Our society accepts the idea, and teaches us, that we need punishment in order to become better people. As social beings, we are raised in our families, schools and legal systems to see merit in punishment as the means to improvement rather than compassionate understanding and consequences as the means to correction and healing.

It is evident to me, after working with clients for over thirty years and, of course, my own personal experience, that most emotional pain is unconsciously self-inflicted. Because of our mostly unconscious decisions to "improve ourselves through punishment," people deny themselves

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pleasure, debase themselves, allow others to mistreat them emotionally or physically, or mistreat themselves by eating poorly, going without proper rest, being unforgiving or engaging in other acts of unkindness toward themselves—all in the committed service of becoming “a better person.”

Our intention to become better people and reduce our pain leads us to inflict punishment on ourselves or has us perceiving that everything that goes wrong in our life is a punishment. The great irony is that we do all of this in a committed, self-loving attempt to gain release from our mistaken guilt.

In truth, punishment only begets more punishment; it does not release or resolve guilt. Punishment actually confirms guilt. We have been so misled about this that we keep running in pain-filled circles, leading ourselves

*In truth, punishment only begets more punishment; it does not release or resolve guilt. Punishment actually confirms guilt.*

to addictions or physical illnesses because we have not been given the time or the knowledge we need to a) stop running, b) stop punishing, and c) turn, face and question our painful beliefs.

Questioning these beliefs allows us to see that they are not the truth—never were and never will be! With compassionate understanding, our self-blame will dissolve and our innocence will be revealed to us.

## **Self-Protection & Self-Love**

All of our actions and all of our defenses are motivated by self-protection and self-love. Even actions that appear to be motivated by vengeance, greed and jealousy are all motivated by self-love. This is good news because it affirms that, at every point in your life, you have only done the best you knew how to do to protect and love your self at that time.

If we believe that we are not loving enough to receive what we want or need from others, we will use manipulative behavior to get our wants or needs met. This is because our self-loving intention is to survive and thrive.

I'd like to share the story of another past client. "Brad" was in his late twenties, a single dad who held a responsible job. Due to being raised by troubled parents, Brad grew up believing that he was not a good and deserving person. When Brad found himself overwhelmed with responsibilities, he would complain that everything always fell on his shoulders. His schedule was hectic, consisting of dressing and feeding his two youngsters each morning then dropping one off at day care and one at grammar school and getting himself to work on time.

When I inquired as to whether he could ask any of his friends to give him a hand, he answered that they were all too busy. I asked him if he had actually asked any of them

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and been told that they were too busy to help him. He said that he had not asked anyone because he expected that they would say no and that that would be too painful for him to hear. Brad did not believe he was really worthy of people's help, and he projected that belief onto his friends. I asked Brad if he had ever had any friends give him help in the past. With a sad expression, he answered that, yes, friends had helped him but, he believed, only because he had manipulated them into helping him by promising them things or making them feel sorry for him and therefore guilty if they did not help.

For Brad to ask for help directly, without offering to pay for it or manipulate a yes answer through guilt, was too threatening to him. To hear a no answer would feel like a validation of his belief that he was undeserving, and this would cause him too much pain. He felt the risk of simply asking for help outright was too great for him to take. Manipulating his friends, however, would keep him from the anticipated pain of rejection and satisfy his needs as well. This behavior prevented him from seeing that his friends really did care about him and did believe that he deserved their support. This form of survival keeps a person stuck in their painful beliefs and away from peace.

The good news is that Brad, upon exploring his fearful belief in more depth, decided he could, with my support, begin to counter the internal voice that said he was unworthy

to receive support. He decided to ask a friend to help him with a half-completed and time-consuming household project—without the use of bribery or manipulation. His friend said yes without hesitation. This was Brad’s first step on the road to correcting the negative message he had received as a child.

No matter why we grow up with negative self-beliefs, when we carry them around within us, those beliefs influence how we treat ourselves, how we treat others, and how we allow others to treat us. These negative beliefs create in us a sense of not being safe. They might cause us to avoid intimacy, become offensively defensive, withdraw or manipulate and sometimes hurt others as a way to self-protect.

## **Emotional Pain and Self-Protection**

What do we need to feel safe from? The answer is emotional pain—pain of rejection, of abandonment, of emotional abuse and of a sense of failure. Without these negative self-beliefs, there would be no need to be self-protectively defensive; there would be no expectations of getting hurt and no anticipation of being punished. When we know our innocence, we can be in touch with the peace within.

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Have you or someone you know ever said, after hearing some good news, that they were waiting for “the other shoe to drop” or something negative to follow? Many people also confuse disappointing experiences or misfortune, such as being laid off from work because the company closed, as punishment. However, you will only “take it personally” when you carry conscious and unconscious self-blaming beliefs within you. Without these damaging beliefs, you will not feel victimized or sit in hurt, anger and defeat. You will, instead, look on the brighter side of any situation and say, “Okay, where else can I get what I need? Where can I put my energies? In what direction can I go to make a positive outcome happen?”

You can think of it this way as well. There’s a hurt or angry or guilty child inside of you who is looking for, but not feeling deserving of, a good, loving, accepting inner-parent who views him or her as innocent. Your job is to convince that child—you—that he or she is innocent. This is not an easy task, but the child is your child, and *your child needs your love and patience and understanding*. Without these positive emotions, your inner child will continue to think badly of her self or him self.

I recall several clients over the years who, when asked to visualize their inner child, were so angry with their child that they didn’t want any part of them. A few other clients, when given a teddy bear and asked to let it represent



their younger self, punched it and threw it against the wall. When these clients started to offer themselves patience and compassionate understanding, they were able to create a more loving relationship with their inner child and then saw this reflected in their improved relationships with others. They experienced greater feelings of peace and confidence in their everyday lives as well.

Emotional pain asks for your acceptance and compassion, your reassurance and understanding. It asks that you listen, accept, embrace and love every part of you. It is not an easy task. Hafiz refers to this work as the hardest work in this world. "Just sit there right now. Don't do a thing. Just rest. For your separation from God, from Love, is the hardest work in this world. Let me bring you trays of food and something that you like to drink. You can use my soft words as a cushion for your head."<sup>12</sup>

Great healing will truly come when you embrace your pain rather than run from it. This concept, too, requires understanding that:

1. Your personality self (your inner relationship) and its incorrect beliefs create an energy that differs from the energy of your spirit self.
2. The difference in this energy creates a dissonance that is experienced as pain.

3. Pain is your signal that correction is in order because the truth of who you are is innocence—and innocence equals peace.
4. Until you are willing to look upon your mistaken beliefs and offer your self compassionate understanding—the antidote to judgmental beliefs—you will deny your self peace and joy, which are the gifts of self-love that already reside in your heart, that already belong to you and are waiting for your acceptance.

## Chapter 7

# The Gift of Defenses

*Now is the time to know that all that you do is sacred....  
Now is the time for you to deeply compute the impossibility  
that there is anything but grace.*

—Hafiz

**M**any years ago, I gave a book titled *How To Love Yourself* by Gay Hendricks to a client to read. When the client returned the following

*To love your self for each and every emotion you feel is to understand that, if that feeling exists within you, it has, or once had, a loving purpose.*

week, she said, “I don’t get it! How do you love your self for hating your self?” To love your self for each and every emotion you feel is to understand that, if that feeling exists within you, it has, or once had, a loving purpose. Our defensiveness, even in the form of hatred, leads us back to our self-loving intentions and to our true identity as a loving person.

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Because of the truism “Consciousness is the first step to change,” it is important to slow down and listen to how we talk to ourselves and how we behave toward ourselves because, if we so choose, we *can* change our beliefs, our feelings and our behaviors. Television psychologist Dr. Phil often says, “You can’t change what you don’t acknowledge.” Therefore, we must listen to our inner dialogue and acknowledge the beliefs that keep us from creating the changes we desire. The first step is to become conscious.

I saw an interesting quote from George Bernard Shaw posted on a 3" x 5" card in a store window several years back and copied it down. It said, “Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.”<sup>13</sup> Though very true, creating your self cannot happen until you understand that every emotion has a purpose—and a positive one, at that. It’s in finding ourselves that we gain the power to create ourselves.

I’ve heard many people, even psychiatrists, psychologists and other psychotherapists; explain that some feelings and their resulting behaviors stem from self-sabotage. I wholeheartedly, 100 percent disagree. Every aspect of your self has a loving intention—every aspect! You might find your self repeating behaviors that do not work, but I guarantee that, at some time in your early life, you came up with that behavior because it was the best mechanism you could think of at that time and in that situation in order to protect

your self, your body, your self-esteem and your sanity. You came up with that defense system to serve you then, and even though it might not be optimal or beneficial behavior in your present environment, you continue to act in that manner because it has become an unconscious habit, born out of your strong commitment to love your self and to take care of your self. That is the gift of your defenses.

When you want to change behavior that is not helpful in your life, you can acknowledge and appreciate your self for the self-love that formed that behavior and then release it and let it go with love. You will also need to find and learn a more effective replacement behavior that is supportive of your present-day situation. To resist the ineffective behavior, to call it self-sabotage, and to be upset and disappointed with your self will only keep you in resistance to it and hinder you from taking the necessary steps needed to create the change you want.

I mentioned in an earlier chapter the truism, “What you resist persists.” If you are busy resisting, you are left with little positive energy to put toward building new and more rewarding behavior. But when you recognize that you have always loved yourself, you can easily release the beliefs that you had chosen to protect your self with and go forward with positive energy. The absolute truth is... *you can create a happy life.*

## **There is Only Loving Intention**

There is nothing—absolutely nothing—that you do that does not have a loving intent. You might be wondering: What about the people who are vengeful? How can they have a loving intent? Let's start with the idea that a vengeful person is reacting to feelings of hurt by something someone did, whether real or imagined. At the time the person felt abused, attacked or hurt, they reacted with self-protective anger, which is a very common defensive stance. As we explore the vengeful person's motives, we will most likely discover that the desire to retaliate is meant to warn, "Don't hurt me again. See the consequences it has!"

Vengefulness is self-protective. Most of the time it is ineffective, illegal and possibly a reaction to paranoid thinking, but its bottom-line intent is self-protection and self-love. If we look deep into the unconscious mind of a serial killer who, let's say, kills red-headed prostitutes, we'd find a terrorized little boy who was severely hurt by someone he believed to be a red-headed prostitute. The killer controls his painful emotions by burying them in his unconscious mind, but his fear and anger are out of control. He is insanely protecting himself. Until, or if, he is able to face his pain and realize his innocence, he will be twisted in fear and anger, mentally imbalanced and a danger to society.

On your path to peace and happiness, it is extremely important that you offer your self all of the love and understanding you can. Find better ways to behave if you are not happy with your behavior, while not judging the part of you that behaved in the old way. Again, look for how your old beliefs influenced that behavior and how these beliefs came into your life, see that those beliefs were useful in your early environment, and let them go with love and appreciation for the role they once served. The strongest resource you have is your gentleness, and the quickest way to create change is with your patience.

*The strongest resource you have is your gentleness, and the quickest way to create change is with your patience.*

Mary Oliver's poem "Love Sorrow"<sup>14</sup> suggests that we employ gentleness and patience to do exactly what the title suggests: love sorrow

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## *Love Sorrow*

Love sorrow. She is yours now, and you must  
take care of what has been  
given. Brush her hair, help her  
into her little coat, hold her hand,  
especially when crossing a street. For, think,  
what if you should lose her? Then you would be  
sorrow yourself; her drawn face, her sleeplessness  
would be yours. Take care, touch  
her forehead that she feel herself not so  
utterly alone. And smile, that she does not  
altogether forget the world before the lesson.  
Have patience in abundance. And do not  
ever lie or ever leave her even for a moment  
by herself, which is to say, possibly, again,  
abandoned. She is strange, mute, difficult,  
sometimes unmanageable but, remember, she is a child.  
And amazing things can happen. And you may see,  
as the two of you go  
walking together in the morning light, how  
little by little she relaxes; she looks about her;  
she begins to grow.



Before I was old enough to resolve the judgmental, self-blaming beliefs that caused my pain, I had no concept of true peace. I found numbness to be normal and familiar. A seemingly painless place, numbness kept all my suffering away but it also prevented me from experiencing all feelings, including happiness. I'd heard it said that we don't miss what we've never had, but peace and joy were so far removed from my consciousness that I didn't have a clue that it was possible for me to experience those beautiful emotions.

When we don't have the tools to face our pain, we numb out. There are many ways to do this: through psychological dissociation and activities such as eating disorders, drugs, alcohol, self-mutilation and thrill seeking; through excessive work, sex, exercise, shopping, gambling or hoarding; through anti-social behaviors like stealing, cheating, lying, fighting or abusing; or by becoming abused, accident-prone or repeatedly victimized.

For me, coming out of numbness was a slow and steady exploration of painful memories and feelings. At first, I had to get through my anger about having to face my past and accept that it just wasn't going to go away on its own. Certain problems at that time brought me into therapy, but my original pain—the beliefs and emotions embedded into my unconscious—continuously brought me into relationships and situations that caused me to replay

my early abuse. Then I needed to get through the additional anger and sadness I held about being mistreated, along with the shame and self-blame from thinking I was less than others because I had been mistreated.

Once the bulk of that work was done, I still had one last challenge—to allow myself to feel those foreign, uncomfortable feelings called peace and joy. As I released all of my self-blaming beliefs and emotions, peace and joy began to bubble forth. This new and strange sensation was uncomfortable at first but eventually became familiar and enjoyable.

My small, daily choices changed. I began to move away from abusers and gravitate toward new friends with whom I shared easy-going experiences. I was in joy—*enjoying* myself. I slowly got used to that new feeling, but even more importantly, I began to identify myself as a happy person, a peaceful person. I began to choose peaceful situations over conflicted ones. Pain became a history that I learned to appreciate but with which I no longer identified.

Yes, I am who I am because I had those earlier experiences, but today I no longer feel like a person who had such a history. I look back at my life experiences with great appreciation—my difficult experiences were gifts, opportunities to change my identity from thinking I was horrible to knowing myself as unconditionally loving and innocent.

At one point, when I was studying the teachings of *A Course in Miracles*, I ran across a concept that teaches, “In my defenselessness my safety lies.”<sup>15</sup> When we know our innocence, we no longer feel the need to defend. If we’ve made a mistake, we take responsibility for it rather than making excuses. If we didn’t make a mistake and have been unjustly or mistakenly accused, we know that the other person’s blaming words and actions say more about them than about us.

Because our defensiveness is connected to our belief in self-blame and because “like energy attracts like energy,” we wind up creating what is commonly known as “a self-fulfilling prophecy.” When we take actions based on a fear belief, the decision we make carries that fear energy and that energy manifests or draws to itself the very thing of which we are afraid.

Life is much more complicated when we carry around self-blaming beliefs and much easier when we take the steps to correct these mistaken beliefs and uncover our innocence and our joy. Remember that, when we correct our mistaken beliefs, we no longer have to suffer the pain of defensiveness and our life moves forward with less conflict and more peace.

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## Chapter 8

# Connection and Disconnection

*Ever since happiness heard your name, it has been  
running through the streets trying to find you.*

—Hafiz

**I**n review, the personality self is the part of us that identifies with our experiences, whether on a conscious or unconscious level, and our spirit self is our true or authentic self that knows our perfection and our innocence.

The connection or disconnection we experience with either our personality self or our spirit self can be confusing, especially when we look around and see so many variations within different individuals. From a psycho-spiritual perspective, let's explore what it means to be connected or disconnected to both the personality self and the spirit self.

## **The Personality Self**

Being disconnected from our personality self means that we are unconscious of and in denial about certain beliefs we hold about ourselves. When we are connected, it means that we are consciously aware of the beliefs we hold about ourselves. We might not like some of those beliefs, and they might cause us to feel various unpleasant emotions, but we are aware of them, and we know what we believe.

To offer an example, I had a client, “Mary,” who held a responsible job but had not gone to college even though she really wanted to. She was raised to believe that she was not, in her words, “college material.” We talked about her desire to attend college and whether she had anything to lose by trying. She said she did not, and told me that she wanted to start classes as soon as she could and that she would pick up an application to a nearby college before our next session. When we met again the following week, she stated several reasons why she had been too busy to pick up the application. She said she planned to get it in the next few days. The following week, she again had reasons why she had not been able to pick up the application.

I suggested that we do an inner dialoguing process in which the part of her that wanted to go to school and the part of her that didn’t pick up the application would speak directly with each other. This exercise helped her become

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conscious that the part of her that hadn't picked up the application was scared, and that the part that wanted to pick up the application was judgmental of this scared part. This judgment and the pain it caused was the reason she stayed unconscious and disconnected from that part of herself. Because unconscious fears always hold the stronger hand, this part was causing her to procrastinate or be too busy to pick up the application.

When her fear part became conscious, the two parts could then dialogue and resolve the inner conflict. These two parts were able to compromise by agreeing that she would enroll in only one class to start. This acknowledged the need of her fear part to be cautious and also satisfied her strong desire to start attending college soon. In this way, her two, now conscious parts were able to move forward as one.

Internal conflicts like these are fairly common within the personality self, not because we are individually flawed but because we have grown up in families and in a society where many conflicting beliefs and judgments exist. Through awareness, we are more able to recognize and resolve the conflicts within our personality self, a process that helps us become more connected to who we truly are. Also, we can then more clearly recognize the inner conflicts in others and not get enmeshed in them.

Clients often ask me what they *should do* about various problematic situations in their lives. I never attempt to

fix a client's problems by offering advice, suggestions or solutions. Instead, I explore with them the deeper beliefs that led to their problematic situation and honor and respect the emotions they are feeling. We then process these deeper beliefs and feelings so they can reach a place where they are fully accepting and comfortable with themselves.

Then, with my support, if it's needed, I help them offer themselves compassionate understanding, which allows them to change any views of themselves that need to be corrected. This, in turn, leads them to an awareness of the best actions needed to change their problematic situation.

This enables them to find clarity from within, and they become less likely to repeat their problematic situations. In addition, because of the confidence they gain in their ability to walk through their problems, they no longer need to seek out others to solve their problems.

If you are working with a counselor or a psychotherapist who tells or suggests to you what you should or should not do, please be aware that these professionals, even if they have good intentions, are keeping you from a) discovering your mistaken beliefs, b) knowing your own ability to resolve problems, and c) feeling self-confident.

When we are connected to our self, we do not feel lonely. I've met many people over the years, both personally and in my practice, who feel a desperate need to meet a partner because they believe being in a relationship will remedy

their feelings of loneliness. I've also met many partnered people who were quite lonely within their relationships. In truth, when we are truly connected to our self, we are never lonely. When we are connected, we are engaged in life, giving and receiving in our relationship with our selves, involved with others, and enjoying the challenges, rewards and lessons of life.

## **The Spirit Self**

Disconnection from our spirit self is only a misperception because our spirit self is always unconditionally connected to us. Consider this: if someone we know were to tell us that we are truly magnificent beings, most, if not all, of us would have a hard time believing this compliment. We'd think that our friend offered this comment because he or she is smitten with us or wanted something from us, and we might also think that if this person really knew us he or she wouldn't be praising us so highly. Without believing it within our selves, we would not be able to open up and connect with the truth of what our friend is saying.

The same is true when our spirit self attempts to remind us of our magnificence. Until we believe what our spirit self already knows is true about us, we will have a hard time connecting with our spirit self. There will be moments of clarity when we do connect, but to become one with our



spirit self—to “awaken”—our *personality self* must already believe, agree with or accept our spirit self’s knowledge of who we are. We accomplish a true connection to our spirit self when our personality self *believes* what our spirit self *knows*.

Let’s explore how knowledge differs from beliefs. Here’s an example: If you’ve measured and weighed yourself, you have *knowledge* that you are a certain height and a certain weight. If, however, you don’t have a measuring tape or scale, you might *believe* that you are a certain height and weight, but that’s merely your belief, not your knowledge.

We have knowledge of some things, but many of the things we think we know are just our beliefs.

Our personality self is made up of beliefs. Our spirit self is made up of knowledge. The spirit self *knows* that we are love and is unconditionally patient

*As we correct our mistaken beliefs and allow ourselves to know how absolutely loving we are, and have always been, we feel more consistently connected to our spirit self.*

with us while we work toward becoming conscious of our true identity. As we correct our mistaken beliefs and allow ourselves to know how absolutely loving we are, and have always been, we feel more consistently connected to our spirit self. As this happens, our experience of being connected to everyone and everything expands as well.

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There is a phenomenon in which some people, fearful of feeling their emotions, become out of touch with their bodies. This is because our bodies are the means through which we feel the vibrational drum of our emotions. Therefore, by suppressing our physical sensations, we suppress our awareness of our emotions. Unfortunately, suppressing our physical sensations as a way not to feel our emotions means that we also lose touch with the signals that are needed to stay physically healthy. This disconnect from both our bodies and our emotions, and therefore from the beliefs that created them, keeps us from being able to correct, heal and connect to our spirit self. It is a dangerous situation that can lead to both mental and physical illness.

Here's an example: When one of my clients, "Joan," was between the ages of three and six, her mother entered her into every baby and child beauty contest available and would not allow her to eat much in fear that she would gain weight. Joan remembered always being hungry. When Joan started school, she would steal food and eat everything she could get her hands on.

This fear that food is fattening stayed with her into her adulthood, and Joan's relationship to food was guilt and fear-ridden. She wouldn't eat because she believed food made her fat, yet after nine to sixteen hours of not eating, she'd be so hungry that she'd eat whatever was available, and lots of it. Joan now suffered from a binge-starve eating

imbalance that played havoc with her metabolism. She was obese, hypertensive and pre-diabetic.

When working with Joan, I saw clearly that she could no longer physically perceive her body's hunger signals. Fortunately, however, the sense of safety that she developed during therapy helped Joan explore her fear of eating and helped her become aware of the beliefs she needed to question and change. It took close to a year before Joan was able to reactivate her body's hunger signals. This was an important part of Joan's ability to reconnect with her body and eventually lose weight and balance her metabolism.

When we suppress our emotions and suppress our physical signals as well in order to avoid feeling our emotions, we eventually weaken our body and open ourselves to psychosomatic illness. Psychosomatic illnesses are real, physiological conditions brought on by the mind.

We have found so many different ways to disconnect from our pain. I believe this is because we have so little understanding of the great gifts our spirit self wants us to receive when we connect to and resolve our pain. Connecting to our pain can be scary but worth the health, happiness, peace and joy we receive by doing so.

In the next chapter, we'll take a look at exactly what self-love is, helping us get ever closer to the center of our own hearts.

## Chapter 9

# Love, the Verb

*Love sometimes wants to do us a great favor: hold us upside down and shake all the nonsense out.*

—Hafiz

*The Secret's message is to let go of all blame, because it only destroys you, and to move forward with hope, love, compassion and kindness.*

—Rhonda Byrne

**T**he word love is both a noun and a verb. Love, the noun, is an *emotion* that we feel toward our self or another. Love, the verb, denotes action and describes a particular *behavior* that we offer to our self or to someone else. This chapter will focus on love, the verb.

We can demonstrate loving behavior toward our self in several different ways, including how we speak to our selves; how we take care of our emotions, our body, and our

environment; how we interpret and respond to the actions of others and to a variety of daily situations.

Many years ago, I worked with a client, “Gretchen,” who was an extremely bright and caring person. She had dedicated her life to promoting issues of social justice and worked full-time for a well-respected, international nonprofit organization. She had a very responsible role, traveling the world and bringing issues of importance to light. She was greatly respected and loved by many, many people.

Because of her dedication to her work, she found herself, quite often, missing lunch and not taking bathroom breaks. We explored her upbringing and the messages she might have received that would cause her not to value her body and not listen to its needs. She came to realize that she believed the issues she was working on were more important than her body.

We looked at all the ways her body supported her work, enabling her to speak, write, travel and dialogue with people. Spending time in acknowledgement and appreciation of her body helped Gretchen change her viewpoint and her belief that her body wasn’t as important as her work. She began to acknowledge that her body was actually essential to her work. She was then able to lovingly listen to her body’s needs when it asked her for nurturance and attention.

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Changing our mind changes our behaviors. Here is a powerful demonstration of this truth. Dr. Bernie Siegel, a surgical oncologist who has written several wonderful books one of which is called *Love, Medicine and Miracles*, reported, “I have collected 57 extremely well documented so-called cancer miracles. A cancer miracle is when a person didn’t die when they absolutely, positively were supposed to. At a certain particular moment in time they decided that the anger and the depression were probably not the best way to go, since they had such a little bit of time left, and so they went from that to being loving, caring, no longer angry, no longer depressed, and able to talk to the people they loved. These 57 people had the same pattern. They gave up, totally, their anger, and they gave up, totally, their depression, by specifically making a decision to do so. And at that point the tumors started to shrink.”<sup>16</sup>

It seems that these patients, who had been angry and depressed, were now faced with a greater challenge, surviving their cancer. Whatever beliefs they were holding that had caused their feelings of anger no longer mattered. Certainly, there was no evidence that these beliefs and feelings were saving them from anything but, in fact, were only blocking them from healing. They chose to no longer believe in what no longer served them—not by resisting those beliefs but by completely choosing and focusing on love.

It might be easier to choose love over any other beliefs, conscious or unconscious, when the stakes are as high as death, but the decision to choose love doesn't require dire circumstances. We just need to keep our eye focused on the "prize."

*A Course in Miracles*, the spiritual teaching in which is likened to the Hindu philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, begins with the statement that the Course "does aim, however, at removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance."<sup>17</sup> All of our pain-inducing beliefs are the blocks to our awareness of love's presence, the love that is who we are.

It is not such a big task to grasp this intellectually, but it is a much bigger task to know this truth deep within our hearts so that we can act from it naturally. The path you are now walking is leading you to experiencing this truth.

Patience is a part of faith. As long as you keep walking forward, you will gradually reach that knowingness within you that you are, always have been and always will be love.

Over the years, I have developed an understanding that love is comprised of four basic aspects: 1) recognition, 2) compassionate understanding, 3) acceptance and 4) faith. Their opposites would be 1) denial, 2) judgment, 3) rejection and 4) distrust.

Here's an example of how each of these aspects come together to create loving behavior. Imagine a three-year-old

learning how to tie his shoelaces and having a frustrating time of it. If the parent approaches the child and says, “Oh, give me that and let me tie it! You’re never going to get it!” We would hardly call that loving parental behavior. Now look at this next scenario in which the parent says: “It’s okay, sweetie. You’re doing very well for such a little boy. Let me show you again, and I’m sure you’ll be able to do it soon. I know what a capable little boy you are.” In this example, the little boy is recognized (aspect #1), shown compassionate understanding for being young and a new learner (aspect #2), hears the parent express belief that the child will be able to learn (aspect #4). The whole interaction involves acceptance (aspect #3).

This loving parental behavior lets the little boy know he is loved and accepted and that his ability to learn is trusted. He comes away feeling hopeful, accepted and loved. This helps him develop a self-loving relationship in which he can offer to himself acceptance and faith in his own abilities.

## **Six Steps to Overcoming Pain-Inducing Beliefs**

When pain-inducing beliefs keep you from loving your self fully, you can engage in the following six action steps to let them go with love: 1) acknowledge your beliefs; 2) offer your self compassionate understanding; 3) offer your self gratitude; 4) find replacement beliefs; 5) find proofs to



support those new beliefs; and 6) thank yourself for doing this process.

### **Step 1: Acknowledge your beliefs**

The obstacle that often gets in the way of this first step is judging your self for what you think is true and then experiencing so much emotional pain connected to that judgment that you push the belief away and keep it hidden from your self in order to avoid the pain. Your resistance to accepting your belief keeps it solid and unchanging within your mind.

Remember the phrase, “What you resist persists.” When the energy of a pain-inducing belief is close to your conscious awareness and is seeking to express itself, to keep it from your consciousness you will need to employ your vital energy to hold it down. You are actually keeping your focus on it as a way to hold it at bay. What you focus on will prevent you from seeing other possibilities. At this point, you must remember that, on the journey to the center of your heart, you must be a spiritual warrior, brave enough to face your judgmental beliefs and fight your way through them with the sword of questioning: “Who says this is true? What are their proofs?”

When a pain inducing belief and its accompanying emotion comes to your conscious awareness, that’s the

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signal that now is the time to take the opportunity to correct the belief and resolve the emotion. If you push the belief and emotion back down, they will only reappear again later for the healing.

## **Step 2: Offer compassionate understanding**

Compassionate understanding is the antidote to judgment. The healing power of compassionate understanding rests not only in understanding how or why you began to believe and/or behave as you did but to offer your self heartfelt sympathy for the pain your beliefs have caused you in your life. Beliefs and emotions are one unit. Both must be addressed because one cannot be released without the other.

To understand your self, explore how old you were when you formed a certain belief and what the situation was that caused you to form it. Acknowledge that forming that belief was your loving attempt to take care of yourself in the best way you could come up with at that age, and in that circumstance, in order to survive and thrive. You might want to visualize yourself at that age and introduce your present self to your younger self, offering a hug or sympathy.

### **Step 3: Offer gratitude**

Thank your self for the loving intentions you had when you formed your beliefs. Even if these beliefs are no longer helpful, or maybe even hinder you now, know that they came from your loving intention to take care of yourself the best you could come up with at the time in order to keep your self safe. Acknowledge that this belief, like everything you've done, has come from your loving intentions and then, with a loving heart, release the belief that is no longer helpful. Once you release the belief, you can begin to focus on finding a new belief that will be helpful for you in your present situation.

### **Step 4: Create a replacement belief**

With love, you have the power to replace painful beliefs with beneficial beliefs. Here are some examples:

If the painful belief is ...	You can change it to ...
“I am not important enough to be listened to.”	“I am as important as everyone else, and what I say is worth being heard.”
“I am not smart enough to be taken seriously.”	“My ideas are worthwhile and most people do consider what I have to say.”

“I am selfish and self-centered.”	“I have often been considerate of others.”
“I am a burden to others.”	“I have assets for myself, my friends and my family.”
“I am destructive and a bad seed.”	“I am a child of the universe with gifts to give.”

### **Step 5: Build proofs to support your replacement beliefs**

Write down all the proofs you have for your replacement belief. Review situations at work, at school, with friends and family, with acquaintances and while engaged in miscellaneous social and community activities that support your new belief. The longer the list the better. Speak with friends and people you trust to help you build your list of proofs. Come up with ideas of different actions you can take to add to your list and then do them. Read your list frequently and, if an old belief should emerge, correct it. After several times of being corrected, that belief will begin to fade—it will appear less frequently—and will eventually disappear from your consciousness.

### **Step 6: Thank yourself for doing this process**

The energy of gratitude, like love, is strong because it has a faster vibration than does fear or other emotions. Allow yourself the time to feel this pleasant vibration

throughout your body. Enjoy your power to create your life as you want it. As you do, you might find yourself repeating this empowering and enjoyable process often.

In the next four chapters, we will take a more in-depth look at each of the four aspects that make up loving behavior. By thoroughly understanding love, the verb, you will quicken your steps to reaching the center of your heart.

## Chapter 10

# True Recognition of What Is

*I had been resisting reality all my life—resisting facing it, resisting accepting it, resisting feeling it. ... When I dropped my stance of resistance I felt totally connected to myself. ... It was ... my life's first conscious moment of peace.*

—Gay Hendricks

**T**he first aspect of love is true recognition of *what is*. Though this might seem simple and straightforward, we encounter situations and circumstances in our daily life that we find disturbing: things that are scary, angering, guilt-inducing or saddening. Of course, we also observe actions that warm our hearts: generosity, consideration, gentleness and loving kindness.

My Qi Gong teacher, Dr. Effie Chow, back in 1987, through the use of muscle testing, was able to demonstrate

that merely observing acts of kindness will energetically strengthen our body/mind and that observing acts of unkindness will weaken it.

Therefore, it is not too difficult to understand why, as we go through our day, we choose not to see the things around us that literally weaken our bodies. In truth, even though we might consciously or unconsciously choose to ignore these events, we do see them, and what we see does affect our energy; we are simply choosing not to consciously recognize their effect.

In some ways, this choice is a self-defense mechanism. Maybe if we stopped to console ourselves for every hurt we feel, or we demanded fairness for every injustice we experienced, or if we cried for every pain we experienced, we'd never get anything else accomplished. Still, if we could give more of our attention to accepting and resolving these experiences, we would be able to make an enormous difference in the type of energy we carry within us.

We've discussed the importance of responding with compassionate understanding in order to achieve true healing, and we've noted that we cannot reach that step without first being conscious of what mistaken beliefs are causing us to feel pain. We've also discussed how learned judgments, which are our beliefs of right and wrong, good and bad, cause us to feel additional pain. We've learned about using mirrors as a tool to become aware of unconscious,

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mistaken and pain-inducing beliefs. Now we'll delve into judgments as they relate to our ability to recognize what is, and we'll explore our ability to be in a state of unconditional acceptance of what is.

It is not possible to fully love without fully recognizing what is true. Because judgments are the primary blockers that prevent us from recognizing what is true, we need to understand how judgments get in the way of recognition.

Let's say a fellow has a belief that he is not good at sports. He is also holding on to pain-inducing, judgmental beliefs that he is a failure at something he *should have been* good at. Where did this belief come from? When he was a teenager, the accepted belief among all the boys at his high school was that boys should be good at sports. Because he wasn't, he believed he was not as good or as manly as the other guys, and he felt ashamed.

After high school, he joined groups that had little to do with sports. He made himself busy with other interests, avoiding people who might invite him to shoot hoops or join a softball team. Since high school, he successfully avoided situations that would "trigger" his shame and therefore he was able to keep it unconscious. However, those feelings, albeit suppressed, were still ingrained inside of him.

Life moves on. He marries and becomes a dad, and his pre-teen son loves sports. One day, his son asks him to come out to the baseball field to practice pitching and



batting with him. The father immediately comes up with excuses but then sees disappointment on his son's face. He wants to support his son, but when he thinks about sports, his old high school shame re-emerges. He is torn between the painful emotion within and the pain of disappointing his son.

He decides to employ the help of a psychotherapist. Together, they explore the roots of the belief that is causing his shame and inability to play sports with his son. Now conscious of the beliefs he has been carrying since high school, he is able to question them and let them go. He now thinks: "Why should I feel that I need to be good at sports? How would not being good at sports have anything to do with me not being as much of a man as other guys? I am manly for being a good father and role model for my son!"

He learns that, by his avoidance of sports, he had only been attempting to save himself from embarrassment and possible rejection. He thanks that part of himself for protecting him and, with love, let's go of that old belief. Now that he no longer carries the belief or the shame that accompanies it, he is able to join his son on the practice field and support his son's love of sports.

## **Double Whammies**

Over the years, I've seen a great number of clients who experience what I call a "double whammy." That is, they have fear of feeling fearful, anger about feeling angry, and sadness about feeling sad. Though they recognize the emotion, they get stuck in it because they don't know how to move beyond it. Let's explore each of these double whammies:

### **Fear of Feeling Fearful**

Fear is a belief that something hurtful or awful is coming. If you are on a boat in a storm, you might be afraid that it will capsize; or if you've received a failing grade in school you might be afraid that your parents are going to be very upset with you. Fear is a belief that manifests itself emotionally. If the fear is strong enough, it can paralyze you into a state of mental inertia and physical inactivity. This fear-induced paralysis could keep you from grabbing a much-needed life jacket or telling the truth to your parents.

When we are afraid of our own fear, we become stuck in a belief that emotionally debilitates us. To become unstuck, we must first deal with the fear of the fear and understand and resolve the beliefs that are causing it. Once we can change the belief about having fear, we will be able to address the original fear and resolve that, too.

## **Anger about Being Angry**

Anger is, at first, a self-protective reaction to being hurt. When anger lasts for more than a few days, it represents an unconscious form of self-blame. In this case, we believe that the hurtful situation or event was, in some way, our fault.

Here's an example: If I am standing on a New York City subway platform at 2:00 a.m. holding a pocketbook with my pay for two weeks, in cash, and someone runs by and grabs my purse, I will, most likely at first, experience fear that I might be physically harmed, and then, hopefully, a healthy dose of anger at the other person for taking my money. If, however, after several days, I am still angry, then it is because I am angry with myself for a variety of possible reasons.

I might berate myself, consciously or unconsciously, for carrying my wages in cash, for not putting the money inside my clothing or into a hidden security belt, for not taking a taxi instead of the subway, for not running after the thief and forcing him to give my money back and so on. All of these are statements in which I hold myself responsible for the loss of my money.

Until I can face this belief and question it, I will remain angry with both the thief and myself. More importantly, as you know from reading previous chapters, I will not

experience complete forgiveness of either my self or the thief until I let go of my self-blaming beliefs. This self-loving correction will also help me learn from this experience and take better care of myself in the future. If I find myself angry with myself for being angry, I must first look at the judgment I have about feeling anger and resolve it.

Many people have learned that feeling anger is not spiritually okay—and they work hard at not feeling angry. Feeling anger is very different from behaving angrily. Anger is an emotion no different than any other emotion. It is a bell that rings in our consciousness and lets us know when certain beliefs need correcting. If we've learned that angry feelings are wrong, we might find ourselves angry with our self when we realize we are having this “wrong” emotion. We will need to resolve our beliefs about anger before we will be able to correct the self-blame we are holding regarding the original angering incident.

### **Sadness about Feeling Sad**

Sadness is a response to an unhappy belief and/or a sense of regret. I differentiate sadness from grief. Grief is a strong emotion that comes from the belief that someone or something has been lost, while sadness comes from situations that bring about unhappiness, like disappointment, which is not necessarily related to loss. For example, it

is quite understandable for a person to experience some sadness due to not getting accepted into the college of one's choice. But if the person cannot let go of this sadness after a reasonable amount of time, it might be because he or she is feeling sadness about being sad.

To overcome such situations of sadness, we must first explore our belief about feeling sad in general. Maybe we believe we *should* not be experiencing sadness and *should* accept what is and go forward with a positive attitude. Maybe we believe it is not, somehow, okay to feel sad for our self. When we cannot accept our sadness, it lingers, and then we feel even sadder. In this case, we are both not accepting our sadness and suppressing it as well. Or we might believe that because we feel so sad and can't seem to get beyond that feeling of sadness, we are destined to a life of sadness. This would certainly be a belief that would make anyone sad.

These three examples of double whammies demonstrate how beliefs and emotions can become so complex that we can begin to feel powerless when enmeshed in that grip. Being mindful, possibly by keeping a journal, being in a counseling relationship or support group, or by doing a self-dialoguing technique called "Focusing" can keep us self-aware and ready to quickly correct whatever needs correcting, thus reducing our pain and furthering our growth.

## What Does Not Need Correcting

It is also equally important to recognize “what is” that does not need correcting. When we stay in gratitude for our self-loving actions, this acknowledgement strengthens our relationship with our self, builds our identity as a self-loving person, and feeds both our happiness and our health.

I developed the following “Daily Exercise” to help my clients build a positive self-relationship. Every day, sometime after dinner but before you are too tired to remember the events of your day, write down the following three statements, being specific and starting each sentence with:

I, (your name) acknowledge and thank myself for...

1. ... the ways I responded to my inner needs, both physical and emotional (i.e. hunger, tiredness, upset), with care, kindness, patience and acceptance today.
2. ... the ways I stayed true to my self today (i.e. spoke up on my behalf; spoke my truth about my wants, needs, concerns).
3. ... the ways I behaved today that I like and I am proud of.

Recognizing “what is” is the first important step on your journey to the center of your heart. Because judgments are what keep us from recognizing “what is” and compassionate

understanding is the antidote to our judgments, we'll spend the next chapter learning to fully understand how to use compassionate understanding to move further along the path.

## Chapter 11

# Compassionate Understanding

*Lift up your eyes and look on one another in innocence,  
born of complete forgiveness of each other's illusions.*

—A Course in Miracles

**B**ecause every intention behind every action comes from love and even though some of those actions have had detrimental or even horrific effects, compassionate understanding rather than judgment is still the only healer. Compassionate understanding helps us reach beyond judgment and mistaken beliefs that are the cause for negative emotions and behavior. Compassionate understanding offers healing in a way that our general, historically ingrained comprehension of forgiveness cannot.

Our traditional knowledge of forgiveness comes from ancient scriptures and paradigms of all the world's



long-established religions, which preach that we must forgive others regularly. Forgiveness means, literally, to let go.

More recently, we've become aware that, without first forgiving our self, the act of forgiving another is ineffectual and more a suppression of our anger than a true letting go and healing. To fully let go, we must not only forgive the other for what we perceive they did to us, we must also correct, within ourselves, any self-blame we are holding that we had something to do with the other person's actions. This is the belief that triggers our anger. If we don't rid ourselves of the self-blame, we will carry this unresolved anger energy inside of us, causing a detrimental effect to our mental and physical health.

Throughout my 30-plus years of counseling, I've heard many clients express that they knew it was

*Until we fully resolve our self-blame, we cannot truly accomplish forgiveness.*

important to forgive themselves or that they believed they had already forgiven themselves only to find that they were still angry. They stated that they had felt sincere in their forgiveness and were now confused as to why the anger had re-emerged. True forgiveness sits under anger. Until we fully resolve our self-blame, we cannot truly accomplish forgiveness.

When my clients have difficulty with self-forgiveness, I explore with them the deeper issue so that they can recognize and understand the beliefs that cause their self-blame and finally let the anger go with love and compassion. In coming to this realization, they find that they are not bad or damaged people but, as we've often stated, self-loving people with mistaken beliefs.

Then, as they recognize and identify with their self-love, they experience two other specific changes:

They are much calmer inside and their anger is truly gone, not just suppressed.

1. They realize they are not bad and that there is actually nothing to forgive. They had mistaken beliefs, but they are innocent.
2. With the realization that they are not bad people but are still responsible for their actions and thoughts, they are able to finally fully forgive and let go.

This final letting go, which comes only after everything else is resolved, is how I define true forgiveness. This process cannot be complete without compassionate understanding, without the release of anger and without the acknowledgment of our inherent self-loving intentions. Only when we complete this process can we truly say, "all is forgiven."

We have much unlearning to accomplish on our path to our true identity and our innocence. Many of us have been taught, from day one, that people, not their behaviors, are bad. Some people are also raised with the belief that all people are born sinners. The Greek word *hamartia* (ἁμαρτία) is usually translated as “sin” in the New Testament. In classical Greek, however, it means “to miss the mark” or “to miss the target,” which is why the word is also used in Old English archery.

It is time for us to come back to the original meaning of this word. It is time for us to learn that we are not bad; we are just mistaken—and we can correct our mistakes. When we miss the mark, we can pull another arrow from our quiver of opportunities, reset our bow and shoot again.

Punishment is not the tool we want to use to eradicate mistaken beliefs of self-blame and guilt. Punishment is a crooked arrow that strongly validates the belief in guilt. With all the jails and forms of punishment people have experienced over the centuries, has any society ever eradicated “bad” behavior?

Most societies have based their judicial system on the concept of “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” These are words from the Code of Hammurabi, the ancient code of law from Babylon that dates back to about 1772 BCE. While this code is still widely used around the world, many refer to it as “legalized revenge.”

Still, people hurt other people and kill other people. People steal, cheat and lie. What would cause a person to hurt another on purpose, to know the act is wrong and do it anyway? Some of the major reasons are the beliefs that lead to emotions such as anger, selfishness, greed, fear and jealousy. What beliefs lead people to these emotions and then harmful behaviors? Consider the following:

If a person is thinking ...	He or she is most likely ...
“No one does that to me and gets away with it. I’ll show them. They’ll never do that to me or my loved one again.”	feeling anger and rage, and they want revenge. This actually stems from fear and a desire for self-protection.
“I’m as good as those who have, so I’ll take what I want. Why should they have and me not?”	feeling jealousy, envy and a distrust in their own ability to get what they want or need. This actually stems from a desire to push away feelings of pain from low self-worth.
“Beat or be beaten.”	unable to feel or receive empathy. This stems from low self-worth and the fear of being hurt, cheated, and a desire for self-protection.

All of these responses have their roots in fear. People whose actions are not fear-based do not intentionally hurt others. Keep in mind that people can have many emotions and not be aware of them yet still act from them. What if compassionate understanding rather than punishment were the righter of wrongs? What a different and less fearful world we would live in.

The great humanitarian Dr. Albert Schweitzer spoke of this when he said, “Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man himself will not find peace.”<sup>18</sup> Another great humanitarian His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama said, “Only the development of compassion and understanding for others can bring us the tranquility and happiness we all seek. . . . If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”<sup>19</sup>

## **Wall Words**

“Wall Words” is one of the concepts I came up with many years ago to help my clients become more understanding and compassionate with themselves and others.

Wall Words are particular words that create a seemingly impenetrable emotional wall between judgment and compassionate understanding. For instance, “stupid” is a Wall Word. Calling yourself or someone else stupid stops

you from exploring the real reason why you or someone else made a mistake, why you or the other person missed the mark.

In truth, you are not stupid. Maybe your mistake occurred because you were distracted by something that pulled your attention away from where it needed to be, or maybe you missed an important lesson in school or at work because you were ill for several days when your teacher or instructor explained that concept or procedure. There truly is a reason for everything—but stupidity is not that reason.

Here's a list of Wall Words to look out for when describing your self and others:

Stupid, idiot, imbecile, numbskull, jerk, dumbbell

Lazy, loafer, bum, freeloader

Crazy, nuts, out-of-your-mind, wacko, out-to-lunch

Think about Wall Words that might frequent your vocabulary or your thoughts. Add these to this list. Any word that blocks a true connection to what is, and to true compassionate understanding, is a boulder blocking your path and slowing your progress to the center of your heart.

The practice of compassionate understanding asks that you, as you walk this path, slow down, listen to your heart, listen to the heart of others, and stop when necessary to heal or correct whatever causes pain. The renowned Swiss psychoanalyst Dr. Carl Jung asked this question, “But what

if I should discover that the least amongst them all, the poorest of all the beggars, the most impudent of all the offenders, the very enemy himself—that these are within me, and that I myself stand in need of the alms of my own kindness—that I myself am the enemy who must be loved—what then?”<sup>20</sup>

Learning to love your self requires commitment. It is not an easy task, but it is the most blessed task because as you love your self, as you love the world and as you love everyone in it, the world will begin to heal.

## Chapter 12

# Unconditional Acceptance

*This place where you are right now, God circled on a map for you.*

—Hafiz

*Allow whatever this moment contains. No matter what event or happening or situation, say “yes” to it. Allow it to be.*

—Eckhart Tolle

**O**n your path to the center of your heart, to reaching unconditional love, your next step is to be able to choose to live in unconditional acceptance—of your self and of others. Unconditional acceptance does not mean saying, “My parents made me this way,” or, “I was born this way. So be it.” It is not complacency. It is actually the first step to creating change, but your acceptance must be authentic.



Unconditional acceptance is a necessary step in the process of being a spiritual warrior, wielding the sword of consciousness and compassion. If you find that you are upset or angry about anything, it is important not to get caught in the double whammy of being upset or angry with yourself for being upset or angry. Rather, accept unconditionally what happened and that you feel what you feel. Then explore and correct the pain-inducing belief behind your emotion.

Unconditional acceptance provides the power for us to take responsibility for our lives and our world. In the Jewish tradition, the phrase *Tikkun Olam* (Hebrew: תיקון עולם) means “repairing the world” or “healing and restoring the world.” This suggests humanity’s shared responsibility—along with the creator—“to heal, repair and transform the world.”

As we use our power to correct and heal ourselves, *tikkun olam* becomes a natural part of who we are. When we move in the world without judgment and with a compassionate

*True unconditional love extends itself naturally and effortlessly because, as we discover our innocence, we see everyone else’s innocence as well.*

and open heart, we become a source of healing for others. True unconditional love extends itself naturally and effortlessly because, as we discover our innocence, we see everyone else’s innocence as well.

## Calmness Energy

The energy of unconditional acceptance is calm. When you are calm, your emotions are not being blown this way and that by things like the nightly news or by a story your friend tells you about an injustice at her workplace. You do not get upset, threatened or angered. You don't take things personally even though they might affect you personally.

It isn't that you don't care, but that you hear news and drama stories in a different way—without feeling emotionally walloped by them. Because you are not clouded by emotional reactions, you are able to *respond* with clarity rather than *react* with judgment. Accepting what is, without judgment, allows you to have a choice about how you respond, which includes the option not to do anything.

Over the years, I've had a number of friends ask me how to handle various situations that were going on for them at the time. You might have had this same experience. I learned that, even though I offered advice that each friend said “made sense” and was “the best way to go,” when they were in the moment of action, they handled their situations differently than what I had suggested. Sometimes they'd call me up afterward to relate the outcome. They would report that they didn't handle the situation as they had intended, that they had no idea why they wound up saying

words that “just slipped out,” or that they somehow just couldn’t say or ask for what they had planned.

Rather than feeling insulted that my friends didn’t take my advice, I learned that each person’s experience is his or her own potential learning opportunity. I came to realize that maybe this friend will need to use this experience to delve deeper into *why* they believed they could not say or ask for what they needed at this time. I began to understand that I cannot change in others what I think needs to be changed. I can only provide them with, and be a model of, non-judgment, unconditional acceptance and love. I can only accept *what* is—and *who* they are or were at that moment. Accepting “what is” means accepting the fact that we cannot change another; we can only change ourselves. Should you feel insulted by a friend not following the advice you gave them, use your feeling as a signal and an opportunity to look into and resolve any self-blaming beliefs.

Each time we are not calm, we have the choice to explore, through unconditional acceptance, why we are not. We can ask: “How do I move from non-acceptance to acceptance?” Actually, the first step to acceptance is to accept that we are not in acceptance. Next, explore the beliefs we have about being in non-acceptance. Do we believe that non-acceptance is the necessary energy needed for us to take action toward change? If so, question this

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belief. Ask yourself, “Is non-acceptance the energy that actually energizes my actions?” Or, “Could it be that love and caring are really my motivators?”

## Love Energy

Over the years, I’ve heard people say that guilt is the necessary emotion that keeps us from hurting each other or that anger motivates us to change. I disagree. I believe that love is the most powerful force. Love is what actually keeps us from hurting each other. Love is what motivates us to create positive change.

When people we know and care about die or suffer grave injury or if we suffer grave injury, we might ask why. Perhaps with great emotional angst, “*Why?*” Asking the question implies that there is an answer. But we experience our stages of grief and, in the end, find that there is no answer. It just is. Yes, we can analyze the catalyst in the situation—a drunk driver, a mix-up in medications, an assault. Why did a drunk driver appear just at that moment? Why was an intern in charge of medication disbursement that day? Why did the assailant choose to be in that location at that time? In truth, we cannot know.

We are left to accept what is, and we can take action to assuage our grief: We can mobilize our society for greater awareness about drunk driving. We can attempt to

change the laws about interns disbursing medications in our hospitals. We can work to have our communities hire more police or ban guns. Yet even those good causes will not change what is: your loved one is gone; your friend or you are in the hospital with a serious injury. To resist that reality is to live in an emotional pain that can be longer lasting and more devastating than the physical pain.

I was a young adult in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I identified as a pacifist. I marched against war in Vietnam, and I was angry at the military and all the men who ran my country, the United States of America. I was not living in unconditional acceptance. I believe the marches for peace played a significant part in ending the Vietnam War, but those marches did nothing to end my personal, internal war. I had no peace inside of me—even when the Vietnam War ended.

## **Peace Energy**

Resistance to war, like resistance to anything, energizes what we resist by focusing our attention on it. Putting our energy into resolving internal conflict, creating inner peace, establishing peace in our communities, teaching compassionate understanding in our schools and other institutions, and supporting organizations such as the U.S. Institute for Peace and the International Institute for Peace

that seek to settle conflict nonviolently are the solutions to ending crime, violence and war.

Here's an example of something that I imagine most Americans have experienced: Over the years and on numerous occasions when I would call to speak with a member of the customer service department at my bank, gas and electric company, credit card company, cable television company, or other major entities on whom I rely for my daily living, I would find myself waiting an inordinate amount of time, listening to repetitive recorded messages, and sometimes getting disconnected after being on hold for a very long time. The powerlessness I felt used to infuriate me!

I began the process of changing my response to situations like this when I started whittling away at my beliefs that I was "insignificant" and, thus, unworthy of prompt attention. As I altered my thinking and acknowledged my self-loving intentions, I began to appreciate myself more. And as I did this, I stopped allowing people, including myself, to mistreat me.

As my self-concept changed and my self-esteem rose, I became more and more uncomfortable with psychological pain and more aware that I wanted and could choose to feel peace. So, when I found myself needing to make a phone call to one of those corporations, I would remember that I would, most likely, have a long wait time and I began to put

my phone on the “speaker” setting so that I could continue to check my e-mails, read my book or tidy my house. If, once again, my phone call would be disconnected, I would just peacefully redial and continue to do what I wanted or needed to do.

Could I have done this earlier in my life? Not really. At that earlier time, I didn't have the emotional foundation I needed to think about myself in a caring way and to take the actions that would make life easier for me. I had to do the growth work first. I am truly grateful for how I take care of myself now... as well as for speakerphones.

Maybe you experience outrage over having to wait a very long time to speak with a customer service representative. Maybe your outrage is caused by a completely different set of beliefs. Maybe you believe that *you*, of all people, shouldn't have to wait while someone whose time, you deem, is less valuable than yours takes his or her sweet time to respond to your call?

My example of feeling insignificant of timely assistance and the above example of feeling overly important are extremes on the continuum of beliefs that keep us locked into upsetting emotional states. Once we create a more loving relationship within ourselves, we are more capable of choosing unconditional acceptance of what is, which fosters peace and allows us to choose actions that create

peacefulness, like finding something worthwhile to occupy our time while we are waiting on hold.

## **Positive Life Energy**

Living in unconditional acceptance means feeling calm, even in the midst of experiences like disappointment or betrayal. While other people might be riled up by the evening news, your compassionate heart accepts “what is” and your body/mind is calm. Should you want to take action, you will do so from a loving, healing intention rather than from anger and vengeance.

The calmness that comes with unconditional acceptance is stated so eloquently in the Serenity Prayer, written by Reinhold Niebuhr and used by the members of Alcoholics Anonymous:

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
the courage to change the things I can;  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

As you begin to unconditionally accept yourself, you find yourself being less intimidated, more confident and fully aware of who you are. You are more courageous to take action and less afraid to offer loving kindness and compassion—even when others around you disapprove



of your decision and don't think your action of love is warranted. You choose love and compassionate acceptance because you know you can and because you know the benefits. You are now able to be a force of love in your own life and a force of love in the world around you.

## Chapter 13

# Knowledge That All Things Are Possible

*When you learn about yourself from yourself, out of that learning wisdom comes. Then you can live a most extraordinary, happy, beautiful life.*

—Krishnamurti

**L**isten to your responses or reactions to the people and experiences you encounter, using the mirror of awareness given to you to see into your self. Then recognize any painful or defensive reactions you might have and explore their roots in self-blaming beliefs, offering yourself compassionate understanding as you do. Question and then correct your pained and defended reactions. Offer yourself a sincere unconditional acceptance and acknowledge your ability to create a different experience by creating a different belief. No, you won't be able to grow wings and

fly like a bird, but, like the Wright Brothers, you might create the ability to fly.

Like too many others, I grew up being told I would never amount to anything, that I was stupid and undeserving. Those ingrained beliefs ruled my life for many, many years. Yet I've accomplished things that, then, I never imagined I would be able to do. Of course, my beliefs did not change overnight. I also didn't have a clue that my beliefs were just beliefs and not truths. So I never considered that my beliefs could possibly be anything but correct. Slowly, however, as I built up my self-esteem, I began to take little risks and grow a greater sense of my true abilities.

Here's an experience that shows how strongly ingrained our beliefs can be and how they affect every one of our choices. I was 25 and just divorced when I first decided to go to college. High school had been a difficult time for me because of my excruciating low self-esteem and lack of confidence. This showed in my grades and in my general state of unhappiness. I believed it would be impossible for me to be accepted into college. Yet I always held on to the dream of higher education.

During my divorce proceedings, I was sitting in family court with my attorney when she asked me what I wanted to do now that I was no longer married. I told her I always dreamed of going to college but didn't have the grades to get accepted. She told me there was an experimental

college on Long Island, New York, that would accept students based on the applicant's written essay about what they would do with their college education. I applied and was accepted.

Even though I was receiving straight A grades, I didn't feel I was smart. I reasoned that the smart students went to colleges that accepted them based on their grade point average and not on a single essay.

In my junior year, I was attending a class called Literature and the Law, a subject I thoroughly enjoyed. One afternoon, I was searching for a way to get home and the professor of this class offered to give me a ride. As she drove, we began to chat. During the conversation, she told me that I was the brightest student in her class. Then she corrected herself and said, "No, in both of my classes."

Because I thought she only taught the class for one period, I asked her what other time she was teaching it. She answered that she did not teach the other class at my school but at New York University. Was I hearing her correctly? Was she really telling me that I was brighter than the students in her class at NYU? My head spun for three days—truly! It was very difficult to have my belief upturned so rapidly. Even though this was a great compliment, it was also disconcerting and very challenging for me to take in and believe.

During my college years, I was involved with social justice issues and, when I graduated, I applied to the New College School of Law in San Francisco. After my first year, I realized I wouldn't be happy in that profession and switched to a masters program in human communication. My studies in human communication then led me to want to work as a psychotherapist, and several years later, I returned to school for a second masters, this time in clinical psychology.

When I graduated, I started studying for the two state-given psychotherapy, licensing exams. All the while, the voice in my head said, "You can never be a professional like those others who can pass these difficult tests." Though a large part of my self-concept couldn't imagine myself as a professional in this field, my spirit self calmly told me, "Put one foot in front of the other," and I continued to study despite my chatty, doubting inner voice.

When I passed my tests and received my license, it was another experience in which I walked around for a week bewildered until I could truly accept that I was, in fact, a capable person who deserved to be recognized as a psychotherapy professional. This reinforced into me, very strongly, that we *cannot*—and *must not*—give in or give up because of early, ingrained messages that we mistake as truths. They simply are not true!

## Overcoming Negative Beliefs

When I work with clients who are so wedded to their negative beliefs that they argue in defense of them, I approach the issue by agreeing with them. I agree wholeheartedly and even offer empathy for their situation. When I do this, they find themselves in the position of defending themselves against their own negative beliefs, which I am voicing. Usually by the time we've completed our conversation, they are much less wedded to their negative beliefs. Had I pursued arguing against their beliefs, however, they would have been put in the position of defending them and, therefore, strengthening them.

In the United States, there seems to be an easy tolerance for people who point out their own negative beliefs about themselves and too little tolerance for people who acknowledge their positive attributes. Mentioning our positive qualities is often seen as boastful even though we might just be stating a fact rather than attempting to “one-up” somebody. This socially accepted practice keeps people lopsided—with too little positive acknowledgment and too many negative reinforcements. Though, in the moment, it might feel insignificant, it is really *very* important that you acknowledge your abilities, your accomplishments and your goodness.

Here's an example from a former client. "Hilda" came in to talk about wanting to start a small business so she could eventually quit her job and do what she really wanted to do. Hilda was a certified public accountant for a large firm, lived on her own and managed quite well financially, but her heart yearned to own and operate a small, neighborhood, retail establishment. Her fear that she did not know how to start and run a business stopped her from moving forward. Hilda often doubted her ability to make decisions, and she would also worry about and second-guess the decisions she did make. It was clear that Hilda had little trust in her self and was very afraid of failure. When I asked her what would happen if she failed, her response was, "I would be humiliated and probably get more depressed and trust myself even less."

Hilda was filled with self-judgment and had little experience with expressing compassionate understanding for herself. We worked to weaken her judgments and build up her self-esteem. We spent time acknowledging her capabilities, such as becoming a CPA and setting up a home for herself. She told me that, in the past, she had used her abilities to accomplish things only to please her parents. I pointed out that, no matter what the reason, she had proven how very capable she was.

We explored whether it was okay for her to use her capabilities on behalf of herself. We also explored her right

to make herself happy rather than living her life to make her parents and her employer happy. She found a college course on how to start a business and slowly, over time, built up enough confidence to take the actual steps needed to purchase and open her boutique. When Hilda's therapy concluded, she had already cut back her hours at her firm and was moving forward in her new business.

## **The Strength of Your Beliefs**

You might believe that your dreams are so huge that they are unattainable. Big dreams might take more time to accomplish than small dreams—or not—but all dreams, regardless of the size, are absolutely possible.

I've heard many people say that they want to be millionaires, yet most never take the risks or do the work that such a financial accomplishment requires. Many are only willing to put out a few dollars for a lottery ticket, yet most self-made millionaires didn't become so by winning the lottery.

Success rarely comes overnight. If a person “makes it big” as a singer, they, most likely, sang in cafes and paid for and recorded their own records for years—ever pushing to craft their talent and get their voice heard in the right places—before making it big. Success takes perseverance. We “will” our dreams into reality by the



amount of willingness we have to put in the work—and our willingness is fueled by the strength of our beliefs.

If you believe you don't have “what it takes” to become a millionaire, you won't become a millionaire. Or if there are other things you truly want more than becoming a millionaire, you will use your time differently and pursue those other goals. Whatever path a person is drawn to holds his or her life's lessons. The pursuit of riches might not necessarily be rewarding for some, but for others it might be just the life experience required for their inner growth.

When we follow our feeling guides—that is, our interests, our curiosities and our desires—we are led to the specific experiences that provide us with the opportunity to meet, heal and love our selves. Even medical students must be willing to give up a “normal” social life and lose out on a number of rich experiences due to their demanding study schedule in order to gain many more rich experiences once they become physicians. When we are willing to do what it takes, the possibilities are countless.

## **Endless Reality**

When you pursue your goals, no matter what the goals might be, success comes more quickly if you believe in your ability to achieve them and have the willingness to do whatever is required to make them manifest. If your

beliefs say you are not able, then walk toward your dreams “as if” you believe you are able—and the results will be the same; you will achieve. If you encounter obstacles, find the help and the ways around the obstacles. If this feels like too much work, then it’s time to reassess whether you are succumbing to your doubts or whether this dream is the dream you truly want to create.

If your mind is stuffed with beliefs of “I can’t,” “I don’t deserve that,” and, “I’m not good enough,” you will prevent yourself from succeeding in order to protect yourself from your feared disappointment and shame. It might not seem loving to keep ourselves from having what we want, but if early, unresolved and painful beliefs are still inside of us, we will automatically defend ourselves from the pain. And we will, at some level, view that as a loving act, as I explained in an earlier chapter. It isn’t until we face and resolve those beliefs that we can expand our horizons and take charge of our lives, creating it just as we want it. As we step forward toward our dreams, any doubts and fears we are not aware of will rise up to consciousness, providing us with the opportunity to correct our beliefs and accomplish our dreams.

I came to this understanding later in my life, so it is only now that I am filled with goals I want to accomplish. Had I had the confidence, when I was younger, to take on what I am now beginning to take on, you might already know me as the writer of popular songs that teach self-acceptance

or a television show personality who hosts a show called “Teaching Compassion for Self and Other” or the author of many more books like this one. You might know me as the already acclaimed expert on leading people towards entering their own hearts.

Life is amazing. It is an endless reality. But we don’t actually experience it as such when we don’t “go for it,” when we don’t “grab the bull by the horns,” when we don’t “jump in with both feet” and “reach for the brass ring.”

Christopher Logue beautifully states the reality of what we can accomplish in this poem:<sup>21</sup>

Come to the edge.  
We might fall.  
Come to the edge.  
It’s too high!  
COME TO THE EDGE!  
And they came...  
And he pushed...  
And they flew.

## **Building Beliefs**

I am more a believer in building beliefs slowly, starting with taking small risks that generate more and more confidence. Yet I’ve known people who took leaps of faith and did well. When this happens, I am inclined to believe

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that they had little to no “fear of failing” beliefs dwelling within them.

There are also some who allow themselves to be pushed into doing what they strongly, either consciously or unconsciously, believe will not work. These people will then find circumstances and events that will prevent that endeavor—and themselves—from succeeding. These experiences will only strengthen their fear beliefs and take them a step backward on their path.

I suggest that you walk your own path and not step where others tell you to step—unless you truly want to take that step yourself. Logue’s poem speaks to the fact that we are more capable than we believe. We are! The only thing that stops us is fear—and fear is only a mistake that, when confronted, can easily be challenged and changed.

What you want is possible. Your eventual success might take time, commitment, money, support, sacrifice, determination, stubbornness, upsetting others, dealing with the disbelief of others or more. But all that you want is possible. This telling poem, called “Thinking”<sup>22</sup> by Walter D. Wintle speaks to this fact:

If you think you are beaten, you are  
If you think you dare not, you don’t,  
If you like to win, but you think you can’t  
It is almost certain you won’t.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost  
For out in the world we find,  
Success begins with a fellow's will  
It's all in the state of mind.  
If you think you are outclassed, you are  
You've got to think high to rise,  
You've got to be sure of yourself before  
You can ever win a prize.  
Life's battles don't always go  
To the stronger or faster man,  
But soon or late the man who wins,  
Is the man who thinks he can!

## **Being a Creator**

How important is it that we are successful at accomplishing something? The answer is, not at all. What is important is what we learn along the way. Attaining a million dollars or becoming a doctor or psychotherapist does not, in and of itself, bring us closer to the center of our heart unless we use the mirror of our experiences to reach inside and turn self-judgment into self-acceptance and self-love.

Most of us know that a person can be a billionaire and also be unhappy and unhealthy. Inner peace is worth more than a billion dollars—I can't count the number of times I've

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heard people say that. Still, \$10,000 could make someone's life better; that amount could get them out of debt or help them buy a car so they don't have to spend many hours each day commuting to work by bus.

The hard and seemingly unfortunate truth is that if you handed someone \$10,000 to fix his or her problems, that person would very likely gather new problems within a short time. Having problems has nothing to do with not having money but with the beliefs the person carries inside. Change your beliefs and you will have your new car, get out of debt or anything else you want, not necessarily immediately, but you will.

Anita Moorjani, in her book, *Dying To Be Me*, says the same thing in different words, "...if there's something I desire, the idea isn't to go out and get it, but to expand my own consciousness to allow universal energy to bring it into my reality here."<sup>2</sup>

Once we change the beliefs that are keeping us from having what we want, we will have what we want. I can hear some of my friends saying, "But what if the economy is bad and there are no jobs?"

*All things are possible when  
you remove the obstacles  
to having them.*

Yes, this situation might make things more challenging, but the degree of the challenge will only be as difficult as you believe it will be. With a strong sense of deservingness and

a willingness to do whatever it takes, you can buy a new car, you can pay off your debts, you can achieve whatever you want. All things are possible when you remove the obstacles to having them.

In the next chapter, we'll look closer at what happens when we have challenged all of our self-blaming beliefs and feel our innocence, when we arrive at our heart's door with a bouquet of love.

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## Chapter 14

# Entering Your Own Heart

*Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing,  
there's a field. I'll meet you there.*

—Rumi

*In the midst of winter I finally realized there was in me  
an invincible summer.*

—Albert Camus

**D**uring my own journey to my heart, I learned to visualize meetings with my spirit self. I did this for about four years. I would meet my spirit self on the beach and ask her a question I had on my mind. On one visit, when I was close to receiving my psychotherapy license, I asked her, “How can I heal others?” This was the answer I received:

*Don't think... just love.*

*To move from your heart, you must first be willing  
to be in it, which means that you must be willing to be*



*with what's in your heart, you must be willing to feel your pain. If you want to touch the hearts of others, you must be willing to touch your own heart. Once you've moved through your own heart—with its sadness, its fear and confusion, its terror, its fury, its bewilderment, its despair—then no one, not even the most insane, will scare you away. It's not the other person's insanity that scares us; it's our own insanity that we are afraid to touch.*

*To heal the other, to truly touch and heal their hearts, you must first have made peace within your own heart. Then fear will have no foothold within you. Then there will be no meaning to the words sane or insane, angry or peaceful, happy or sad. Then the only question becomes, "Can you extend your heart?"*

*This is the beginning and the end of all that is meaningful. When you can fully extend your heart, then all that seemed to have meaning dissipates and the truth of what is meaningful comes to the light. The truth is this simple and this difficult, this beautiful and this horrifying, this exciting and this boring. It is this and this alone: a violin string threaded through all of our hearts, vibrating love; one sound, one beautiful sound within each of us that we are all listening to.*

From her words, I learned that I would only be able to extend love to my clients and help others heal when I could fully enter my own heart—fearlessly, with loving

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compassion and without judgment—when I could fully connect to the only healing energy that exists, which is love.

## Connecting Hearts

This path to the center of our hearts connects all of our hearts, but first we must connect to our own. We must “love again the stranger” as beautifully described in this poem, “Love After Love”<sup>24</sup> by Derek Walcott.

The time will come  
when, with elation,  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other’s welcome,  
and say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf.  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.

The journey leads you to the “door,” and you arrive a stronger, happier, more confident person. You hold a bouquet of love. You love and enjoy yourself. You live in appreciation for all the lessons you have faced that have brought you here. You feast on your life. Life is good. Is there something more? Do self-love, inner peace and happiness require surrendering something? Will you feel different, disconnected, alone if you walk through this door?

We talked about the personality self as a relationship between the conditioned inner child and the internalized parent and about the

*You are your spirit self  
... one with everyone  
and everything.*

steps needed to change this relationship into a fully loving one. So, no, there is nothing to surrender. That relationship, which I call the personality self, is just a temporary identity you use to find your true identity. Once the energy of your personality self truly matches the energy of your spirit self, your sense of separateness from the spirit self dissolves and you begin to know that there is no separation, that there is no relationship, that *you are your spirit self*, and that you are one with everyone and everything.

Your sense of you will merge into the spirit self. As you travel your path, each correcting step you take is a step into your heart. There is no real door, only a grand hall where only one beautiful sound, only one voice and

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only one vibration is real. In this grand hall, you will not be blindsided by the comings and goings of the world but will wait patiently for others to join you in your expanded awareness.

They will visit you but will not fully know the realness of your experience. You will love and accept them as unconditionally as you do your self, and you will feel fully connected to them in ways they might not be able to be connected to their selves. You will live in the truth of love, and you will know joy because you know unconditional love. You will have entered the great hall.

## Choices

You might not choose to live fully within your heart—that choice is completely yours. What would it mean not to live fully within your heart? It would mean nothing. The truth is the truth whether you choose to live in truth or not. Who you truly are will not change. You are you, and you are spirit. Only your awareness will change, and awareness is yours to do with as you please. You will experience no right choice or wrong choice—only *your* choice.

At this point, you can choose to be at peace with everything that is—even when you would like some things to be different, such as if a dear friend were dealing with a cancer diagnosis. You know your own innocence and you

know the innocence of your friend. You experience only the peace of unconditional acceptance. That doesn't mean you don't tell your friend about a new and promising cancer treatment—because your friend's faith in it could mean the difference between life and death. You will recognize what level of self-love your friend is experiencing, but it won't matter in terms of the love you feel toward your friend. You will love your friend with the same total and complete love that the universe and his or her spirit self loves.

While on your path, the vibration from your personality self changes to match that of your spirit self—the awakening process naturally progresses. The speed of your awakening depends, of course, on how focused you are on doing the work of correcting self-blaming beliefs. When you move toward the center of your heart, you wake up each day a bit more peaceful and less reactive than the day before. This is a *gradual awakening* and is how I experienced changing. Others have reported what is known as *spontaneous awakenings*.

## **Awakenings**

A spontaneous awakening most often means that only a part of a person's energy has been awakened. Though this could be a large leap in consciousness, it doesn't mean that

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the person is now someone who has fully let go of his or her personality self or has fully awakened.

Many of the stories I have read about or by people who have experienced a spontaneous awakening have reported that they received a wonderful, often dramatic opening to an abundance of truth. For some, this information enabled them to move out of the depths of depression or influenced them to use their life in service of others or brought them back from death's door.

Although a spontaneous awakening offers the individual a huge realization of what is true, he or she still has a lot of diligent work to do to clear all past self-blaming beliefs and corresponding emotions from the personality self.

Following a spontaneous awakening, there is often a comedown effect. As the quicker vibrational energies enter, many subconscious memories and conditioned beliefs become dislodged and allowed into consciousness. The ego is thus "cracked open" and often has no way to process the experience. Because the rise in vibration is confusing, bringing up unpleasant and unresolved concerns, the individual can find himself or herself in danger of ending up in a state of severe confusion or psychosis. The greater the experience of awakening, the greater the comedown. Therefore, a spontaneous awakening is more like a sudden shift in consciousness without first working through the slower vibrational beliefs of self-blame and the resulting

emotions. If you are interested in learning more about spontaneous awakenings that lead to psychosis, you can read, *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis* by Stanislav and Christina Grof.

Through the psycho-spiritual path to the heart that I am suggesting, you will experience a gradual awakening, one in which your mind and your body become accustomed to the changing vibration. You are called on to be a spiritual warrior on your own behalf, carrying the sword of compassion and correction. There is no “cracking open” of the ego (personality self) and no onslaught of dangerously overwhelming, painful thoughts and emotions.

One of my favorite teachers is an American woman named Gangaji. When Gangaji speaks of becoming an awakened being, which I call entering the great hall, she says, “Give it all up and you will see immediately what can never be lost. Then you will know where your true home is, and you can truly rest.”<sup>25</sup>

Through the process I call “entering your own heart,” a process that involves the willingness to become a spiritual warrior in the effort of letting go of your identity with your personality self, this awakening happens gradually and naturally. The process of dis-identifying with your personality self is hard, but the process of identifying with your spirit self is easy; it’s like hearing your favorite song after not hearing it for a while, tasting your favorite food

after not eating it for a while, or seeing a beautiful sunrise after not seeing one for a while.

The path is where you learn to embrace the truth of who you are, whether you travel with a quick, purposeful step or occasionally wander away from the path. The unconditional love, patience and acceptance of the universe will not remove the path, it is yours to walk when you choose. The path set out before you leads you to your true self. It is, and always will be, your choice to meet and know your true self.



## Conclusion

*The sun will stand as your best man ... when you have found the courage to marry love.*

—Hafiz

**T**he path is now laid out for you. Only you can choose the work of removing the barriers to love's presence by unearthing the sources of pain and by becoming a spiritual warrior, undoing each blockage that prevents you from identifying with your spirit self, with love. It is not easy work, yet as you experience the rewards, you might, like me, find yourself becoming enthusiastic about digging out and casting away your pain. It is a very empowering experience and one that builds self-respect, self-love and self-trust.

There are so many, many books with a myriad of teachings and teachers. I can't stress enough how important it is to choose only those teachers who clearly know your innocence and can reflect that back to you. Make sure that every teacher, therapist, or clergy person you go to always

sees and treats you with compassionate understanding and loving kindness.

As my awareness of my true self grew, I began to write spiritual poetry. I'd like to share one of my poems with you:

I am a petal on the flower that is god's temple  
god is my fragrance, god is my beauty  
You are a petal on the flower that is god's temple  
god is your fragrance, god is your beauty

I recently discovered this quote from Hafiz: "I am a hole in a flute that the Christ's breath moves through; listen to this music."<sup>26</sup> Whether we refer to fragrances, beauty or music, remember that you are the energy and you are the essence of the spirit self, the "all and the everything."

My preference for a psycho-spiritual approach to achieving self-love and awakening is based on the fact that, with most other spiritual teachings, there are no real "hands-on" road maps for traversing the bumpy path into the center of your heart. Though I find spiritual writings inspirational, it was psychotherapy that helped me find my innocence. And it was in finding my innocence that my whole sense of reality changed, that I began to live in peace and I began to awaken to the true knowing of my self as a spiritual being.

If your path is filled with deep, dark holes and huge boulders, like mine was, take comfort that developing

self-love, inner-peace and happiness really is attainable. As I said earlier, it's the quality of love on the path—not the swiftness of the journey—that counts. Your reward is not in some heaven somewhere else. Your reward is immediate because you experience the peace-filled, self-discovery of knowing the truth of who you are. You are the reward!

Each encounter you have with a belief that says you are not enough or somehow flawed cuts like a knife. Why? Because when you believe it to be true, it hurts. Stay strong and find support to learn the truth of who you are. You are a magnificent, miraculous being!

The brilliantly wise spiritual poet Khalil Gibran speaks of this path in a brutally unromantic poem titled “On Love”<sup>27</sup> from his book *The Prophet*.

## *On Love*

When love beckons to you, follow him,  
though his ways are hard and steep.

And when his wings enfold you yield to him,  
though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.

And when he speaks to you believe in him,  
though his voice may shatter your dreams  
as the north wind lays waste the garden.

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you.  
Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.

Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your  
tenderest branches that quiver in the sun,  
so shall he descend to your roots and  
shake them in their clinging to the earth.

Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself.

He threshes you to make you naked.

He sifts you to free you from your husks.

He grinds you to whiteness.

He kneads you until you are pliant;

and then he assigns you to his sacred fire,

that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast.

As you journey into your heart, remember that subtle energies are really the most powerful energies. Therefore, stay aware of your inner voices and refer regularly to the six steps to overcoming pain-inducing beliefs in Chapter 9 and the daily exercise in Chapter 10. These will strengthen you on your journey.

Do the best you can. Find solid support and always treat your self with loving kindness, patience and acceptance.

May each day bring you closer to living in the great hall, dancing joyfully through all the experiences you encounter in this life with peace in your heart and with an unconditional love for your self, for every one and for every thing.



# Epigraphs

## Introduction

*Just as rivers flow from east and west to merge with the one sea, forgetting that they were ever separate rivers, so all beings lose their separateness when they eventually merge into pure Being.*

*Chandogya Upanishad, Chandogya Brahmana, Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandogya\\_Upaniṣad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandogya_Upaniṣad) (accessed July, 2012)*

*Namaste: I honor the place in you in which the entire universe dwells. I honor the place in you which is love, of truth, of light, and of peace. I honor the place in you where, if you are in that place in you, and I am in that place in me, there is only one of us.*

Definition of Namaste, several sources.

## **Chapter 1: The Relationship That Is You**

*In all the great spiritual traditions, at their heart is tenderness—just to be kind inside, and then everything rights itself. Fear rests. Confusion rests.*

Pamela Wilson, *Befriending Ourselves: Resources for Inner Peace & Compassionate Care*, [www.befriendingourselves.com/Quotes.html](http://www.befriendingourselves.com/Quotes.html) (accessed July, 2012)

## **Chapter 2: You Are an Energy Experience**

*You are in physical existence to learn and understand that your energy, translated into feelings, thoughts and emotions, causes all experience. There are no exceptions.*

Seth (Jane Roberts), *The Nature of Personal Reality*, (Amber-Allen Publishing, 1974), 22.

## **Chapter 3: Emotional Treasures**

*Our deepest fears are like dragons guarding our deepest treasures.*

Maria Raine Rilke, *Favorite Quotes: Choice Sayings on Life and Learning*, compiled by Aaron Shephard, <http://www.aaronshp.com/author/quotes.html> (accessed July, 2012)



## **Chapter 4: The Outside as Mirrors**

*Perception is a mirror, not a fact. And what I look on is my state of mind, reflected outward.*

Helen Schucman, scribe, *A Course In Miracles*,  
(Foundation for Inner Peace, 1976)

## **Chapter 5: Judgments and Pain**

*If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Driftwood*, (Houghton  
Mifflin & Company, 1857)

## **Chapter 6: The Purpose of Pain**

*Through love all pain will turn to medicine.*

Rumi, *Poems of Passion*, <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/H%20-%20World%20Religions%20and%20Poetry/Poetry/Rumi/Poems%20of%20Passion/Rumi%20-%20Poems%20of%20Passion.htm> (accessed July, 2012)

*We find our power in the same place as our pain.*

Aaron Shepard, *Favorite Quotes: Choice Sayings on Life and Learning*, compiled by Aaron Shepard, <http://www.aaronsherp.com/author/quotes.html> (accessed July, 2012)

## **Chapter 7: The Gift of Defenses**

*Now is the time to know that all that you do is sacred... Now is the time for you to deeply compute the impossibility that there is anything but grace.*

Hafiz, “Now is the time,” *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz*, (Penguin Group, 1999), 160

## **Chapter 8 : Connection and Disconnection**

*Ever since happiness heard your name, it has been running through the streets trying to find you.*

Hafiz, “Some Fell with Each Good Rain,” *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz*, (Penguin Group, 1999), 76

## Chapter 9: Love, the Verb

*Love sometimes wants to do us a great favor: hold us upside down and shake all the nonsense out.*

Hafiz, "Some Fell with Each Good Rain," *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz*, (Penguin Group, 1999), 76

*The Secret's message is to let go of all blame, because it only destroys you, and to move forward with hope, love, compassion and kindness.*

Rhonda Byrne, *Ascension Gateway: Spiritual Quotes & Spirituality Guide*, [www.ascensiongateway.com](http://www.ascensiongateway.com), (accessed July, 2102)

## Chapter 10: True Recognition of What Is

*I had been resisting reality all my life - resisting facing it, resisting accepting it, resisting feeling it. ... when I dropped my stance of resistance I felt totally connect to myself ... it was ... my life's first conscious moment of peace.*

Gay Hendricks, *Learning To Love Yourself*, (Simon & Schuster, 1990), 4

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## **Chapter 11: Compassionate Understanding**

*Lift up your eyes and look on one another in innocence, born of complete forgiveness of each other's illusions.*

Helen Schucman, scribe, *A Course In Miracles*, (Foundation for Inner Peace, 1976) 247

## **Chapter 12: Unconditional Acceptance**

*This place where you are right now, God circled on a map for you.*

Hafiz, *Gaiam Life: Stream of Consciousness*, <http://blog.gaiam.com/quotes/authors/hafiz?page=1> (accessed July, 2012)

*Allow whatever this moment contains. No matter what event or happening or situation, say “yes” to it. Allow it to be.*

Eckhart Tolle, *Befriending Ourselves: Resources for Inner Peace & Compassionate Care* <http://www.befriendingourselves.com/Quotes.html> (accessed July, 2012)

## **Chapter 13: Knowledge That All Things Are Possible**

*When you learn about yourself from yourself, out of that learning wisdom comes. Then you can live a most extraordinary, happy, beautiful life.*

Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti on Education* (Krishnamurti Foundation, India) 12

## **Chapter 14: Entering Your Own Heart**

*Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing, there's a field. I'll meet you there.*

Coleman Barks, *The Essential Rumi*, (HarperCollins, 2004)

*In the midst of winter I finally realized there was in me an invincible summer.*

Albert Camus, "Albert Camus Quotes," *Goodreads*, <http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/957894>.  
Albert\_Camus (accessed July, 2012)

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## Conclusion

*The sun will stand as your best man... when you have found  
the courage to marry love.*

Hafiz, "Dividing God," *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz*,  
(Penguin Group, 1999), 136

# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Circle of Atonement, “The Course’s Nondualism: Love Is a Law Without an Opposite.” (accessed August 8, 2012). <http://www.circleofa.org/articles/CoursesNondualism.php>
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## About the Author

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