

# The Evolution of Focalizing

Reducing Suffering  
Supporting Possibilities



Michael Picucci  
with Scott Marquardt  
& Other Contributors

**The Evolution of Focalizing**  
Reducing Suffering and Supporting Possibilities



by  
Michael Picucci

With  
Scott Marquardt  
& other Contributors



## **THE EVOLUTION OF FOCALIZING**

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This eBook comprises the updated content of our nonprofit's previous web site, which generated thousands of appreciation correspondences and connections from people around the globe. When changing our name in 2013 to focus our newer learning, we were inspired to continue making this detailed healing information widely available. This eBook also gives the reader the additional experiences to comprehend our new evolution:

### **Focalizing Institute**

The Institute is a NYS chartered, 501(c)3, nonprofit, educational, and healing foundation and community. We exist to partake of and offer effective healing possibilities. The Institute has also supported the research of Dr. Michael Picucci for almost three decades.

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**Other Works by  
Michael Picucci**

*Complete Recovery:  
An Expanded Model of Community Healing*

*The Journey Toward Complete Recovery:  
Reclaiming Your Emotional, Spiritual  
& Sexual Wholeness*

*Ritual as Resource:  
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*Organic Solutions to Real-Time Challenges:  
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*Focalizing Source Energy:  
Going Within to Move Beyond*

*Focalizing Dynamic Links:  
A Human Technology for  
Collectively Engaging Source Energy  
& Creating a Better Future*

# **Table of Contents**

## **Holism Birthed Focalizing**

Importance of our *felt senses*  
The Focalizing Paradigm  
The Focalizing Institute Belongs to All of US  
Accessing Focalizing  
Holism as a Possibility  
What Exactly Is Holism?  
Envisioning the Reward of Holism  
Holistic Healing and Focalizing  
Integrating Holism  
Healing Perpetuating Healing

## **Addiction & Recovery**

What is Addiction?  
Primary Addictions  
What Addictions Repress  
Addictions as Self Preservation  
A Living Map of the Journey  
Beyond First Stage Recovery  
What is Complete Recovery?  
Adopting Your Own Process of Recovery  
Expanding Your Recovery  
Incorporating Strengths & Acknowledging Limits of 12-Step Programs

## **Community**

Where We Are ...  
Stories Help Us Heal  
Community Is ...

## Spirituality

Spirituality in Focalizing  
Spirituality, Addiction & Trauma  
Turning on the Light  
Source Energy  
One Person's Prayer

## Relationships

On Love  
Attractions Awaken Possibilities of Healing  
Models of Relating  
What We Never Learned  
Our Discoveries  
"The Power of Two"  
In Balance and In Love  
Wisdom and Guidance for Loving  
'The ABC's of Relating' by Evan Pritchard

## Sexuality & Sacred Sex

Sex and Source Energy  
Sacred Sexuality  
The Four Primary Energies  
Sexual Concerns  
Integrating Spirituality & Sexuality  
Healing the "Sexual-Spiritual Split"  
Relationships Without Sacred Sexuality  
Sexuality & Higher Consciousness  
Natural Resistance to Fusing Energies  
Fantasies? Yes! Yes! Yes!  
Full Body Orgasms  
Graceful Guidelines for Sexual Healing  
Evaluating Our Progress

## **Trauma Resolution**

It's All About Trauma  
Trauma Transformation  
Four Types of Trauma  
Moving Forward with Trauma Healing  
Interview with Peter A. Levine

## **Anxiety, Depression, Grief & Other Challenges**

Beyond a "Dark Night of the Soul"  
Blessing or Curse?  
A New Integration  
Transformation  
Support Nurturing and Healing  
Spiritual Emergencies  
Healing Grief

## **Disease Transformation & Immune Restoration**

Beginning to Focus ...  
Invisible Realities Come to the Rescue  
Disease Transformation  
Immune Restoration  
The Balance Within: The Science Connecting Health and Emotions  
Old Ideas Connecting

## **Conclusion: Landing Well and Moving Forward**

The Six Wisdoms for Dissolving Barriers to Holism  
Constellation of Eight Desires Sought from Focalizing

## **About the Authors**

Dedicated to my best friend

John M. McCormack

Who invited me to facilitate my first retreat in 1985 and ignited the course of my professional and creative life. Subsequently, John supported the creation and growth of the healing and research community that has supported my discoveries for almost three decades. He still serves on the board of the nonprofit *Focalizing Institute* providing unconditional love to many. Always with a ready smile, John is welcoming of new folks, especially young adults to our work and healing circle. He is my hero and one of my living treasures.

Michael Picucci  
October 2013

## Welcome



*The major problems of our time are systemic; they cannot be understood in isolation.  
They need a systemic, or holistic, approach to be solved.*

–Fritjof Capra

## **Authentic Process Healing Birthed Focalizing**

This book is about the evolution of healing—curing what manifests in one’s body and mind that limits contentment and joy. My co-author Scott is a great example of how the body and spirit can be re-awakened through focalizing and thrive in new and satisfying ways. His response to focalizing was uniquely swift and dramatic. Because he embodied focalizing so instantly and seemed to have a mysteriously natural grasp of the process, he soon began to give *me* new and valuable feedback. I was so taken with his contributions that I invited him to plan and co-focalize workshops with me. And last year, we had a magical experience focalizing at a large reunion at International Centre for Healing at Crossroads, Antigua.

Focalizing promotes healing and releases us from pain that we hold within, resulting in increased effectiveness, contentment and physical well-being. The healing of mind and body affects our physical world as well as our relationship to it and others. We see healing take place in the body, but also in what the body encases: the mind, the soul and the spirit. What follows are

the roots of the work, the experiences of the Focalizing Institute, and the metamorphosis that preceded it.

This book will give you insight into many pathways for healing and self-realization. Each of us has a different journey towards healing or, as we like to call it, *holism*. Each individual's journey is as unique as a snowflake's shape. There is no correct path to follow, but only the inner experience and sensation that you are feeling better as you move forward. We call it your *inner compass*.

To feel better one cannot always rest in the status quo. Often it means looking from a new perspective, letting go of old perceptions and trespasses or dissolving frozen, unconscious trauma blocks in one's body. We shift perspectives on issues from the past and how they have restricted us. Exploring ourselves, not just on the surface where much is easily shielded, but also in the mysterious inner world of sensation, subtle awareness and mental imagery.

The Focalizing Institute started as the Authentic Process Healing Institute—a community of people who had experienced the phenomenon of healing done in a peer group setting being more effective and longer lasting than that done on one's own. There is an energy that is created when a group shares a common intention. It is our intention that by reading these pages, you now share in that organic, communal healing vortex which started in 1985 and, as it continues to evolve, also continues to touch so many people.

We have divided this book into topic sections. These topics will give you an overview of places to begin or to further advance your own healing process. See if a topic area calls to you. We then suggest that you read it slowly, take a conscious breath or two, and notice any physiological responses. Explore this practice of listening with your body, and notice what happens. Whether this is your first time thinking about mind/body (somatic) healing, or whether you are a veteran, we hope there is something here for you.

What you take away from each section depends on your views and on your comfort level with each subject. I urge you to be mindful of whether any of these chapters upsets, titillates, embarrasses, or speaks to you in any way. With curiosity, notice where those feelings/sensations arise. When you acknowledge such “felt awareness,” how does your body feel? Is there tightness or a temperature change, a pressure feeling or heaviness? These sensations could be your body's conditioning, holding on to past traumas, and on to the resultant, stuck energy barriers within. Through focalizing—a pleasurable resourcing process—the barriers can be dissolved, creating a freer flow of your creative energy.

***The most honest question to ask yourself is:  
Am I ready to heal?***

Healing is a non-linear event. It is no longer viewed as a series of ‘stories’ about unpleasant events that we must endure in our lives. By naming particular minor and major traumas and internalized barriers (involuntary hold-backs) and having them cleared, we allow a more consistent flow of energy, balance and clarity. It is in those moments of lucidity, when you no longer react involuntarily from a place of fear or remorse, that you feel better.

Feeling good about our actions and ourselves can make us more aware—and in turn more mindful—of the internal, tangible healing process. We naturally glide forward, desiring and receiving a better experience of being alive.

### **Importance of our *felt senses***

We wish to share with you what we have learned about reducing suffering and supporting possibility. We’ve learned to look into our lives to see and hear with what seems like *new eyes and ears*. These new perceptions, while disorienting at first, have led to a profound transformation of symptoms and suffering.

We have begun to perceive our lives and our healing paths through the ‘felt senses’ (internal body sensations), energy and the wisdom of our own bodies.

My teacher, physicist and psychologist, Peter A. Levine, defines felt sense:

*The felt sense is a medium through which we experience the fullness of sensation and knowledge about ourselves ... [it is] the vehicle through which we experience ourselves as organisms ... the felt sense unifies a great deal of scattered data and gives it meaning.*

Another teacher, Eugene Gendlin, coined the term ‘felt sense’ in his book Focusing: *A felt sense is not a mental experience, but a physical one. And by ‘physical’ he means: A bodily awareness of a situation or person or event. An internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about the given subject at a given time—encompasses it and communicates it to you all at once rather than detail by detail.*

Many master teachers and facilitators have taught us how to honor the felt sense in our bodies. We have entered into some new avenues on blind faith and have learned that we are drawing on ancient roots, which serve to keep us oriented and in balance. Transmitting these gifts to you gives us a feeling of contentment while giving our lives a grounded sense of purpose and place. As we have healed and found wholeness in ourselves, we trust our inheritance of abundance from the earth.

## **The Focalizing Paradigm**

Focalizing is a paradigm that integrates body, mind, and spirit (or nature) in the journey toward wholeness. The paradigm took on additional understanding, form and modeling, causing the Authentic Process healing Institute to be renamed to Focalizing Institute in Nov 2013. It is rooted in the notion best expressed by Peter Levine: *While life traumas are a fact of life, they do not need to be a life sentence. In fact, trauma can be healed with appropriate guidance and support and even become a significant force for psychological, social, and spiritual awakening and evolution.*

Focalizing is deeply connected with the felt senses of the body and embraces our inner wisdom to heal and guide our self-realization process. This process is addressed through a variety of healing modalities. They are drawn from psychotherapy, somatic therapies, and new understandings of physiology, neurobiology, and the central nervous system. We often utilize communal healing—two or more people—with shared intentions, and without hierarchy—to provide a means for expressing and encouraging our inherent but untapped healing powers. These connections of two or more can be virtual and/or in person.

## **The Focalizing Institute Belongs to All of US**

No one entity owns the Focalizing Institute. We all do. It is an endowment from our living pulsating earth, or our creator, and it moves within us. We are a nonprofit public entity, established by unpaid volunteers with some paid technical assistance. Funding to support the Institute's research and this website is through private donations and grants.

## **Accessing Focalizing**

Unfortunately, most people come to focalizing during life crises when they are at wits' end with no idea where to go next. Often guided by a caring friend or serendipitous happening, they stumble upon the process, confused and lost, feeling misunderstood or unheard by their current caregivers. Not only lacking the clear answers they seek to satisfy their needs, sometimes they don't even have a 'voice' left to ask clear questions. They come with all kinds of conditions from AIDS to Xenophobia, each person just wanting to feel better.

## **Holism as a Possibility**

Have you ever seen a powerful movie, listened to a great piece of music, finished a really good book, or watched a stunning sunset and came away with a feeling of profound happiness? Have

you ever said to yourself, “Everything makes so much sense. I wish life were more like that ...” only to wonder if perhaps it could be, if you could see things a little more clearly? Have you ever felt like everything in your life probably made sense, but you were missing some of the puzzle pieces, and so it remained a mystery to you?

If the answer is yes, then you have glimpsed the holism that underlies and surrounds us all the time, but that blind spots and barriers accompany even the happiest life. The quest to embody this holism can take a surprisingly quick shift or a good part of a lifetime, but it is worth the trip. And whether you are recovering from grief, HIV, cancer, trauma, incest, sexual abuse, cultural oppression and confusion, addiction, or depression, if you are seeking a complete recovery, you are in fact seeking to rediscover the holistic state. They are one and the same.

### **What Exactly Is Holism?**

When I read Peter Russell’s *The Global Brain Awakens*, I was deeply touched by two stories that go to the crux of holism. They were both about a growing change in perspective since our astronauts viewed earth from the moon. Edgar Mitchell, the sixth man on the moon (and later a founder of The Institute of Noetic Sciences), said that while standing on the moon he was deeply moved and felt a strong connection to our planet. He describes his view of earth from the spacecraft on return: *It was a beautiful, harmonious, peaceful-looking planet, blue with white clouds, and one that gave you a deep sense ... of home, of being, of identity. It is what I prefer to call an instant global consciousness.*

As my colleague Peter Russell emphasizes, In processes like focalizing we leap to the realization and awareness that we are part of a larger living system, with its own organic intelligence. Together we are learning to listen to the pulse and tune into its wisdom in meaningful ways. We are beginning to see and feel the holism in it all.

### **Envisioning the Reward of Holism**

Holism is an intention of focalizing. It encompasses not only the feeling of being whole and complete in oneself, but also of being integrated into the cosmos, one with nature, and connected with all humanity. As we envision such a state for ourselves, or at least accept that it is possible, we recognize the need for a process that goes beyond healing our symptoms. Holism is a place of joy, bliss, love, effectiveness, creativity, respect for all life, and peace, a place from which we can meet future challenges with resilience, grace and wisdom. We come from a new integration, having brought parts of ourselves (physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual) together at

the deepest level of inner knowing. This leads to integration and balance with every part of us having significant value and importance.

Holism is the understanding that reality is made up of organic and unified wholes that are greater than the simple sum of their parts. At the core of this is what I call the *shame-free presentation and celebration of the Self*. When we experience a holistic state of being, we know who we are and no longer feel ashamed or embarrassed by our unique personal history, or the so-called shadow elements of our nature. Of course we will still be discriminating with regard to when and where we share certain aspects of ourselves, but we will experience and radiate the essence of increased effectiveness and spiritual connectedness, whether we express it verbally or not.

### **Holistic Healing and Focalizing**

Focalizing is a highly effective way of releasing the crippling toxic shame and frozen energies which block our holistic expression. We explore unconscious happenings in our bodies and make them conscious. When this happens, it releases an energy that enhances relationships with others and with the natural world. Carl Jung, who first wrote of collective consciousness and inspired the core foundation of Alcoholics Anonymous, explained that when unconscious content becomes conscious we experience a sense of clarity, a fuller understanding of ourselves, an experience that goes beyond ordinary, everyday consciousness. I refer to this as a glimpse of holism—a stroke of our own genius.

Focalizing leaves the everyday world behind—the world of right and wrong, good and bad, “more thans” and “less thans”—and we find and integrate our complex, more complete selves. In the holistic perspective, there is no “normal” or “abnormal.” We are diverse by design. As the author Jean Houston once said, *A normal person is someone you don't know very well.*

In interviews with individuals who experience holism, it is not uncommon to hear someone say, “I am awed,” or “I never believed life could be this special.” This was certainly the case for me. It was not just a passing euphoric feeling. It became established in my ground-of-being. Once, the awe surrounding my own life experience was so great that I sought out a therapist solely because I needed a safe place to share it. I needed a place where I knew I would be heard and would not be triggering someone else's feelings of deprivation or envy. Since sharing it with a therapist, I have been able to integrate awe and bliss as components of my everyday life. I, too, would never have believed it.

## **Integrating Holism**

An encounter with the holistic state of being may bring with it feelings of ‘non-ordinary’ calm and detachment. When we expand our perceptions, we see the impermanence of things, yet trust that it’s okay. Friends who practice Buddhism are able to articulate many of the finer points of non-attachment and impermanence. For me, this has come to mean that though I may want to cling to certain things, relationships, or even life itself, deep down in my *being* I know that I am okay without them. Somehow, my inner sense of knowing and my experiences of transcendent calm give me something to fall back on when other realities appear to desert me—or at least the part of me that wants to hold on. Similarly, in the experience of holism, people report feeling less dependent on the ‘things’ of life to feel whole and content. They relax their sense of ‘holding on.’

## **Healing Perpetuates Healing**

Please feel free to read the sections as they call to you. There is no particular order to these chapters; any one could be a portal into your own inner healing cycle.

In this mysterious sea of humanity we join and support you on your unique journey. And, we invite you to join us on ours.

## Addiction and Recovery



*I think of addiction as the sacred disease ... Very probably, God created alcoholism in order to create AA, and thereby spearhead the community movement which is going to be the salvation not only of alcoholics and addicts, but of us all.*

—M. Scott Peck, M.D.

At the Institute, we have considerable years of experience with recovery and we understand the addictive disease process from the inside out. We have experienced freedom from addiction and compulsions through two distinct phases: primary and complete recovery.

### **What is Addiction?**

Addiction is generally defined as a disease process characterized by:

- continued use of a substance, behavior or process
- despite physical, psychological, emotional or social harm,
- progressive over time,
- involving habit and compulsion
- with signs of withdrawal when ceased or decreased.

## **Primary Addictions**

- Alcoholism,
- Drug Addiction,
- Food Related Addiction,
- Gambling Addiction  
(including compulsive debt and spending),
- Sex Addiction,
- Codependency,
- ACOA Syndrome {Adult Children of Alcoholics},
- Internet & Porn Addiction,
- Obsessive-Compulsive Thinking/Acting  
(cleaning, shopping, self-diminishing, worrying, etc.)

Primary addictions recovery requires rescuing our life and spirit from compulsive habitual attachments to substances and behaviors. And as we discover the intricacies of recovery from a wide range of addictions, we recognize a common link among them.

## **What Addictions Repress**

This common link is how addictions act as involuntary coping mechanisms to control effects in the central nervous system (CNS) of trauma, childhood abuse, family and societal distress, prejudice, and ignorance. An addiction serves to self medicate as a way to deal with and suppress complex issues and energies within the psyche. Actually, who we are involves more than our psyches. What is stifled and crushed is the energetic ‘make up’ of the entire person—your whole being. The effects of both addiction and the suppressed traumas, which compulsive use tries to control turn highly activated energies inward. Over time they become frozen in place. And when triggered by life events the resurfacing of these ‘patches’ is what addictions attempt to repress, often without full understanding of the inner torment.

## **Addictions as Self Preservation**

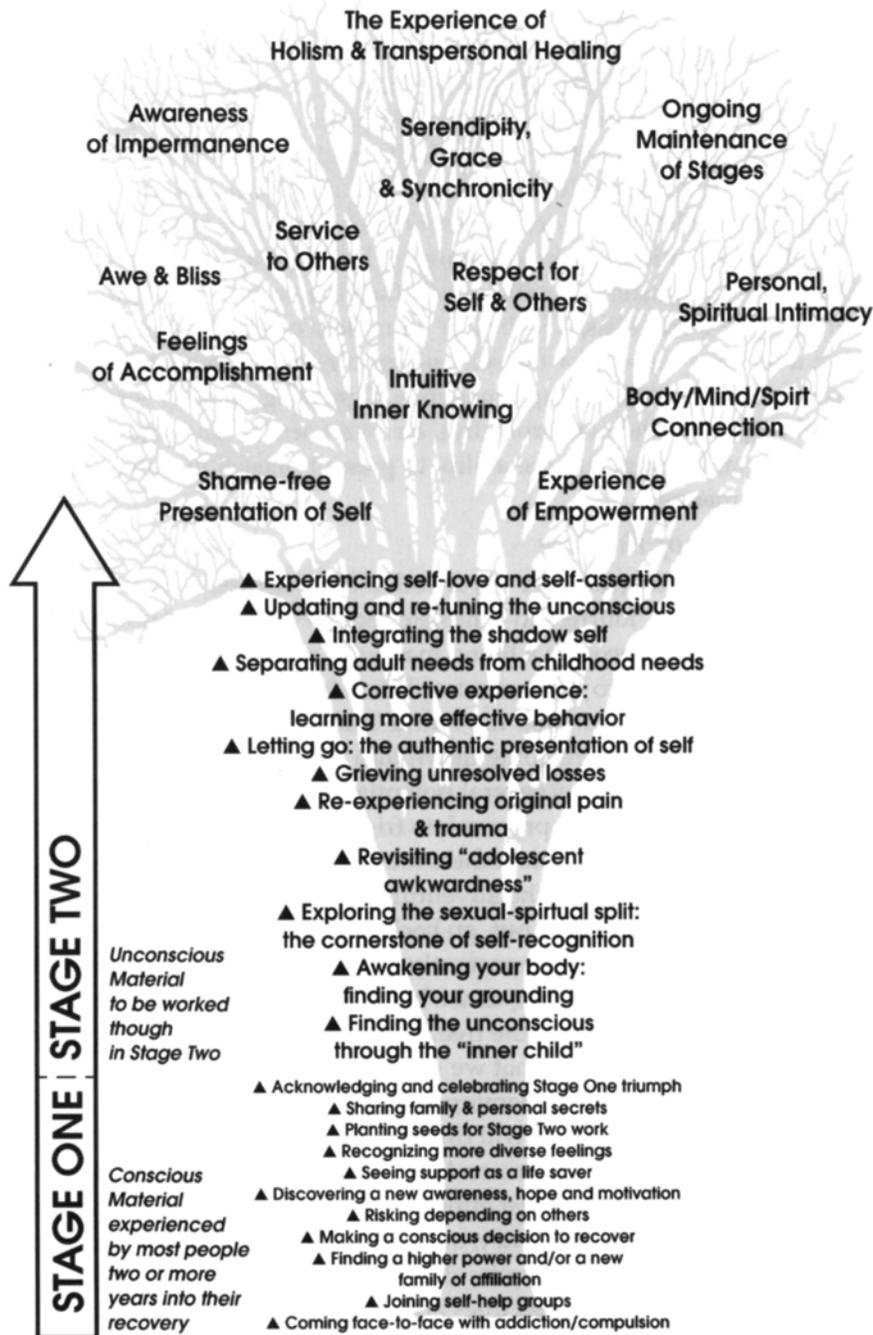
We who are, or have been, addicted, in a sense actually choose (often unconsciously) our addiction as the best coping mechanism available at the time. Addicted people have gone to great lengths, and have taken great risks for self-preservation. When under threat they indeed have an internal savior-self, which loves and defends their ‘being.’ That hidden and misunderstood source of love protects through a creative, instinctual survival mechanism by pushing in and freezing

energy. Unfortunately, as the addiction progresses, a cycle of guilt-relief-shame escalates. The true self is held down and frozen as well.

### **A Living Map of the Journey**

With many years of research and experience in recovery, we support a re-framing of the recovery process into a dynamic yet simple two-stage holistic process. Complete recovery includes freedom from all the burdens that restrict our being.

On the journey toward complete recovery we expand beyond healing primary addictions. We acknowledge other involuntary habitual behaviors, thinking, and feelings that are roadblocks to the fullness of who we are. You might think of them as heavy pieces of luggage, suitcases filled with medieval suits of armor and weapons of self-defense. These very heavy coffers are hindrances to our full self-expression, the intimacy we seek, and our inherent spiritual gifts.



*Tree Diagram of The Staged Model of Recovery*

### **Beyond First Stage Recovery**

In unlatching the luggage you might recognize contents of codependence, self-diminishing thinking, depression, or self-sabotaging behavior. Packed inside are patterns of underachieving,

over-achieving, and physical self-injury. You might also find fear of abandonment, fear of violation, and fear of negative projections, wrapped up in being sexually unfulfilled or lacking love. And underneath there is black and white, or right and wrong thinking and many other folded up dilemmas. All of these and more are outdated, injurious weapons, only effective at keeping us from what we want the most: mutual trust, love, and respect. Until the underlying chaos and energy restrictions are unpacked and released, our inner self-protective system will update old compulsions and defenses with other primary or secondary addictions.

### **What is Complete Recovery?**

At the core of complete recovery is a state of being in a conscious evolutionary process of completing itself. We respond to this life-giving source by staying up to the moment in taking care of our inner and outer needs, continually rediscovering those needs. We gain the courage to appropriately and authentically express our fullness. And we know what it is to be open hearted, and are conscious of when, where and how to experience this opening.

The grounding principal for the journey is respect for self, others, and present existing realities in that order. Through that respect and with compassion we lay down defensive weaponry and armor piece by piece and understand why they were once necessary. We come to view addictions, personal as well as cultural ones, as ways the organic system creates a feeling of equilibrium and safety in the face of conflict and trauma. We learn that with education, 'wise inner counsel,' and a newfound resilience, underlying conflicts can present themselves for healing. As we are able to make it 'okay' for them to come out of hiding, we grow more alive and authentic. Addictions fall away.

### **Adopting Your Own Process of Recovery**

The definition of complete recovery expands with each person who adopts it as their own process. In the essential experience of complete recovery we:

1. Integrate many of the split-off aspects of ourselves so that we feel whole,
2. Reclaim our emotional, spiritual, and sexual fullness,
3. Present ourselves to the world free of toxic shame,
4. Experience a rich open-hearted spiritual connection with ourselves, others, and the pulse of the universe, and
5. Identify more with our spirit than with our conditions, realizing that we are always larger than the present challenges we face.

## **Expanding Your Recovery**

In twelve-step programs it is said that anonymity is the spiritual foundation for addictions recovery, a tradition born in Alcoholics Anonymous. In focalizing the ongoing desire for completion, for feeling whole and resolved about our life purpose is the foundation of complete recovery. It is the binding spiritual glue that brings us together in community and makes healing possible.

The following ‘promises’ are from Alcoholics Anonymous, the pivotal book that galvanized AA and inspired other twelve-step programs:

*We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word “serenity” and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.*

Many “Twelve-Steppers” fully realized these promises only when they expanded their recovery objectives. In focalizing, we build on AA’s promises:

*We will know true intimacy and connect in meaningful ways with others. We will finally heal the schism between our spiritual and sexual nature. Fear of authority figures will disappear as we put our faith in an inner, higher authority. In presenting ourselves shame-free to the world, we will discover our purpose for being. We will realize that Source Energy is the Great Spirit within us and beyond us. When we open our hearts we will know that we are the Spirit, represented in an energetic feeling called love. We will experience and know the feeling of complete recovery.*

As the journey continues, the self expands to include our larger world and the cosmos. We near completion of our own personal biographical healing—our spiritual self is fully energized and blocks to knowing our holistic connection with life finally dissolve. Through recovering our ‘transpersonal self,’ our own healing merges with the transformation of the world around us. On this journey, from beginning to end, we are moving in the direction of a free-flow of energy and vitality that we can feel and experience.

## **Incorporating Strengths and Acknowledging Limitations of Twelve-Step Programs**

Since 1935, with the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous, tens of thousands of alcohol and drug-addicted men and women have begun the journey to recovery by turning to a compassionate

spiritual community embodied in AA and other twelve-step programs. This approach has been unrivaled in its ability to help people stop active addictions. Yet, all too often, the process of recovery is limited in terms of healing the issues that underlie alcoholism, drug dependency or other life-threatening addictions. The realization of one of AA's promises, "We will know a new freedom and a new happiness ..." eludes many Twelve-Steppers who struggle between feelings of gratitude (thankful to have their lives back in control) and feelings of frustration and emptiness that something is still missing.

These secondary issues are profoundly important to complete recovery. Even individuals with years of sobriety can experience problems that threaten their continued recovery—among them: codependency and other secondary addictions, depression, self-destructive behavior, underachieving, fear of abandonment, lack of sexual fulfillment, and the array of challenges facing those who are also living with HIV and other serious illnesses. I can attest to the fact that issues regarding sexual orientation can be a particular challenge for recovering gays, lesbians and transgender individuals. All of these, and other manifestations of internalized dilemmas, can keep people in recovery from what they want the most: mutual trust, love, and respect.

Stage 1 is recovery from "addictions," Stage Two Focalizing is "recovery of" fulfillment, wisdom, serenity, and emotional, spiritual and sexual wholeness.

If addiction and recovery are part of your story, we invite you to join us on this most exciting and meaningful inner journey—a path to wholeness, in which recovering individuals not only learn to chart a more effective course through their inner wilderness, but to fully appreciate the unsought gift M. Scott Peck calls *being touched by grace*.

## Community



*I am going to tell you the story of my life ... and if it were only the story of my life  
I think I would not tell it.*

–Black Elk

### **Where We Are ...**

At its heart, focalizing and dynamic linking are about bringing our stories and creating new, live stories. These stories help us move forward in respectful, pragmatic motions. In a troubled world or physical body, community's collective energy can be a transformational antidote. It supports us in making person-by-person shifts that are healing to the individual, society, and the whole of humanity. This fosters a win-win-win circle of energy and experience. The third win is the collective energy of two or more in conscious community. This vortex is another entity to draw on Source and further inform our focalized inter-weaving ascendant process. You will be amazed at what is quietly happening all around us. The bridge to the future story is already in the making and is ours for the shaping.

## **Stories Help Us Heal**

Personal stories evoke the power of experience. They remind us that unknown forces are at work in each and every one of us, no matter how ordinary we may appear to be. They remind us that no one gets by with a perfect, unscarred life, and now and then, everyone shines with the divine. Stories inform us of resources we otherwise would not know to look for. They tell us that, however the details differ, we all feel the same emotions. This reminds us that we are not alone in our own private soup, and that we all belong to the same human family.

Stories connect us one to another. They provide pathways and solutions. They give us courage. Cultural anthropologist and teacher, Joan Halifax, writes, *Stories are medicine because they teach us about and prepare us for the experience of change. Through the story, we connect to a more realistic vision of who we really are.*

We share healing stories so they may serve to inform, inspire, or guide us. They are shared in the spirit of transformational community. It is our stories and emerging futures that provide the ‘spiritual glue’ that holds conscious community together.

## **Community Is ...**

There is an unexplainable magic that occurs when people join together with a shared intention to heal, grow and make constructive change. When they let down their masks of composure and they nonjudgmentally share intentions, struggles, joys and sorrow in a ritualized format, an indescribable healing (and/or innovation) takes place.

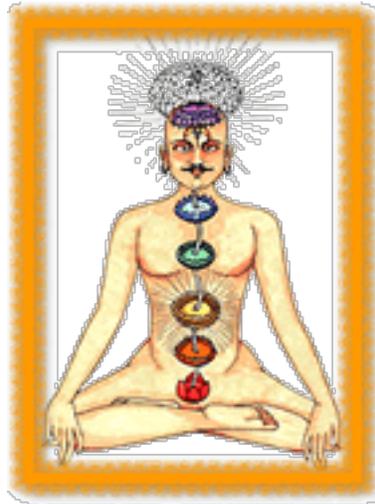
We have discovered that in dealing with emotional, psychological and cultural limitations or blind spots, true healing and transformation takes place in conscious community. This is true within the powerful Twelve-Step movement, as well as with workshops, retreats and organizational gatherings that assist people in turning inward. We consider community to be two or more people with common challenges or intentions who are willing to shed their masks in a structured setting. In focalizing we intentionally bring the complexity of such challenges out in the open. In such safe places, framed with psychological, physiological, and cultural education provided by a skilled facilitator, individuals and groups resolve their barriers and open new vistas of possibility.

When we meet in clearly defined community, “something more” takes place, something quite mystical. There are no words to explain these experiences. According to Dr. Peck: *Community, like a gem, is multi-faceted, each facet a mere aspect of a whole that defies description ... The gem of community is so exquisitely beautiful it may seem unreal to you, like a dream you once had when you were a child, so beautiful it may seem unattainable.*

Focalizing becomes a healing community when we add the focus of committing ourselves to a common purpose or intention, whether it be for healing or creating new possibilities. Community healing takes place in a non-ordinary state of consciousness when compared with everyday consciousness. It is the time and space where deep healing and opportunities for clarity and transformation can occur. When we enter into such a community setting, we leave the everyday world behind—the world of right and wrong, good and bad, ‘more thans’ and ‘less thans’—and we find and integrate our complex, more complete selves.

## Spirituality

Spirituality is a broad concept that encompasses values, meaning and purpose. It speaks to how one turns inward to the human traits of integrity, love, wisdom, imagination, and compassion. Spirituality encompasses the existence of a higher intelligence, guiding spirit, or mystical transcendence. It embraces a flowing, dynamic balance, which supports and creates the healing of body-mind-nature.



*We live in a universe that is opulent, limitless, and accommodating. It will manifest for us exactly what we have the consciousness to encompass ... When you know the secret the supernatural becomes natural and miracles become commonplace.*

–Rev. Eric Butterworth

Spirituality and religion are not the same. Though religion often has spiritual qualities and features, spirituality is more expansive. Certainly organized religion supports the spiritual life of millions of people, but it is not a religious spirituality that we concentrate on. For example, most, but not all, religions have rules and dogmas, and focalizing is most resourceful when we remove

limiting dogmas, rules, sins, and dualistic concepts of good and evil. We operate from a simple foundation of open-minded respect for self, others, and present realities. If we first respect ourselves, and consciously make it our intention to respect others and the realities that already exist, we are on firm healing and creative ground for all.

A definition of spirituality that resonates with us comes from a priest and author named Fr. Leo Booth who calls it, “creative positivism.” He says that through being enthusiastic, creative and positive, you are spirituality in action. It’s a good intention to bring this kind of joyful, inspired spirit to all healing and creativity.

### **Spirituality in Focalizing**

Source Energy (or spirituality) provides the open *field* for focalizing, perhaps the most essential, and no matter how full a definition we give it, people will still struggle with it. This is a good thing. We are not only about the question of growth, but also about staying open to the questions that keep growing. The more we know, the more we become aware of all we do not know. The vastness of unknowing becomes our friend and companion; our source of strength and resilience. And mysteries unravel only to present greater and richer mysteries.

### **Spirituality, Addiction & Trauma**

We know that certain activities and thought habits dim the light of aliveness. They offer a false promise of escape, excitement, or redemption, all of which turn out to be elusive and illusory. They can also hurt those around us.



Cravings and addictions are a misdirected way to dispel the darkness we sometimes feel inside us. Feelings of hatred, anger, resentment, fear, panic, are all responses to the cloudiness that betrays our innate knowledge of how to heal ourselves. These so-called heavy or empty feelings are also the body's symptomatic response to unhealed traumas that occurred in our natural, evolving process of growth. No blame is necessary for these traumas! Why beat up on generational and cultural ignorance—obstacles that have become such an integral part of our evolutionary saga? We haven't got the time; resolution is what's important.

In Gary Schwartz and Linda Russek's book The Living Energy Universe, they offer: *Our contemporary leaders of both science and religion are ultimately in the same boat [as we are]. They were raised as children to accept certain stories as dogma, and it hurts them, like it hurts us, to revise our cherished stories. Too often we make the mistake of defining ourselves by our histories, by our past systemic memories, and by the stories we ultimately accepted and the stories we ultimately rejected. We live a storybook life, and often, we are not very reliable storytellers. Fortunately, we are not the mere history of our stories. We have the energy and information to create new stories.*

Access to our Source Energy is a path to rewriting our life stories. It is a path of healing into our full aliveness.

## **Turning on the Light**

*"Are You a God?"* they asked the Buddha.

*"No,"* he replied.

*"Are you an angel then?"* "No."

*"A Saint?"* "No."

*"Then what are you?"*

Replied the Buddha, *"I am awake."*

—Houston Smith

We know there is a light inside of us; sometimes we just can't find the switch. At times we might hear someone speak of his or her troubles and insights and automatically the 'answer' light

switches on inside ourselves. Sometimes it's even better than the answer we were looking for. That is the power of source energy in community. The same is true as we learn to tune in to the felt senses of our body and make room for whatever is present. When we give those 'sensations' respect and space to 'be' without judgment, an inner transformation of energy occurs and brings forth our spirited light, along with contentment, balance and joy.

Spirituality, or getting friendly with your Source Energy, is the most beautiful part of the journey to wholeness and innovation. It is also the part of the journey that keeps unfolding, even after we have "completely recovered" our authentic self. No one can tell you what that is, or define it for you. We discover it in the scriptures of your own heart and the light within your body.

### **Source Energy**

Source energy is what radiates out of your core life force. We have all had at least fleeting experiences of connection with our self. When you connect, "everything feels right" and it is all integrated for a moment. It could be called your place of creativity. It is also your "inner healer" or "inner compass."

Your source energy, your true self, your core energy, your essence are all synonymous. What many of us are recovering from, in the larger view, are energy blockages and unconscious defense reflexes that inhibit our access to source energy.

As you look inward, without judgment, your higher self or essence will open to you. As the inspiring author A.H. Almaas writes, *This is the basic law of the heart*. It is the nature of the higher self to want to be known. Once it has been recognized it will lead you to other ways in which you can know it and be it. From this point on, your progress on the path seems to quicken, and the hurdles that lie before you are less riddled with the thorns and barbed wire of your resistance. From your higher self, you begin to accept the lessons that present themselves, and to understand the ways in which each of us creates our own curriculum. To put it another way, once you have drunk from the well of source energy, you know the drink that will quench you. Not only do you become more willing to do what you must to find that hidden essence, it is more willing to be found.

From identifying my 'curious observer,' that part of me that is the perceiver of all that I am, do, think, and feel, I have begun to recognize the location of my higher self. When I realized that I cannot be what I perceive, then I realized that I must be the perceiver, or self. Emotionally flat at first, this observer-self gradually became more and more infused with energy and pristine awareness. It has since demonstrated itself to be my evolution, joy, and purposeful being.

## **One Person's Prayer**

For a focalizing circle exploring prayer, I decided to put to paper a version of my own spontaneous personal prayer. I often recited it to myself while on the LifeCycle getting my cardio exercise. Who says you can only do one thing at a time? I have found exercise and prayer to be as compatibly rich as sex and prayer. Who ever would have guessed?

*I am the water. I am the wave. I am always part of the whole, and I am a manifestation of that same whole. Through the unique ways I bring my energy and light into the world, I contribute to and honor the whole. I pray that I remember that my differences, my unique qualities, are my gifts, even my reason for being in this larger process of evolution.*

*In my own unique wave manifestation, I live in a vertical reality connecting the energy of mother earth to father sky. From the earth's perspective, I live in the sky. From this lofty and humble place of knowing, I invite in the guiding light of all the spirits whom I've loved and been loved by, my ancestors, those dear ones who have passed before me, and Source Energy of which I am a part. I ask to be guided lighting my way by bringing grace, synchronicity and serendipity to my own life journey and the journeys of all my friends and relations. I pray that our daily challenges are graced with poise and wisdom.*

*I pray that I can continue to let go of pushing and trying, becoming more the awake receiver of the inner and outer gifts that come my way; that I may continue to learn to rest, enjoying the sweetness of moments, being ever more present for what comes to me.*

*I pray for my well being and the vitality of all my relations. May our suffering be minimized and our dreams realized for our own good and the benefit of the whole.*

*I am thankful for who I am, where I am, and the lessons of this life. It is with humble gratitude that I say Thank You, Thank You, Source Energy for the awareness, understanding and love I bring to this very moment. Thank you for showing me who I am. Thank You! Thank You!*

## Relationships

While our central focus here is to explore the nature of more intimate unions, the ones that fill that ‘someone special’ slot in our life, many of the same principles we present here apply to our other important relationships as well.

In The Road Less Traveled, M. Scott Peck, M.D., wrote these quotables:

*I define love thus: The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth.*

*Love is a strangely circular process. For the process of extending one's self is an evolutionary process. When one has successfully extended one's limits, one has then grown into a larger state of being. Thus the act of loving is an act of self-evolution even when the purpose of the act is someone else's growth. It is through reaching toward evolution that we evolve.*

### **On Love**

Dr. Peck's book was an all time sales record breaker, on the *New York Times* bestseller list for years. Millions of us read these words. Yet it is only now, through technologies like focalizing, that we can finally heal the internalized cultural and personal wounding that has prevented our relationships from realizing the wisdom in these words.

### **Attractions Awaken Possibilities of Healing**

Like it or not, we are attracted to people based on an unconscious template that is below the surface of everyday awareness. Attraction to another brings to life early, primary relationship dynamics involving needs that were met and those that were not. Our endorphins go up when this connection reawakens beyond our awareness and we begin an unconscious reenactment of aspects of childhood. With self-awareness one can notice this natural process after bonding occurs in a significant relationship. It is not nature's dirty trick, but rather a revisiting of these dynamics for conscious and unconscious healing. It can be a significant self-curative bridge from

“falling in love” to Real Love. Nurturing and supporting this possibility asks us to be educated and relatively conscious of the possible joys as well as the traps and pitfalls.

### **Models of Relating**

Most of our models for relationships are from our families, which are more often than not dysfunctional, at least by present day standards. Another influential exposure is to Hollywood images, and we internalize ideas and role models of relationship through TV, movies, and commercials. Commercials usually give us unrealistic scenarios where people have no worse problems than tooth decay or bad breath. TV offers mostly shallow views of life in relationships. Movies, on the other hand, usually present an overly dramatic, violent or sordid view of relationships.

The intention of a healthy relationship is not to sell tickets! However, Hollywood sends a strong subliminal message, and many believe they want to or should be in such a relationship.

Relationship models also come from church, school, or religious groups, but often from untrained or biased teachers who may have a particular agenda. Thus, in our reaching for our heart’s desire we are repeatedly left unfulfilled. Either the fantasy never materializes or we find ourselves in a family or TV repeat and wish we could get out.

### **What We Never Learned**

Many of us have never learned or experienced healthy relational dynamics for the long haul. Though many relationships are fulfilling for a while, few are dependably so. It is true that “the course of true love does not run smooth.”

That is why it is so important to become relationship-educated by reading, attending relationship workshops, or investing in couples focalizing, in order to awaken ourselves so that good relationship dynamics can be demonstrated and discussed. Opening to new learning allows a couple, or an individual looking for a better relationship, to try out new strategies and ways of communicating in a safe, nurturing environment. And by being more open and communicative, it is possible to build a smoother, more enduring road to deep contentment and abiding love.

### **Our Discoveries**

At about the six-month point in my relationship (of over twenty years) we hit some communication barriers that were based on historic sensitivities. Fortunately we were resourceful enough to seek out facilitation (often called couples therapy, which wise people are now doing

early in relationships before destructive dynamics take hold). It made all the difference. We found each other in deeper and more significant ways. Some years later we participated in a couples sacred sex workshop produced by Body Electric. This experience transformed and deepened our union once again. We learned about, internalized, and began to experience “The Power of Two.” Our new ability to consciously fuse our energies (and drawing on the erotic) has empowered us further in loving ourselves, each other, our relations, and our commitments to meaningful lives, both together and independently.

### **“The Power of Two”**

In any relationship of two people there, in fact, exists three entities. The first one is “me,” the second being “you,” and the third being “me-you.” The awareness of the last entity, me-you, is one of the important invisible realities. This third entity requires our conscious attention. It can and should be a source of growth, healing and transformation. It is where we untangle and heal subtle dynamics that mysteriously creep into a relationship once bonding begins to occur.

The practice of “Respect for Self and Other” (self first!) is a powerful way of nurturing the third entity. When this dimension of the relationship is valued and taken care of, it is then able to fulfill and take care of the “me” and “you” of the triune. The third entity, though invisible, dictates the health and radiance of a relationship. (This is also a powerful reality in the sexual aspects of the relationship, and I refer you to our chapter on Sexuality & Sacred Sexuality for guidance on the care and feeding of the third entity.) Also, a practice of balance is one of the quick ways to “fertilize” the ‘me-you’ so it can minister back to ‘you’ and ‘me’ in palpable and richly rewarding ways.

### **In Balance and In Love**

How do you keep your balance when you’re in a relationship (which is the powerful and invisible third entity)? It’s a difficult but rewarding challenge. Focused effort to keep all the emotional energies in balance can lead to not only a fulfilling relationship, but also a relationship that brings consistent joy for the long haul. It can be a solid platform from which both individuals ground and enrich themselves.

Sound impossible? It isn’t. Couples using these techniques can choose to attend relationship seminars, read books and check websites that may help them focus on more effective strategies for achieving long-lasting and consistent fulfillment. The key is keeping your balance, both as individuals and as a union. To make this effective you must be willing, mature adults, and act as such.

## **Wisdom and Guidance for Loving**

Love, relationship and connecting are at the forefront of our minds and hearts during this time. Thankfully, more available than ever are trainings in relationship skills and healthy guidance, which offer holistic wisdom for all aspects of loving relationships. Through books like Conscious Loving, by Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks, we learn the following skills: Let go of power struggles and the need for control, balance needs for closeness and separateness, increase intimacy by telling the ‘microscopic truth,’ communicate in a positive way that stops arguments, make agreements we can keep, and allow more pleasure into our lives.

Through Stephen and Ondrea Levine’s workshops and their book Embracing the Beloved: Relationship As a Path of Awakening, we are shown the power of listening, opening to our own and each others vulnerabilities, and seeing through veils of relating to the source energy within.

What we’ve learned in focalizing about intimate relating is so basic and important. We foresee a day when it may be included in high school education. This only makes sense to do so. It can eliminate so much suffering and confusion, which can be lifted for generations to come.

## The ABC's of Relating

by Evan Pritchard

Below are some of the extremes that have come out of “fall in love” relationships that are based on cultural misconceptions, plus an offering of complex “real love” balancing possibilities.

### *Codependency Extremes:*

**Extreme A:** I hate your behavior but I can't afford to bring it up because I would be lost without you. (Codependency)

**Extreme B:** I'd love to get close to you, but I can't afford to become emotionally involved and get hurt. (Independent i.e. not in a relationship with anyone but themselves)

**Balance:** We help each other become more powerful both as individuals and as a unit, by trading our knowledge, skills, insights. We delicately and respectfully negotiate with one another so that all needs and challenges of each find rest and understanding in the invisible third entity.

(Interdependent)

### *Parental Extremes:*

**Extreme A:** I would never want you to be in any danger, either emotionally or physically. To show you I love you, I will prevent you from taking chances, going out of my way to provide a safe environment for you at any cost. (Over-protective)

**Extreme B:** I know it hurts me more than it hurts you, but it's better you deal with the hard facts and learn them from me. You'll be a stronger person for it. Don't come crying on my shoulder.

(Not Compassionate).

**Balance:** We are not afraid to ask for help, or, sometimes give it when asked, but are firm about our boundaries (what's not okay with us). If one of us feels crowded, the other backs off. We have an agreement that we'll not assume anything about the other, and treat our verbal agreements as negotiable contracts.

### ***Winning and Losing Extremes:***

**Extreme A:** I love winning arguments. We'll get along fine as long as you listen to me. (My Way is Right Approach)

**Extreme B:** I don't care about winning arguments, my ego is not at stake. You have your way. As long as we work together. I can imagine myself in your shoes. (Open Minded Doormat Approach)

**Balance:** Both of us need our opinions heard, and need to be a part of the decision making process, so we don't feel resentful. Both of us have good ideas when it comes to solving problems. Both of us need to "put ourselves in the other's shoes," and listen deeply.

### ***Sensitivity Extremes:***

**Extreme A:** What about me? Why can't you be more concerned with my feelings? I am very sensitive. (Stuck On Self-Sensitivities)

**Extreme B:** I am totally wrapped up in you, and feel everything you feel. My emotional needs aren't important, as long as you love me. (Lost at Sea Approach)

**Balance:** We both listen to the other about our needs and sensitivities, and so both of us feel satisfied and nurtured.

### ***Equally Extreme:***

**Extreme A:** I love myself, but you can bask in my glow if you like. (Hello Moth, My Name is Fire Approach)

**Extreme B:** I love only you, see only you. I am nothing compared to you. (Moth To A Flame Approach)

**Balance:** We are a union, we are equal partners, giving of ourselves equally to each other, though we may each give differently. We believe in the magical power of two. We both practice deep listening.

### ***Transference Extremes:***

**Extreme A:** I need to be free of responsibilities as I was as a child. I need you to take care of me, not be an authority figure. (Peter Pan Approach)

**Extreme B:** I need to be controlled as I was as a child so I won't go out and hurt myself or do something stupid. I need you to set limits on my addictions. (Little Lost Boy/Girl)

**Balance:** We work together as a team; neither one being the parent or child. Occasionally we affectionately play the parental role for the other, and enjoy the same in return. Our relationship is a circle of energy and action.

### ***Extremes of Perfection:***

**Extreme A:** Love must be perfect and wonderful all the time. If anything goes wrong, that's it. I quit. I have other fish to fry. (Bold Idealist)

**Extreme B:** Love stinks. I can't live with ya and can't kill ya, so I put up with a lot of crap for the sake of the relationship. In the end it doesn't matter. As long as I have somebody. If we broke up, there might not be anyone else for a long time. (I'll Settle For Less)

**Balance:** Our love is like cooking; we break a few eggs when we make an omelet. However, we always throw away the shells when we're done, and wash the utensils too. We like to resolve everything we can before it builds up. We talk it over and let it go. We stick together not out of fear, but from conscious commitment.

### ***Extreme Boundaries:***

**Extreme A:** You and I are one ... forever. We are alike in so many ways. There are no barriers between us ... I'm sure you agree. There is just us versus the world. Honey, let me do that for you ... (No Boundaries/Mystical Union Railroad)

**Extreme B:** I am a rock, I am an island ... and an island never cries. Since we're married, you can sit on my island, but I'm sure not going to give you a map. (Isolationist/I Can Do It Myself)

**Balance:** We have healthy boundaries. We both have our territories staked out, and have worked out understandings about how to share things. We are not afraid to stand in opposition to each other on certain issues. We prefer different TV shows and activities, spend time alone or with others, as well as together.

### *Sexual Extremes:*

**Extreme A:** Life's uncertain, so have dessert first. Let's have lots of sex, party, and have fun. That's what relationships are about anyway. (Is There Life After Sex? Approach)

**Extreme B:** Relationships are very serious. I never saw my parents kiss or fool around. They had a spiritual relationship. Once we live together, we have to be serious and responsible. We have to think of the future. What if we had kids? Adopted? Sex isn't that important when compared to ... (Relationships and Sex Don't Mix)

**Balance:** It's always difficult to overcome the sexual-spiritual (love) split that we learned as children. That's why couples need to talk about spirituality and sex at the same time, not only what is uplifting about it but what turns them on.

### *Monogomy Extremes:*

**Extreme A:** We're a couple and if you start seeing someone else I'll be devastated and never speak to you again.

**Extreme B:** You're not as sexual as me, so naturally I'm going to get my needs met where I can. Sometimes we don't have sex together for a whole week so I'll mess around like everyone else does, hey, it's the 21st Century.

**Balance:** We both understand and respect each other's sensibilities and comfort zones. We don't abuse them. Instead of making demands and rules, we negotiate through our desires, needs, fantasies and sensitivities. If necessary, we get help in doing so. We never forget who the primary relationship is with and don't let anyone come between us or hurt the "third entity." The only relational guidelines that matter are the ones that we create respecting one another's needs and spiritual growth. We learn the basics of sacred sexuality, a source of buoyant energy for the union.

### ***Extreme Effort:***

**Extreme A:** My love for you is just a reflection of God's love, and so I shouldn't have to work at it. God put us together as soul mates, so it should require no effort. (Easy Street/ Money Grows on Trees and So Do Relationships Approach)

**Extreme B:** Love is all about extending yourself to the limit, giving your all, using all your willpower to make it work. Any two people can hammer out a relationship if they just try hard enough. (Beating a Dead Horse Approach)

**Balance:** Even though the overall "chemistry" is there between us, we still need to work at it. Life is full of unexpected challenges, so we both need to commit to extending ourselves for one another, and to keep growing spiritually. Feeling love is a good point of departure but it's not enough.

### ***Practical Extremes:***

**Extreme A:** We don't work well together, but we're SO in love, we don't care. (Bliss Ninny)

**Extreme B:** We work well together but there's no passion at all. We're compatible, but it's more like a business partnership. (Chairman/woman of the Bored of Relationships)

**Balance:** We look at the bigger picture, and try to develop "the whole package." We do romantic things for each other, but nail down our agreements and areas of responsibility as if we were a mini-corporation.

### ***Extremes of Passion (but is it love?):***

**Extreme A:** I can't live without you. If you left me I'd just die.

**Extreme B:** If I tried to leave, you'd probably kill me. So what else can I do?

**Balance:** We both experience real love for each other, and so we offer freedom to each other. At the same time we have come to a decision to be together for the long haul.

### ***Financial Extremes:***

**Extreme A:** Why worry about money? When you have love, you have everything. By the way, we're losing the house at the end of the month, honey.

**Extreme B:** What are you complaining about? Of course I'm not around to raise the kids, I'm out making money. How do you think you can afford to buy all those expensive clothes? Don't ask questions.

**Balance:** We plan time together to discuss our mutual financial needs and strategies; We also plan time together for play and meaningful discussion.

### ***Extreme Honesty:***

**Extreme A:** I saw a (man/woman) on the street today that was twice as attractive as you, but I didn't pursue. (Brutal honesty, inappropriate disclosure. "Thanks for Sharing!")

**Extreme B:** I think you're the greatest and most attractive person who ever lived. I would never look at or fantasize about another (man/woman). (Total non disclosure i.e. BS)

**Balance:** We are committed to having an honest relationship, and are willing to go through occasional discomfort to achieve it. However, we are always respectful of each others' feelings.

### ***Psychological Extremes:***

**Extreme A:** Its all my fault that the relationship isn't working out. I just don't have what it takes. (Cringing Neurotic)

**Extreme B:** You're right, for once! Its all your fault that the relationship isn't working out. You just don't have what it takes. (Bullying Personality Disorder Type)

**Balance:** As the song goes, "It's a little bit me, it's a little bit you ... too!" We both take turns pointing out areas that need improvement, and admitting our own shortcomings as well as acknowledging what's working.

***Breaking Up Extremes:***

**Extreme A:** You're going to leave me sooner or later, so I'll leave you first. (Paranoid Pre-emptive Strike)

**Extreme B:** You're too insecure to talk about breaking up as a possibility, so I'll plan my getaway in secret. (Serves you right approach)

**Balance:** We agree to commit ourselves to improving the relationship, including expressing both our satisfactions and dissatisfactions in a compassionate way, without threats. We listen to one another. If we both agree it can never work, we agree to be respectful without malice and revenge in transforming our relationship .

## Sexuality & Sacred Sex

### Sex and Source Energy

To define sacred sexuality, it is important to rediscover what sex means to us. Paramount for growth is to break out of preconceived thinking. To help us step out of the cultural box I use the word sex as an acronym, **S.E.X.** stands for *Source Energy eXchange*, or as my partner sometimes likes to refer to it: Source Energy eXtravaganza!



*Sex is the outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace bringing about love.*

—Alan Watts

This new perspective is not strictly about performance or procreation, or even about orgasm, though that can be a wonderful benefit. S.E.X. is about sharing and exchanging energies that originate more from our hearts than just our heads or our genitals. It is about uniting our longing for wholeness and connection, yearnings that are naturally sacred and spirited. It is about pleasuring and being pleased in whatever consensual form that takes.

As author, Brandy Williams, writes: *Sex is the most engrossing human act. Intimate touch involves all the senses. At the moment of pleasure, of shivering contact with a partner or a stolen moment of self-love, all our normal duties, tasks, fears, failures, all things we do drop away. This is life at its simplest, a time simply to be—to watch, listen, smell, taste, touch and feel, to focus on being a physical creature and experience the body's capacity for pleasure and transcendence.*

*When our bodies feel healthy and our hearts clear, when we can give and accept pleasure freely and with sincerity, when we bring to intimate touch an awareness of the source energy, sex becomes sacred. We blossom into a fully human consciousness, caught up in the passionate embrace of life ... We become ... supple, flexible, centered, alive in the moment.*

### **Sacred Sexuality**

Sacred Sexuality is the desire to discover and explore our pleasure, conditioning and our limitations by exchanging four personal and distinct energies with another, or exploring them alone. We open our 'new eyes and ears' and listen to our bodies through the felt senses. Becoming familiar with the body's felt senses adds great fluidity to the process. And by expanding our sharing skills of our own body's existing realities, however gradual, the experience of sacredness seeps into the bones and marrow of the lover. What more beautiful way could human beings embody the sacred than by challenging themselves to bring the four primary soulful energies together? When we do this, when we consciously give and receive these four energies, we experience ecstasy, transcendence and a new sphere of personal growth, empowerment, and understanding.

### **The Four Primary Energies**

There are four primary soulful energies in Source Energy Exchange (S.E.X.). These are: love and pleasure, lingum and yoni. The third and fourth energies are Hindu Sanskrit terms and understanding them assists us in breaking out of traditional, cultural thinking patterns. The third expression, lingum energy, represents the masculine drive, penis, aggression and personal power, the giving of complex energies, and glory. While lingum energy is often male identified, in reality this energy is found in all human beings. And our fourth soulful expression is yoni energy, which represents the feminine, the vagina or any part of the body that exudes surrender and desire to receive energy. Yes, men too have yoni energy.

We are all more or less conditioned and limited in our expression of yoni or lingum energies, not to mention love and pleasure. In truth, we have all suffered traumas to our lingum and yoni energies, as well as love and pleasure. Unlocking traumatic and toxic shame and thawing frozen energies is our path to the sacred. Experimenting, without judgment, along the felt sense boundaries of these energies, is a direct route to source energy, the earth, our ancient memories, and the universe. All four of these source energies are the universe's way of expressing itself through us.

*As the river gives into the ocean, what is inside me moves inside you ...*

–Robert Bly

### **Sexual Concerns**

I have met with many people who have shared very personal sexual concerns with me. They ranged from feelings of deadness in their pelvis, to erectile challenges, orgasmic difficulties, being restricted in experiencing sexual desire or feeling limited with a partner they love. Sometimes it's a body part, or image—too big, too small, too tight, too wide. There are many similar burdens that people carry in a very heavy way. My experience has taught me that the principles explored here can be enormously helpful. In most of my experiences with focalizing these types of hardships have been resolved.

### **Integrating Spirituality & Sexuality**

After facilitating countless workshops and sessions with individuals and couples, one thing is certain. The healing of the schism between our sexual and spiritual (love) energies is not only a provocative topic, but one of the most intimidating tasks before us. Yet, it is also one of the most important. What I call the “split” arises out of early religious and cultural training, which teaches that love and families are good while sex is dirty, bad, and perverse. I have yet to meet one person who does not highlight this as a foremost challenge in life.

A deeply ingrained and culturally-induced rift between sexuality and spirituality haunts us. Yet, these two human forces are two sides of the same coin. At its most fundamental, when two people come together with open hearts, sex is a sacred act, joining them in body and spirit. This kind of union can be healing, the very embodiment of ‘transcendent beauty,’ to be regarded with reverence and respect.

All too often, this is clearly not the case. Opening the heart and keeping it open can be challenging particularly for those whose sexuality is connected to psychic and spiritual wounds of early experiences. As a result, it is difficult to resolve our connection to source energy with our human need to express, satisfy and celebrate our sexuality.

### **Healing the “Sexual-Spiritual Split”**

The split between spirituality and sexuality is a deep psychic schism within almost everyone in our culture that prohibits *enduring*, loving relationships to form, which at the same time can *remain sexually alive and growing*. Generational, cultural, and religious exposures cause the rift,

and early programming that plants seeds deep in the unconscious. Once they sprout merging the two, after bonding, is virtually impossible without specific healing.

I'm convinced that the key to the disconnecting dilemma we face is to re-unite the body, mind, and nature. And a primary obstacle most people face is uniting nature with the sexual. I call this "healing the sexual-spiritual split." We need to consciously reintegrate source energy and the cosmos with our sexuality.

### **Relationships Without Sacred Sexuality**

When sex is not fulfilling in a monogamous relationship, the cornerstone of the union is weak and vulnerable. Most of us, consciously or unconsciously, commit to such relationships, at least in part, anticipating sexual satisfaction. If fulfillment dwindles or becomes barely existent, a foundation of the relationship is betrayed. One will often feel imprisoned and act out in emotional or sexual ways. There is, or will soon be, trouble in paradise. And often, because couples lack the skill required for sensitive dialogue, they go into denial, often for years. This is not necessary. New skills are available now.

I am happy to report that I have been living in a sexually fulfilling, loving relationship for many years now. All the work has been worth it! Opening up the heart, letting go of taboos, sharing shame-free sex, and being responsible and self-respecting, are keys to both the kingdoms of higher consciousness and pleasure. It is no wonder that when some are in the throes of orgasm they say, "Oh God, Yes!" In that moment of letting go and dropping defenses, a greater reality bursts forth. Loving sex heightens consciousness, and for me, Source Energy is consciousness, and source energy is love.

Imagine yourself and your partner, with open hearts, choosing to pleasure each other. Imagine breathing and letting go into the bliss, whatever it may be, and knowing that you are going to Source or the highest energy powers. Your partner is joining and supporting you in this awareness and experience. Then you switch; pleasure your partner in whatever ways are desired and appropriate for the two of you. If you really give yourself such a delightful experience, you will soon experience ecstatic sex, erotic energy, and you will have a rich spiritual experience that is enlightening, as well. Every time that you do so, more veils are dropped between partners, more consciousness opens to them. It will reveal itself in the daily living of life and in creative expression. This is what sex and pleasuring looks like when you are healing the sexual-spiritual split.

## **Sexuality & Higher Consciousness**

Combining love with sexual expression can be an act of higher consciousness. In focalizing, we help foster a genuine experience, which occurs when two human beings combine love's energy with erotic energies; a transcendent experience occurs, one that is often profoundly healing. This is a very sacred sharing and the true goal of a fulfilling sexual experience. Reaching this goal is the result of a give and take, a negotiation of the openhearted experience of interconnectedness.

Though this process can be awkward, it is essential to learn to communicate about our needs, desires, and fantasies. "Reclaiming Adolescent Awkwardness" is a phrase I use to give people permission to go to the awkward 'places' necessary to heal the sexual-spiritual split and to form authentically intimate relationships. This is because so few of us have had healthy, natural adolescent exposures to sex. It is a learning deficit, not something wrong with us, and with a bit of courage and willingness new awareness can flourish.

Yet even so, we will often encounter resistance to fusing our loving, sexual source energies. Contrary to what many naïvely believe, we need to learn that healthy loving includes the expression of our more shadowy desires as well as our tenderness. The delicate opening up of our repressed sexual histories, variations, and fantasies is extraordinarily enriching and healing. Appreciating the nature of resistance and de-shaming our fantasies are entryways to a 'circle of energy,' allowing the experience of full body orgasm and full-hearted spirituality.

Under our needs, desires, and fantasies are powerful and subtle feelings and energies that want to be expressed. These expressions help us grow holistically; they teach us about aggression and passivity, about our feminine and masculine energies, and about pleasuring and being pleased. They help us dissolve shame toward our inner contradictions and complexities and experience them fully for healing, growth, and self-understanding.

True and spiritual lovemaking is the interweaving choreography of our higher and shadow selves. It is a holistic bringing together of aspects of the so-called higher and lower self—how beautiful and so very intimate to do so with open hearts.

## **Natural Resistance to Fusing Energies**

An appreciation of resistance signals a most important awareness of sexual healing. All that you've read thus far, and exercises in the "Graceful Guidelines to Sexual Healing," which will follow, will bring up resistance in the body. Notice the felt sense of this resistance in your body. Make room for it. It has personal and cultural reasons for being. Just because it was placed there doesn't mean you have to live with it for the rest of your life.

Awareness of resistance is good; you want to bring your resistance up out of your unconscious, where it has ominous rule, and expose it for resolution. By connecting with your

resistance, you have the opportunity to discern and untangle the diverse feelings and incidents that have formed themselves into a wall of shame. Whenever shame or energy blockage surfaces in a budding or long-term intimate relationship, the struggle to share it is part of the process of healthy development. It is the joining of less developed and more mature aspects of self together in a sensitive, growing relationship. In this process, there is great value in the shame. Shame flirts with us. It lures us while at the same time it tries to hide. As suggested by the author, Max Scheler, in his book, *Shame and Pride, It is from in and under the shame that our shimmering magic emerges.*

### **Fantasies? Yes! Yes! Yes!**

Contrary to what many of us learned, a fantasy is not an action, and it is the furthest thing from sin I can imagine. Many are curious about where their fantasies come from. They often feel shame for having them. Yet the one thing we all agree on is that the most secret fantasies are the juiciest. How interesting this is! In my many years of research on sexual fantasy this is what I discovered: They are mysterious and they are to be respected.

Sometimes their origin is almost obvious—from a Freudian or deep psychology perspective of our personal histories. Sometimes they have remnants of early abuse and violations. Even if they do have conscious histories there are still mysterious elements to them. Often, however, there is no conscious recollection as to why one might have a particular fantasy or fetish. I have known people, myself included, who have had transpersonal experiences (particularly during ecstatic sex or other non-ordinary states of consciousness, like focalizing), where they discover in a visceral way that some fantasies come from beyond this physical lifetime and are therefore transpersonal.

Fantasies and the “juice” within them are to be de-shamed. In doing so, we are able to fall more deeply in love with ourselves. This self-love is essential to grow in sacred sexuality. We do not have to act on our fantasies or fetishes. Having them does not mean we are bad or that something is wrong with us. As we de-shame them and bring the juice from them into a safe relationship with our partners and ourselves, we again meet Source Energy, or the universal spirit. Only shame is God-less. The juices within these fantasies and the way they continue to transform, as they are de-shamed, is part of what keeps a long-term relationship sexually alive. Margo Anand describes this transformation as a process of alchemy, in *The Art of Sexual Magic*:

*Like a true alchemist, you learn how to turn the base metal  
of your own energy into the purest gold.*

Many of us are afraid of letting our wild primordial nature (be it aggressive or passive) and fantasy world become exposed, because it could hurt someone or ourselves. There is this possibility, and it is important to be ethical and responsible in a relationship, as well as in every other avenue of our life. As they say, there is a time and place for everything. In Anand's book, she quotes Jenny:

*I realized that it is love that allows people to be wild while holding aggression in check ... If there is a strong, deep heart connection between two people, then you can go totally wild and yet at the same time remain sensitive enough to stay playful and not hurt each other.*

### **Full Body Orgasms**

When we give and receive these energies, even with ourselves, we find ourselves in a “circle of energy” not being able to discern the giving from the receiving because we are experiencing both. It is this phenomenon of experiencing the circle of energy that, along with other awareness, makes full body orgasms (rather than genital orgasms) possible and even likely. It is through the subtleties of give and take that we learn to distinguish between and relish the body sensations and electrical currents of ejaculation, climax and full body orgasm. We can take the words ‘sacred sex’ one step further and explore the power of prayer in combination with full body orgasm. And we also are able to experience the art of multiple orgasms as a deeper form of ritual, which integrates our blissful desires for union with the Source Energy—all at once.

This translates into wholeness and deep gratification. We experience firsthand unification with all nature of which we are an expression. In Chia and Areva's book on the *The Multi-Orgasmic Man* they say:

*Once you are able to cultivate your energy ... you will find that you have more energy than you ever thought possible.*

### **Graceful Guidelines for Sexual Healing**

Most people yearn for sexual healing. I make this statement as a therapist and as a human being who has facilitated myself and many others on the journey.

Sexual healing is the shame-free revisiting of complex sexual histories, limitations and perceptions combined with new awareness, understanding, and compassion. In the process of this rejuvenation, we learn how to merge our spiritual and sexual energies.

These guidelines can be used to illuminate and focus a core-healing journey that is central to having life mastery, which is the awareness of aliveness, sensual pleasure and contentment.

Five graceful guidelines for sexual healing:

1. Increase Body Awareness
2. Share Sexual History
3. Dialogue in Relationship
4. Create Fusion Exercise
5. Rediscover adolescent awkwardness
6. Appreciate Resistance
7. Healing is Possible: Belief Creates the Experience

1. **Body Awareness.** Introduce yourself to the possibility of bringing full body awareness and energy to your sexual regions. Some of us have depleted energy levels and a diminished sense of aliveness in the pelvic area and a fullness of energy in the heart region. Others feel constricted with their heart energy while another is having intense pelvic charge. This is particularly evident in early intimacy and bonding.

Because of these culturally fragmented energy disbursements in the body, sexual motivation usually has more to do with feelings like neediness, escape from other feelings, and proving one's self-worth, than pure pleasure and the normal desire for interconnectedness. For many, pleasure can only be realized in highly charged scenarios. Often they are avoided because they are dangerous and/or self-destructive. Some of us are just fearfully frozen. Others become frustrated at a perceived lack of ability to negotiate the complexities. Many repeat unfulfilling patterns again and again. Whatever one's history may be, the following exercises have proven helpful in energizing and awakening sexual aliveness.

In Latin and most Eastern and metaphysical philosophies, the word "breath" is synonymous with "spirit." Conscious breathing brings energy (and spirit) into the body. This exercise will help improve anyone's ability to breathe and improve sexual aliveness. First, do conscious, deep breathing exercises focused in the groin. Imagine that you can take your breath all the way down to the perineum, that lowermost part of the crotch between the vagina and the rectum or the scrotum and the rectum. In reality, most feel they can't breathe into their perineum, yet imagination can produce surprising results. This exercise can be done while brushing your teeth, riding in a car, or for a few minutes before or after sleeping. While the results may not be immediate, with a little practice and patience, deeper breathing of this sort will help lead to spiritual-genital integration.

The "rotation exercise" is an exercise that you can combine with the conscious pelvic breathing. Stand up straight, put your feet shoulder-length apart, relax (unlock) your knees, and rotate your hips in a circular motion, stretching out in all directions as far as is comfortable.

Imagine that you are standing in the center of a mostly empty peanut butter jar and you want to use your hip and pelvis, in a circular motion, to clean the peanut butter off the sides of the jar. Keep rotating, first in one direction, then the other. Lower and raise yourself to completely clean the inside of that jar. Attention to conscious breathing will be helpful. Take a moment or two to giddily and randomly move your pelvis, tuning into the energy and spontaneously moving and following your inner current. Just go with the flow for a few moments. You will begin, subtly at first, feeling a renewed aliveness in this region that is sensual, sexual, and centering—all at the same time.

These exercises are also excellent ‘warm-ups’ for more pleasurable sexual experiences, alone or to be shared with a partner. (For additional information and exercises on all of the guidelines in this article see my book: [\*The Journey Toward Complete Recovery: Reclaiming Your Emotional, Spiritual & Sexual Wholeness\*](#)).

**2. Sexual History.** Begin a process of uncovering and sharing sexual secrets from your past with ‘safe’ people. It is important to do this practice with those who are sensitive, understanding and compassionate listeners. These ‘secrets’ are rightfully too sensitive to be exposed to individuals who will not afford them suitable respect. Along with these secrets, there is a need to bring awareness to religious and other spiritually infused influences on your early sexual development and evolution.

I suggest writing a narrative history, or outline, to put one’s sexual development in a historical perspective. This begins with the first remembered ‘exposure’ to sex, sexual energy, or sexual material. Then, as best you can remember, recreate your development with subsequent incidents. This exercise will help put your current sexual expression in an understandable and historic context. By sharing this history with a safe person, one can further heal the sexual-spiritual split. After sharing “sexual histories in perspective” (in a shame-free setting), your psyche will gradually produce additional memories, further illuminating your history. Shared sexual histories provide a grounding and framework for your present experience while simultaneously creating a platform for new possibilities.

**3. Dialogue in Relationship.** Encourage yourself to risk cultivating meaningful dialogue around sexual issues in dating situations and with significant partners. The deepest interpersonal healing takes place in a relationship. Finding and cultivating a safe partner(s) is, of course, pivotal. One can do a great deal of healing with therapists and within community. However, that healing will be limited by the appropriate professional and cultural boundaries of these relationships. To

ultimately heal the sexual-spiritual split, we must explore relating to another human being while attempting to bring both polarized aspects of the split to this relationship without walls of shame arising. It is important to work through shameful aspects and feelings of inadequacy about sex with a partner. It is fine to move slowly. ‘Intention’ and ‘willingness’ are paramount.

**4. Fusion Exercises.** Consciously combine meditative, spiritual, or contemplative experiences with your own sexuality. Such experimentation is a very different and awkward experience for most people, at first, but in time one feels a new and deeper connection with both pleasure and release. Sexual experiences often grow from being simply physical, (with genital concentration), to becoming a full-body, kinesthetic event that can be powerful and rewarding.

Suggesting a combination of sexual and spiritual experimenting often brings laughter and confusion. People always ask, “How are we supposed to do that?” They often break out in further embarrassed laughter and disbelief when I suggest, “Try experimenting with masturbating (or self-loving) and praying at the same time!”

This laughter is a defense. Notice how foreign the suggestion feels, emphasizing the reality of an internal dichotomy! Think about this in relation to merging your core sexuality with a spiritual, loving union or relationship with yourself or another.

Create rituals with candlelight, mirrors and incense for sessions of self-loving and self-pleasuring. Slowly begin to make a “special time and place” in your life for, and begin to exalt in, your body (however you may perceive it), your sexuality, alone or with a companion, as an ecstatic all-encompassing manifestation of your humanity.

Use your intuitive creativity and responsible, courageous risk-taking abilities to create your own additional practices to merge sexual and spiritual energies. Like flowers growing toward the sun, as we humans experience this fusion in our psyche, our bodies and our defensive reflexes organically grow toward sexual and spiritual unity.

**5. Rediscover Adolescent Awkwardness.** Become willing to enter a period of discovery that I call “adolescent awkwardness.” In dating or in a significant long-term relationship, a time comes when the healing of this internalized sexual-spiritual schism must be addressed for the relationship to grow. We must surrender preconceived concepts regarding sexuality and intimacy and join another person in authentic adolescent discovery. Many of us missed a healthy adolescence, and therefore cannot go further into intimacy without visiting this important building block. It is important to give yourself permission to feel adolescent and awkward with

yourself and another. It is rich, fertile ground in which to plant seeds of new awareness. Very workable and pleasing possibilities will grow from these seeds.

**6. Appreciate Resistance.** Appreciation of our own resistance signals the most important awareness of healing. All of the above exercises will initially bring resistance to the fore. This is good; we want to bring resistance up out of the unconscious, where it has ominous rule, and expose it to a “process of resolution.” By connecting with the resistance, and moving through it, we have the opportunity to discern and untangle the diverse feelings and incidents that have formed themselves into walls of shame.

Whenever shame or blockage surfaces (often feeling like a wall) in a budding or long term intimate relationship, the struggle to share it is also the process of healthy adolescent development. It is the joining of less mature and more mature aspects of ourselves together in a sensitive, growing relationship. In this process, there is great value in the shame. Shame flirts with us. It lures us while at the same time it tries to hide. As suggested by the author, Max Scheler, in his book, *Shame and Pride, It is from in and under the shame that our shimmering magic emerges.*

**7. Healing is Possible: Belief Creates the Experience.** Combining love with sexual expression is an act of higher consciousness. It is important to believe that when two human beings share love’s energy combined with erotic energies, a transcendent experience occurs, one that is often profoundly healing and enriching. This is a very sacred sharing and a goal of a fulfilling sexual experience. Reaching this goal is the result of a conscious give and take, a negotiation of the open-hearted experience of interconnectedness. Accepting that this is awkward, we need to learn to communicate our needs, desires and fantasies. Under each of the three currents are powerful and subtle feelings and energies that want to be expressed. Releasing these expressions helps us grow holistically; they teach us about natural aggression and passivity, about our feminine and masculine energies, and about pleasuring and being pleased. They help dissolve shame, insecurities, and to accept contradictions and complexities. It exposes the need to experience them fully for healing, growth and self-understanding.



### **Evaluating Our Progress**

I believe that there will always be one more way we can heal this schism, drop more veils, or enhance our capacity for pleasure and spirit. Not to worry. If all the veils were gone, where would our humanness be? How interesting to ponder such ideas as we heal ourselves day by day, and with each healing, enhance our ability to give and receive pleasure. It is a process of both struggle and delight with spontaneous expressions of perfection and bliss. Progress rather than perfection is the intention, and if we are earnest our bodies will lead our progress toward our personal perfection.

In evaluating our progress in healing our sexual-spiritual split, we need to ask ourselves: *What motives do I bring to sexuality? What do I want from the sexual aspect of my nature?* We know our healing is progressing when our answers emphasize spiritual fulfillment, integrating power and surrender, femininity and masculinity, and the desire for shared experiences of pleasure and higher consciousness.

## Trauma Resolution



*Trauma is hell on earth. Trauma resolved is a gift from the gods.*

–Peter A. Levine

### **It's All About Trauma**

Some years ago, my colleague and friend, Nicholas Cimorelli, and I were discussing our clients' common issues. Nicholas looked at me and said "Michael, do you notice that it's all about trauma?" I intuitively answered "yes" though I had never before made the correlation. Then I read Judith L. Herman's book Trauma and Recovery and began to clearly understand the relationships between trauma, addiction, neurosis, anxiety, depression, hyper-vigilance, and relational discontent. As Nicholas said, "It's all about trauma."

My understanding of trauma is first-hand knowledge. I've experienced and observed it in my own life and in the lives of countless clients. When I was four years old, my mother left my father, my two older brothers and me. TRAUMA. EARTHQUAKE. I had to get through it, I had to survive. For years afterward, my dad was full of rage at what had happened. DAILY TRAUMA. DAILY EARTHQUAKES. He threatened to put us in a home if we weren't good. TRAUMA. "Better be good no matter what." Continuous uprooting (TRAUMA) with and without my brothers (MORE TRAUMA) to live here and there; sexually molested by an older neighbor (SEX TRAUMA) and having to be hospitalized as a result (YES, AGAIN TRAUMA). Nobody seemed to care what happened. MORE TRAUMA! I think you get the point I'm

making. It is not surprising that I turned to alcohol and drugs at age fourteen to quell the confusion and storms within. At the time, these substances seemed like lifesavers.

My life has been formed and informed by trauma, and trauma healing has become my central teaching. Not everyone has the kinds of early traumas I did. But I've found that most of us suffer from more traumas and traumatic conflicts than we're aware of. They are cultural and universal. Traumas can be dramatic or subtle. We are traumatized whenever our life force, passion, curiosity or love is stomped on. Traumas live repressed in our bodies—in our psyche, in our central nervous system, in our sinews, either re-enacting themselves or restricting our life force through visceral fear. Their effect on our entire organism is one of the major causes of disease. They pose emotional and physical challenges to all our relationships with others. Repressed trauma annihilates relationships.

### **Trauma Transformation**

As Peter Levine says in Waking The Tiger: Healing Trauma,

*Trauma is like a straightjacket that binds the mind and body in frozen fear. Paradoxically, it is also a portal that can lead us to awakening and freedom.*

Transforming trauma requires fusing the energy frozen in the “trauma vortex” with its polar opposite energy. This cannot be understood cerebrally; trauma transformation must be experienced to be understood. I have learned most about this sort of transformation by doing my own healing. I simultaneously began to engage in body and energy-oriented therapies. First I studied Polarity Massage, then Rubenfeld Synergy, then Bio-Energetics and Core-Energetics; Yogic Techniques, then Healing Imagery, Somatic Experiencing®, and focalizing. To the average reader these may sound like ‘out of the norm’ or new age modalities. They are not; many draw on ancient traditions. The reality is that most significant healing can only occur in “non-ordinary” environments. When extraordinary things happen to us, we must do extraordinary things to heal ourselves—things like learning how to hear our bodies talk to us and guide us.

Let me share the first few sentences of Levine's book Waking the Tiger: Trauma Healing. *If you are experiencing strange symptoms that no one seems able to explain, they could be arising from a traumatic reaction to a past event that you may not even remember. You are not alone. You are not crazy. There is a rational explanation for what is happening to you. You have not been irreversibly damaged, and it is possible to diminish or even eliminate your symptoms.*

Levine goes on to add credence to my earlier discussion with Nicholas on the concept that “it’s all about trauma” and the transformation of energy. This is a big shift for most people who are accustomed to talk therapy and allopathic medicine, *a shift we need to make*.

### **Four Types of Trauma**

There are four basic types of trauma:

1. **Physical Trauma** ~ accidents, surgery, anesthesia, assaults.
2. **Emotional Trauma** ~ abandonment, neglect, ridicule, encroachment.
3. **Sexual Trauma** ~ rape, molestation, unhealthy or premature exposure to sexual energy or acts, cultural ignorance on sexual diversity.
4. **Endurance Trauma** ~ a prolonged sense of feeling unsafe in one’s world.

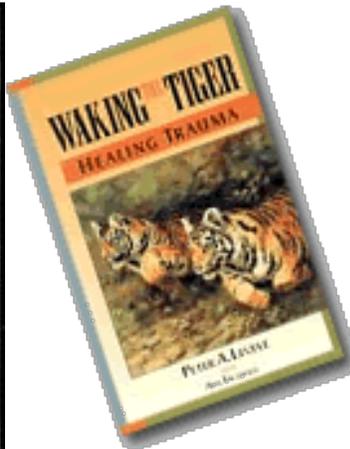
Torture, war and other violent acts often thread together complex threads of these four basic types of trauma. With both old and new traumas we may experience alarming flashbacks, sudden panic, or continuing feelings of sadness and anxiety. In many cases, we may feel shame. We may look to drugs to ease our pain. The good news is that the more progressive members of the healing community are learning more effective ways of healing all forms of trauma. We are committed to expanding and disseminating this learning.

### **Moving Forward with Trauma Healing**

If you want to explore the area of trauma healing for yourself or a loved one, read my interview with Peter A. Levine. What’s most important is that you keep an open mind and heart. Be willing to experiment if something feels right in your body and mind, and notice if there are palpable results. If you do not feel results for your efforts, then this may not be the right method or practitioner for you. We are all different and it is important that we honor this. Change practitioners or methods if your experience is not optimal. Listen to your intuitive sense.

In any energetic healing, *slow is fast*, is the paradox that makes healing graceful and solid. Trust yourself to do what makes sense to you without overwhelming yourself. Overwhelm is the enemy! The first rule of trauma healing is to move only as fast as your entire organism is prepared to move without being overwhelmed. The experience of being overwhelmed circumvents any effort to transform traumatic energies in your system.

## Interview with Peter A. Levine



*The Instinctual organism does not sit in judgment; it only does what it does. All you have to do is get out of the way.*

—Peter A. Levine

Michael Picucci (**MP**): I've been around psychotherapeutic healing and trauma recovery for a good number of years. When I came across your work, it really felt captivating and revolutionary for me. I don't want to put you in an awkward position with this question, but I'm curious—Do you get that kind of reaction often?

Peter Levine (**PL**): You know, I hadn't even really thought about it in that way until you asked the question. Yeah, I think I have got that comment from a number of people. And some people actually even surprise me. You know, it's the funniest thing. Having developed it over such a period of time, over 30 years, you're just doing something and you don't really think about the context so much. When I was doing this work, as you know, there wasn't even a definition of trauma or PTSD, as we know about it today. That's relatively recent, only about 20 years old, if that. I think the thing that was most revolutionary if I think back (but again, to me it made common sense, so I didn't really think of it as revolutionary) is the idea that animals in the wild are subject to constant predation and that they ... I mean, obviously, if they didn't have mechanisms to return their nervous systems from threat arousal to equilibrium, they wouldn't survive in the wild. So, there has to be a deeply innate mechanism that's there to bring us back from the brink of insanity, the brink of fear and experience of threat to balance. And if that's the

case, and it appears to be the case—I mean, I basically studied everything that was written on animal behavior related predator-prey behavior ... By the way, can I take a side on this?

**MP:** Sure.

**PL:** When I was at UC Berkley in the early 70s, this idea was really churning in me. I would go to the library, and I would get literally anything I could find. I would sit in the stacks and just trace books and references. I remember that as a wonderful time of my life, of living with books. I would occasionally get an article or book, and I would then have plenty of time with it. But then it would get recalled, and I would let it go and get the next book. Then the same thing would happen. Just recently, a couple months ago, in San Diego I met a woman named Mary Mane. She is probably the preeminent researcher now in attachment work with animals. She was a student of Mary Ainsworth. A really lovely, solid woman. We started to talk at breakfast one day, and it turns out that she was the other person! In order to understand maternal attachment, she was going over all this ethology literature, as was I. So, we were developing those ideas at the same time. It was such a wonderful and somehow reassuring experience to realize that we were both looking at what we thought of as strictly human issues, trauma and attachment, and that we were both driven to study instinctual functions in animals.

**MP:** So, back to the original question about ‘Do you get my kind of reaction about you’re work being captivating and revolutionary often?’ I think you’re answer is ‘Yes.’

**PL:** Yes, and I get all kinds of other responses, too. Although I must say that in the last few years, it’s really quite rare that I get something that’s dismissible or negative in any way ... In the beginning, a lot of people including our shared publisher said, “Well, this is about animals. How can that apply to humans?”

**MP:** So, I think you already answered my next question, which was going to be ... Operating in the body-oriented practitioner world, especially since I’ve come across you, I hear of people who have known about you for years and years. So, it makes me ask, when did you get started, and what first inspired you?

**PL:** Who’s to really say what the inspiration was? There were two tracks. One was the story of Nancy in the book, which was in 1969. You know that story?

**MP:** Yes.

**PL:** There was another one, which was before that. The two of them really merged along with the animal research. It must have been about 1965 or 66, and I had just met someone who was in

that same class that I was teaching at the Santa Barbara Graduate Institute, Judith Weaver. My friend, Jack, dragged me to San Francisco to go to this one or two day workshop conducted by Charlotte Selvers. She was one of the first people to bring sensory awareness, body awareness to the United States. This was an experiential workshop she was doing. Again, I had just come from the Midwest. There was no such thing as the growth movement. There was no such thing as bodywork. At the time, there may have been four or five rolfers in the known universe. There were no other body-workers. In this workshop, we spent hour after hour walking around, being aware of our walking, being aware of every part of our bodies, picking up a rock, feeling a rock, feeling the weight and texture, picking up another rock, picking up a piece of wood, looking at the wood ... This just went on and on and on. Suzuki Roshi was there, the head Zen monk at Tassajara. I asked one of the monks, 'How are you doing with this?' I was completely befuddled. The monk said, 'I'm getting a terrible headache.' This woman just drove us. And then at the end of the day, we were asked to lie down on the floor and feel our breath. The most remarkable thing happened. I became aware of my muscles breathing with my breath. It was like my whole body was breathing, and I had never had an experience like that before. I remember feeling different for several days. About a year or two after that, I was asked to teach a course called Contemporary Natural Science, given primarily from the zoology department. There was a laboratory part in which I was asked to set up a physiological laboratory for monitoring bodily physiological responses. I thought, 'I wonder if I can actually measure what I had experienced that year before in Charlotte Selvers's workshop. So, I asked for a volunteer, and this lovely, young, fiery red haired undergraduate student volunteered. She would come in and I would connect what's called an anemograph, and I was able to record her breathing and heart rate. I also put electrodes on different muscles. Obviously muscles couldn't breathe, but I wanted to see if there was some tensing and letting go that was synchronized with the breathing, and therefore felt like they were breathing. When I first set her up, I could find no such relationship. I was getting frustrated, and so was she. Then one time, I was doing some relaxation with her, and she flipped into what we now call a trance or an altered state. And, boom, all of a sudden I started seeing the synchrony between the actual breathing and the electrical activity in the muscles in the foot and in other parts of the body. So, I then became interested in what these rhythms reflect in terms of well being. Later, after my experience with Nancy, and soon after my doctoral work, I was asked to be a consultant for NASA. This was for the first space shuttle flight, which of course hadn't yet gone up. There was a real big problem. When the astronauts would go into zero gravity, when they go into orbit, they would very frequently get sick. It's called Zero-G Sickness, or enuresis; they would basically get nauseous and throw up. It was more than just an unpleasant situation, because it actually could get dangerous. It could get in the machinery and affect other people. So, there was a project to somehow monitor when it was about to happen before it

happened, and then train these people to do something. They were trying biofeedback and different drugs. I noticed that the astronauts that actually were able to do well, that didn't get sick or were able to stop themselves from getting sick were people who had a response somewhat similar to the woman who I measured those years earlier. I had also done some measurements with people I worked with who were traumatized. When they would resolve the trauma, you could see that their body would go into this full-body breathing. So, a picture started to really form. There's another important part that shouldn't be left out. I took a leave of absence when I discovered the Esalen Institute, and there were people doing things like Charlotte Selvers, Fritz Brogue, Ida Rolf, and so forth. Also around that time I got into Reichian therapy. This stuff was just completely mind blowing to me. Burney Gunther had a book, Sensory Awakening: Going Below your Mind. I was also very much taken by Reich's work.

**MP:** As am I.

**PL:** I think that Wilhelm Reich is a person who has been tragically lost in most people's awareness.

**MP:** Yes.

**PL:** I've asked audiences of body therapists at big conferences, 'How many people know Wilhelm Reich?' To my chagrin, an increasingly smaller and smaller minority raises their hands. This is a man whose work has really been important on all of the cutting edge things that are going on in society today. He's a root of it. Also around the time of Nancy, I started studying with Ida Rolf. So, I got the privilege to look at bodies and to touch bodies. Now, I didn't really do rolfing that much afterwards. I did it for a while. But I got two tremendous gifts for Ida Rolf. First, I started to really see a body as it is. She wouldn't let you give a theory about what you saw. You'd have to actually see what you saw. And she was very big on relationships of one part of the body to the other. Then when I started to palpate muscles, I found that some muscles were like rock iron tight ... more like a car tire. If you push a car tire, it pushes your finger right out. Other muscles were like mush, or were woody. They didn't respond at all. I later met a woman, Lilla Moore Johnson, who had devised a whole theory on that. And then the body-dynamics people later incorporated that in a different way. I then came back to the stuff that I had observed with animals, and I said, 'Oh my God. This is what happens when an animal is being chased full out.' Its muscles are going at the maximum amount that they can, and then in a fraction of a second the animal collapses. So, you have a mixture of muscles that are frozen in stiff terror, braced in fear, and other muscles that have collapsed in sheer terror. So, all these pictures started coming together, a kaleidoscope. The picture just got bigger and bigger and more complex, of course. The remarkable thing, I think, is that even with this complexity, I found certain very

basic principles to hold true. The first one, which I mentioned at the beginning, is that as animals ourselves, human beings have this innate ability to rebound from extreme experiences and threat given appropriate guidance.

**MP:** Yes.

**PL:** And that this could be learned relatively easily and quickly. People can get from being very debilitated, dysfunctional, sick, whatever term you're using, to not only get rid of their symptoms, but to really come alive.

**MP:** Can we take all of that, and let me ask the next question. I think this begins to bring it all together in a new way. Here's a quote from your book. *As we begin the healing process, we use what is known as the felt sense, or internal body sensations. These sensations serve as a portal through which we find the symptoms, or reflections, of trauma. In directing our attention to these internal body sensations, attacking the trauma head on, we can unbind and free the energies that have been held in check.*

**PL:** Did I say 'attacking the trauma head on?'

**MP:** Actually, you did. I was a little surprised at the wording.

**PL:** You're kidding! My God, I contradicted myself there. I can't believe it. So, in other words, we're not doing it head on really, we're doing it through the felt sense. That's the difference. Thank you! That has to be changed for the next version. That's humorous.

**MP:** So, taking the theory into account, how do you come to that awareness that you could engage it in that way?

**PL:** Yes, that goes back to all the things I've been talking to you about. I started then to say, 'What is this?' What is it that lets you know that you feel better? I became very interested in what was called motor learning at that time, and emotion theory, which went back into the early 1800s. How is it that you know what you know when you say 'I feel good about this' or 'I feel bad about this?' or 'I'm scared?' How the heck do you know that? I actually coined the term around that time as 'registered experience.' There's Eugene Gendlin's book, *Focusing*, which again is a book that everyone should read. He actually had been working on this in a philosophical way and had written some really fabulous stuff. I think his really great stuff included things that were written in papers, and I gradually got some of his papers. This really confirmed for me that I was on the right track here. But I'm not sure exactly how I made that connection between what animals go through without apparent awareness, in the sense that

humans have it. Although I do believe animals are sentient. This is kind of the vehicle that allows us to do what animals do instinctually. This refined sense is the tool that allows us to be able to do what animals do. You see, I think our minds have gotten in the way of this happening naturally—our over-socialized, over-developed, over-frontalized mind. It's the felt sense that allows the mind to work in concert with the instincts. So, it's our link between our 'highest' and 'lowest,' that is to say between our most elaborate function and our most instinctual function. As I started to work more methodically with asking questions about people's inner experience, I started to learn about that landscape, and particularly about that landscape, when it had to do with responses to overwhelm, to threaten, to traumatize. And gradually I started to develop a lexicon, because ... How do you ask people questions about that, that doesn't get them out of the experience? That was really one of the most difficult parts, thinking of how to ask them this kind of question.

**MP:** And you have developed a beautiful lexicon. But going back, speaking of lexicon and use of words, so where you had said, 'attacking the trauma head-on,' you would probably have wanted to say or would change that today to something like what?

**PL:** Embracing, contacting ...

**MP:** Engaging at the periphery ...

**PL:** Engaging at the periphery, contacting it, joining with it in a titrated way.

**MP:** You also articulate how frozen energy in the body, in the central nervous system, is renegotiated in the body moving one from activation to resilience. It dawned on me that another way of saying what you are saying is that, 'We are using the power of love or spirit to transform.' When you talk about resource energy in somatic experiencing, it seems we are also talking about the energy of love or spirit. Would you care to comment on that at all?

**PL:** Usually, in the past, I've kind of tried to stay out of here, but now at my advancing age into 60 ... If you think about how traumatized people are, not just in terms of shock trauma, but in terms of their whole development, and what percentage of the human race has been deeply traumatized, I think just looking at sexual attacks alone in childhood, I believe the conservative estimates are something like one out of four people in the world. And it doesn't seem to really vary that much with socio-economic status. So, when we look at how things are going on in the world, you can say, 'My god, how crappy it is.' But at the same time or on the other hand you say, 'God, it's a miracle that we're doing as well as we're doing given the amount of traumatization, neglect, poor parenting, inadequate parenting that most all of us have received.'

**MP:** So, the energy of spirit or love ...

**PL:** Yes, the energy of spirit or love—getting back to that. Empirically, when I work with people, most people come to that. I don't say anything about it. If they have that belief, I am glad of that, because that's going to be a resource for them generally. This is one of the things that really caught my attention as I started to work with many, many more clients is—how consistently people would experience something that we would talk about as spirituality. I mean, it could be more in a Tao or Zen sense of their being in the now and the now being eternal. Or it could be that they felt held by a golden light or in the arms of Christ. If they're Jewish they have some kind of a Jewish thing. Although, I actually found many people would have experiences from other religions as much as from their own religion. This is the thing that I think Stan Grof also started to notice in the psychedelic experiences.

**MP:** So, you don't necessarily talk about the energy of spirit or love being a resource or in the resource, but one could notice that themselves. As I do ...

**PL:** Yes, that's right. I mean, I don't think it's my role to ... Sometimes I'll ask a person, especially somebody who's really struggling in a very difficult situation. I ask them what their beliefs are about spirituality or religion or God or if they have any particular beliefs about that. I also preface that with 'If I'm not prying,' or 'I don't want you to even answer this question unless it feels like you want to answer this question.' Of course, at the same time, for some people religion actually has turned out to be almost the opposite of resource.

When you work with trauma in this way, it's almost universal, it's certainly more yes than nay, that people do report these kinds of experiences and that they are deeply resourcing. Then sometimes if you ask the person, 'Here you are now. If you would have been here before this particular trauma ...?' (because usually people come after a particular breakdown to see me at least) '... and your life was just going to go on, or what happened, happened and here you are now. Would you have chosen to have the accident happen or the event happen? Or would you have chosen to not have it?' Almost one hundred percent of the people say they would have chosen for it to happen, because of the richness of what's happened in their emotional and personal and spiritual life. So, it's almost ridiculous to deny it. It's certainly counter-therapeutic to deny it.

**MP:** If we could just shift for a minute to something we were discussing just prior to the interview, the addiction field. It appears to me, Peter, that both you and I are of the same philosophy that addictions are self-medication for residual trauma and distress in the body. Do

you agree that with the current abilities we have to address, trauma calls for a re-education and transformation of the way we treat people with addictions?

**PL:** Absolutely, yes. Certainly people that are in distress tend to gravitate towards certain substances. A lot of times people actually pick a substance, and they're in the right category. So, if they are anxiety driven, they will tend to go for alcohol or for narcotics. If it's depression, they'll tend to go for stimulants. Of course, unfortunately, these are not good medications for either. So, I am really struck by how people try to self-medicate themselves and how, of course, it makes things worse. Also, about how reliant our culture has become on medication, whether it's addictive or whether it's called substance abuse or whether it's prescribed medication. You know, I was very much caught by the irony. There was a program on the drug that a lot of young people are using.

**MP:** Ecstasy.

**PL:** Ecstasy, which is MDMA from a long, long time ago. They were interviewing these kids on why they took this drug, what they got out of it. They mostly said that they could talk to people easier, they felt better about themselves, and they weren't shy and inhibited. Some of them spoke about feeling love, but by and large people reported what is called 'social anxiety.' It alleviated that. This is the irony: After that program, or as part of that program, the commercial break was ... Guess what for.

**MP:** Prozac.

**PL:** Paxil. They showed the same situation of an adult being at a party and being uncomfortable and not being able to talk to somebody and then says, "Here, take this."

**MP:** Yes, incredible contradictions.

**PL:** And I'm sure that the people that did this had no idea that they ... or maybe they did and just laughed at it. This is the dilemma. But don't get me wrong—I am not against medications. I, quite frankly, think that medications have made a tremendous contribution. I mean, almost miraculously to the degree that antibiotics did. But like antibiotics, they can wind up causing more problems if you don't really use them in the right way, or in an ecological way. I think that's been the case with these medications. They've been used to cure people of their trauma or their depression or their anxiety, and of course it doesn't do that. Maybe a medicine will come that will do that. I mean, people should keep trying.

But really, the way things are right now is that most of these medications suppress or, in some way, support the person so that there's the possibility that their therapy can be much more effective. Some people really need that support. So, think of it as a resource, but as a temporary one. It's not a long-term solution. I've heard some group has the expression, 'Pills without skills don't do anything.' It may even be an addiction or recovery community. But it's a good saying. I think as a culture we are so overly dependent. I've seen advertisements that say, 'Your wife left you six months ago, you're still feeling blue. Do we have the pill for you!' That was Prozac. Nothing like, 'Maybe you're stuck there. Maybe you need some help to work this through. And maybe this isn't just your wife. Maybe this is a pattern that goes back into your childhood that we could productively work on together.'

**MP:** Shifting back to Somatic Experiencing® for a minute. As you know, I've taken your three-year intensive training, and I'm actually impressed that I signed up for it at fifty-five years old. I've been around and done a lot already. But more than that, I was surprised when I went to the training and there were so many other seasoned practitioners in the room. Normally, training programs attract the inexperienced practitioner that's just getting started in profession. At least in New York, you are attracting old-timers that have been through and seen it all.

**PL:** Actually, that's true, that's something that I've noticed much more in the last five or ten years. Certainly the last five years. Both in the states, in Europe and other countries, that we're getting much more people who are the seasoned clinicians. I'm very glad about that. And people who grew up in kind of a similar mold like I did in some ways. That's been really kind of fun and amusing.

**MP:** Yeah, it was very exciting for me to be sitting with, and doing exercises with, practitioners who had been through the 80s and had studied character structure, had done the 'child within and younger self' kind of work, all the experiential therapies, the cathartic work and the body work. It's like, we've all done it all, and we find ourselves in this room studying this now, and are all quite taken with it actually. Is there any way that you can account for that appeal?

**PL:** Part of it is just a maturing. And then books and articles that I or others have written. Then, just gradually, evolution ... I mean, generally things don't start at the conservative center. They start by people who are more out, as it were, in the so-called 'fringe,' which in a way is too bad, but that is how it is. Those are people who are more likely to go for something, anything! So, they would come to take the S.E. class, but they would also bring all kinds of stuff, which to me that would be more or less nonsense. However, when many of these people then would work with other people or who were therapists, and the therapist would say, 'Wow, what is this you're doing? I've been able to move through something that I didn't even know was here!' So,

gradually it emerges. Another thing, quite frankly, is I think there is a cultural zeitgeist in the world. There is this movement now about the body being central in the therapy of trauma, and the body being central in psychotherapy, even, that really has turned a corner. Also what I think has been a really important thing is EMDR because of several different things ... All of a sudden they made tens of thousands of psychologists aware that there was a body, and that there were other ways to work with trauma than not working with it, or tying people down to a chair and making these poor Vietnam vets watch Platoon. Then spokespeople like Bessel van der Kolk speaking to large numbers of people. So, I think many of these things have really converged to where now many people ... I mean, I think it's just an evolutionary time. It takes that time for it to get out and ...

**MP:** Which actually leads me into the next question I was thinking of. On the website, we quote an NIH Director, Esther Sternburg. She's an MD, and has a new book called The Balance Within. It's an excellent book. One of the things she's saying is that *we must focus on the minute connection between each part, and at the same time looking outward to the emotions and beyond*. Now, she's writing this book for physicians with a lot of good, grounded research.

**PL:** Wow.

**MP:** Now you, of course, are already doing this work. There's also a fast growing discipline of psychoneuroimmunology. And our Institute community is all about reducing human suffering through felt senses of the body. So, it seems a new paradigm of healing from the inside out is coming of age. And this is an NIH director that I quoted from.

**PL:** Really?

**MP:** Do you perceive yourself or us as shape-shifters in some larger evolutionary process? Do you think in those ways at all?

**PL:** I think that, as you said, and as I said before, there's a wave that's crashing on the shore here. Some of us have been on that wave for a few decades, and some have just got on the wave. But it's the wave that's happening. I think these things are irreversible at this time. They're helped on by all kinds of things. I think one of the things that may actually be one of the greatest helpers is the HMOs.

**ML:** Yes.

**PL:** Because medical care has gotten so poor overall with this. It hasn't solved the problems. And it couldn't have even if it was the best system of free enterprise and democracy, because it's

still not dealing with the root problems. I think because it's taken things to such an absurd extreme that people are now more and more open. And in a sense they themselves are, because they need something that's dealing with all the chronic symptoms, the things that could have been prevented. In order to survive they have to look at prevention. There's a study that recently came out of CDC by Filletti. Basically, they show that the main healthcare burdens that we have are either directly caused by trauma, the effects of trauma—like suicide, depression, anxiety, self-destructive behaviors, alcoholism and so forth ... I mean, the correlations are vast. They are as high as 20 times the non-traumatized population. Even the main killers of what are considered to be strictly medical diseases like diabetes, cancer and heart disease. That's what really makes things change. I think so many of these things are conspiring in this wave that has crashed upon the shores of change.

**MP:** In all of that, you founded or originated the Somatic Experiencing® Institute.

**PL:** Yes, that was basically to be a structure for training people and professionals. But also for getting the work out to a larger population, because people have to become empowered. That's one of the principals of Somatic Experiencing®. You get the client empowered as quickly as you can so they're not overly dependent on you. You also want information out to as many people as you can so that they can help prevent traumatization in themselves, in their family, in their children, in other people by knowing what to do. A lot of people have studied Red Cross first-aid. We need just as many people to study this kind of emotional first-aid. That's one of the reasons that I've really been devoting a lot of my time and efforts and energies to getting material out through the media. That's why I did the tape series, the Sounds True six-tape series, Healing Trauma. And I just released less than a month ago a two-tape series called It Won't Hurt Forever: Guiding a Child Through Trauma.

**MP:** I remember when you first told me about that, I heard great excitement in your voice. What is the enthusiasm about?

**PL:** I'm still enthusiastic about it, and that's a miracle for me. If I'm still enthusiastic after I've put something out, that's really gone beyond the pale. Usually, at best, I don't even want to hear it. I still feel very strongly about it, and I've gotten all kinds of feedback from people. I recommended it to the group I was teaching in Washington DC at the Networker conference, and I said, 'Now, this is not for seriously traumatized, sexually abused children' and so forth and so on. 'This is for the more ordinary trauma that parents can help their children with.' And this woman got up and she said, 'I'm sorry, I disagree. I've just used it with one of my deeply sexually traumatized children, and I've had just miraculous results.' Of course, that's in the hands of a therapist. This is one of the things that I've also been saying for thirty years, again not using

the word ‘trauma’—that it’s not just sexual abuse, it’s not only molestation or sexual attacks that traumatize people. That’s probably a significant, but not even the major proportion of ways people get traumatized. They get traumatized by getting in accidents, automobile accidents and other accidents. They get traumatized by medical procedures, surgeries and other invasive medical procedures. Natural disasters. It’s really the significant majority of people who are, in some way, under the spell of trauma. And they’re limited in some way from living fully, because of these traumas. They may not have the clinical symptoms of PTSD as of the DSM manual, but they are traumatized. Their lives have been in some ways restricted or limited, and they’re more vulnerable to later traumatization. So, getting this information out and trying to get it into hospitals, so that they don’t unnecessarily traumatize children, infants, and adults as well. Because just the knowledge itself can prevent a lot of trauma.

**MP:** Yes.

**PL:** So, these people can get the treatment that they need—and then that will, of course, save billions of dollars in the long and short run. But there’s the fear ... if we say people have PTSD, we don’t want them to have another thing that they can file a disability claim for. You know?

**MP:** I do know.

**PL:** So, we have a lot of education. That’s what we’re trying to do.

**MP:** So, you’ve had some heady experiences in this time of doing this work—between NASA, working with the space shuttle people and teaching trauma around the world. Have these been among your most rewarding experiences? Or is there anything else that you’d like to share with us when thinking of a real rewarding experience being involved in this process?

**PL:** Well, thank you. I think that some of the most rewarding are just being with people, clients that I work with and seeing them transform. Nothing can really beat that. There’s another interest that I didn’t mention. After I started to develop this method, I said, “Wait a minute ... pain, injury, suffering, misfortune ... that’s been around since the beginning of recorded history.” It’s on the cave paintings, the early literature, and god knows where else—massively by the time of Greek civilization. I thought, ‘Well, people have had to deal with this forever! They must have discovered some of the similar things that I’ve discovered.’ So, I became very interested in what certain native healers, sometimes called ‘shaman healers,’ do throughout the world to deal with what might be similar things based on the organism’s intrinsic ability to right itself. For several years, I had an opportunity to work with the Hopi Guidance Center in Arizona, and then to be with other indigenous people in different parts of the world—South America, and a little bit in Northern Scandinavia, in Lapland. At first, my search was to corroborate that they saw things in

similar ways—part in curiosity, part egoistic. I think what I learned is ... Well, that's true—they do see things similarly. People in the remote areas of the Amazon have heard the term 'trauma.' I mean, they use their own word. In South America, the term 'sistus' is used, which means fright paralysis. That's trauma. They've heard the English word; they know the Spanish or Portuguese word. They know trauma, and many of them talk about treating trauma by their different models. Instead of 'dissociated' parts, they're going to try to find the parts of the soul that had been severed and induce them back into the body of their patient. The other thing that came strongly to me was that, by and large, these people don't see it in terms of an individual. They see it in terms of the group. So, if an individual is traumatized, the group is traumatized. And for the individual to heal, the group has to heal. In our society, there's so much fragmentation and everybody's autonomous. Everybody has his or her own car. Being in Southern California right now, it just amazes me! I'm on the highway, and there's almost not a single car that has more than one person in it. So, we're so atomized, so split off from each other. When someone's traumatized, we're okay ... Send them to a doctor, but we're not really able to stay patient and supportive very long. I think one of the things these people have taught me is that to heal trauma, we have to re-establish community. In re-establishing community, our whole models of healing will change. Our whole existence will change. There have certainly been great advantages to being individualistic, but there's been a tremendous downside to that as well. So, I'm very much inspired by how some of these native people truly live that ... walk that talk. They don't judge people. They support people. They hold the space for them to participate in some of the rituals so that they can heal. It's because they don't distinguish them. They don't say 'Well, you're the sick one. We're the well ones. We'll tolerate you're being here.' They don't really have that barrier.

**MP:** Having said that, I'll make my last question off of it before you make your closing comments. This is also sharing with you the sentence in your book that I love the most, and there were a lot of them. But the one that I loved the most that jumped out at me was the sentence that said, *Transformation is the process of changing something in relation to its polar opposite.* That is such a clear and succinct sentence about a word that many of us don't really understand—transformation. It makes me think back to what you were just saying about the community healing versus the individuality. Do you have any thoughts about polar opposites there and the possible transformation, as we're moving along?

**PL:** That's really humorous, because that was sort of one thing that I wanted still to add.

**MP:** Oh, great.

**PL:** Yeah, it's actually pendulation. You asked me about the things that I've discovered that have really made a difference in people's lives, and certainly the concept of pendulation is one. It's

related, as you know, to the two-vortex system and so forth. Obviously, this is nothing new. This has got to be as ancient as can be, which again is a relief. If something works, you can expect it to have been around a long time. When I was able to track people's inner experience, I found that no matter where they were if they could then really be aware of the sensations, then the sensations would move them ahead in time. They would get unstuck. Basically, trauma is about being stuck. And when they found that however bad they felt, that they would go to an opposite experience ... and it's not that they felt bad, and now they're feeling good. No matter what they're feeling, this will change. It's not just that you go to an opposite experience, but you're always going to an opposite experience. You're either coming or going to or from an opposite experience. That experience of being able to pendulate I think gives people ... (and this is one of the ways we have the spiritual entrance, and I'll speak about the other one) is that you now know that 'this too shall pass.' That's what impermanence, I think, its all about, the Buddhist or Taoist idea of impermanence. It's not that you can't take your possessions with you when you die, so you might as well give them to somebody, you know? But that literally what we're experiencing is only transitory no matter what it is. There's this basic polarity, which is the same thing that allows the animals, I'm convinced, to not be traumatized. It's this going back and forth that gives us this feeling of freedom. Because in not being bound to either of them ...

**MP:** So, going back and forth between the opposites without judgment.

**PL:** That's right. Simply observing the experience. This is, I think, somewhat similar to what Wilhelm Reich talked about with expansion and contraction—being the basic pulsation of life from the amoeba to the human being.

**MP:** Yes.

**PL:** But again, we tend to sometimes not see the illusive obvious. The one other thing, to go back to the spiritual heart of this, is that the energy of trauma ... and it is an energy. It's the energy that allows a gazelle to escape from a cheetah at 65 miles an hour. It's the energy that allows a 100-pound woman to lift the car off of her child, and pull the child out from underneath the car. That's the energy that's there to defend and protect us, to save our lives. That energy is also the energy that is spoken of in the east as the Kundalini energy, the energy that many of these spiritual practices set out to raise. The thing is, if you've been traumatized, that energy has already been tapped. You don't have to do a meditation or breathing techniques to raise it. You simply then have to complete the process.

**MP:** Would I be correct in saying that it's already been tapped and frozen?

**PL:** And frozen—that's right. But it's there!

**MP:** Yes.

**PL:** It's there, and it's always been there.

**MP:** And it's accessible.

**PL:** And it's accessible. I think that has something to do with really understanding the spiritual part of it.

**MP:** That's great. Is there anything else you wanted to say?

**PL:** Nope.

**MP:** Thank you for the interview and inspiring the focalizing process.

## Anxiety, Depression, Grief & Other Challenges



*“The dark night of the soul is only one aspect of the spiritual journey, and there are many others that are much more pleasant.”*

–Christina and Stan Grof

Here we address the complex puzzle of anxiety, depression, grief and other psychological and psychiatric challenges with great respect. No easy answers here, only the promise that profoundly effective ways exist for reducing the suffering caused by severe anxiety, depression, grief and other psychological concerns. The path from severe anxiety or depression is best traveled with acceptance, compassion, knowledge, and understanding. One must often reach out beyond themselves to acquire these ingredients, calling upon doctors, therapists, facilitating healers, and most importantly an inner intelligence that comes through our spiritual core. Many of us must first find this inner invisible teacher and make room for it to inform us. We support this process. Whatever happens to us is happening for a reason. Whether we like it or not (and who likes these things?) our present experience is an important part of our evolutionary path. We can hate what’s happening to us, and yet we can simultaneously find a special ‘knowing’ within, one that guides us to what we need in order to complete our transformation and rebirth.

In our experience, all of these serious emotional issues signal a death to a part of our ego structure—an invisible programming shaped in earlier years that wants to hold onto our old ways of perceiving ourselves and our world—that are no longer needed. This is where the possibility of rebirth or awakening reside. If we navigate these choppy waters with good guidance and gain

access to inner wisdom, the storm will subside, and we will find a new sense of self with more resilience and clarity.

### **Beyond a “Dark Night of the Soul”**

My first bout with crippling clinical depression was in 1984. It came after two years of cancer treatment that had almost killed me. Although my cancer seemed to be in remission, I now had to face the world again and rebuild a life. It seemed impossible. All I could do was sit or lay, crying or twisting in a horrific unexplainable anxiety. It never stopped. I couldn't sleep. I wanted to die rather than continue to feel this way. I thought my horrific experience with chemotherapy was “as bad as it gets,” but the depression was far worse. The expression “dark night of the soul” seemed like a Pollyanna-like understatement at the time.

This debilitation lasted almost a year during which time I had to be rushed to the hospital as a psychiatric emergency because I was afraid I would throw myself out the window. The attending psychiatrist knocked me out with Thorazine for two days and gave my system a rest. It helped for a short time. Being a person in addiction recovery, I refused to get involved with anti-depression medications fearing they would taint my sobriety. I burned out two therapists in the process! The looks of pity and helplessness in their eyes only made me feel worse!

My sponsor in twelve-step recovery asked me if I would speak to a woman he knew who had struggled with similar depression in recovery. I said yes. When she called, I realized I knew and admired this woman. She radiated a spiritual strength and calm. She told me of her own depression, which years earlier had made her a prisoner of her bedroom. She explained how she found relief from the symptoms with a medication prescribed by her psychiatrist. She comforted me and reassured me that the medication was not contradictory to my recovery. I believed her and asked for her doctor's name.

Within several days after starting the medication, I began to feel better. My sense of interest returned. For the first time in over a year, I could see a light at the end of the tunnel. I was able to do things again. I could hardly believe how dramatically different—and better—I felt. Within several months, I was taking the courses I needed to complete my counseling certification. I've had a few bouts of serious depression since that time. One was set off by the loss of my life-partner Gil in 1988. Bereavement of someone that close, even when fully processed, includes anxiety and depression. Depression visited me again, differently though, after my heart attack and bypass surgery. In my subsequent bouts, I was much more able to facilitate my process and get help faster.

## **Blessing or Curse?**

To be sure, psychotropic medications can be a blessing or a curse. They are a blessing when they alleviate intolerable feelings. They are a curse if they make you feel worse, or if they make you feel just good enough to avoid the emotional and spiritual emergence that wants to happen in you. The latter will eventually backfire. If this sounds like what is happening to you, you should seriously consider looking at alternative meds, doctors or approaches.

## **A New Integration**

Depression, anxiety and other psychiatric challenges always have precursors, or are at least related to underlying factors beyond the threshold of our awareness. In my case, when the strain of dealing with the cancer eventually overwhelmed my emotional defenses, I was flooded with agitating dark feelings I wanted to run from. Throughout this period I was always strangely and intuitively aware that these horrible feelings were not new, and I felt defeated that they finally caught me. These were feelings of intense hurt, despair, anger, grief and frustration that needed attention for a fuller recovery to take place. In complex and mysterious ways, I feel my cancer was at least in part due to these feelings suppressed in my being, as was the depression and anxiety. My cancer, depression and anxiety informed me in ways that led to a new integration of myself. I became stronger, wiser, and clearer regarding who I was and wanted to be.

## **Transformation**

While medication may be a god-send for those dealing with crippling severe symptoms, for those who feel able, the most profound and poignant healing transformation can unfold through focalizing and similar healing techniques and communities. Not unlike addiction, most emotional challenges are a vivid signal that repressed traumatic energies, feelings, and conflicts from our histories are ready to be tended to and transformed. As we better understand this process, our reliance on medication will lessen. Even a systemic biological depression can often be worked through with appropriate compassion and support in a safe setting.

I pray that our society will become enlightened enough to nourish and be supportive of individuals who need special attention as they work through their Source Energy emergence. We will need to eventually create affordable, non-clinical, residential settings where suffering individuals can be supported in safety for brief or periodic times. They could take the time to learn how to be informed by the felt senses of their own bodies for their healing. The body knows and it never lies. The central nervous system will unravel toward wholeness under favorable conditions. If our culture understood and supported the sensitive nature of complete

recovery or the “whole person recovery process,” we would not need to resort to medication nearly as often.

### **Support Nurturing and Healing**

There are times when I can see difficult times coming for my clients, and I encourage them to get away from the everyday challenges and heal in a safe, nurturing place. Often, they cannot take time from work or they cannot afford to go away. Even if they could, our culture lacks appropriate, low cost, supportive, rest and renewal environments that facilitate such healing. We need them desperately. Psychiatric facilities are not the answer; they are merely the last resort.

### **Spiritual Emergencies**

I have come to share the views of transpersonal psychologists Christina and Stanislav Grof, M.D. In their book, The Stormy Search For The Self, they suggest:

*For some individuals. . . the transformational journey of spiritual development becomes a “spiritual emergency,” a crisis in which the changes are so rapid and the inner states so demanding that, temporarily, these people may find it difficult to operate fully in everyday reality. In our time, these individuals are rarely treated as if they are on the edge of inner growth.*

In a supportive environment, with proper understanding, these difficult states of mind can be extremely beneficial, often leading to physical and emotional healing, profound insights, creative activity, and permanent personality changes for the better. When we coined the term “spiritual emergency,” we sought to emphasize both the danger and opportunity inherent in such states. The phrase is, of course, a play on words, referring both to the crisis, or “emergency,” that can accompany transformation, and to the idea of “emergence,” suggesting the tremendous opportunity such experiences may offer for personal growth and the development of new levels of awareness.

There is great wisdom, understanding and compassion in these words. Until we can provide temporary, safe community environments for healing, we are severely limited. We need creative solutions. Some are presently available, but only for those who can afford them. If our society wants to put money in a faith-based initiative, creating safe and effective places and strategies for citizens in spiritual emergency, it could be an interesting and timely place to start. People who would go to these havens, and those who would minister to them, would share a faith and intention that healing will occur. During these times of economic constraint and limited healthcare resources, it is almost impossible to provide such environments at the levels required. The best we can do is provide as safe, structured and nurturing environments as possible and use

our more refined knowledge of contemporary medications to provide symptom management as we coach ourselves and others through this emergence of spirit.

## **Healing Grief**

Grief dwells in an inner reservoir. When you focus on one particular loss and reconnect with those feelings, you gain a clearer perspective on many other losses. The ones that you organically reconnect with depend on your current needs and the issues at hand. If one allows for it, there is always a sweetness and comfort in these reconnections. This is more accessible once you process through the shame-bound and selfish complex feelings, and a part of you comes alive once again. It makes sense that grieving enlivens. If there was not significant and meaningful bonding in these relationships to begin with, we would not have experienced the loss as traumatic.

Furthermore, in the state of openness and vulnerability that is created through grieving, new learning and corrective experience come more easily. These can be times of significant change and transformation. Outer life experiences tend to be put in a perspective that reflects what is truly important in your life, and what is without significant meaning. When you re-enter and process unresolved losses, you simultaneously begin to separate “the wheat from the chaff.”

Dr. Robert Gass, who conducts workshops on loss and “opening the heart,” suggests: *One may always feel sadness ... yet rather than being crippling, this sadness may one day become like a rich color in the palette of the soul.*

There is very good news in this merging with nature’s healing process. Grief is a healing feeling. If we allow ourselves, it will come naturally.

Healing grief is a very individual process. Each of us must be reassured that *the sun will shine again*, for while we are in grief, only dark clouds prevail. We must be comforted by an outside source, written or spoken or sung words that healing will organically occur. We need to be with our unpleasant feelings and even allow ourselves to get lost in them as need be. We must also rise above our grief as need be. We must pull ourselves out of it to periodically socialize, even if we don’t feel like it. We must dance with suffering, allowing it to lead sometimes in our private moments and in the nurturing presence of our community. However, it is also important to distinguish the grief healing that occurs in grieving unresolved losses from feelings connected with a current, significant loss. Though the healing principles are the same, a present loss, even one that is grieved in a healthy way will take longer to heal than unresolved losses from the past. This is because a current loss is anchored in present reality that must be lived day to day, while unresolved losses from the past are not anchored in a current reality that must be dealt with. You only ‘make room’ for the feelings to move through you and be respected. The revisited memories are ghosts from the past that bring us profound and important connections with lost parts of our

selves. With this reclaiming of our wholeness, we develop an expanded sense of aliveness. This process continues to quicken as we become more grounded in our wholeness.

## Disease Transformation & Immune Restoration

### Beginning to Focus ...

I write on this profoundly important topic from my own experience (both personal and professional). I know disease well and have been transformed by and through it. Diagnosed early (1983) in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, I faced a plethora of serious chemo and HIV-induced infections, one causing a near-death experience followed by a year of paralyzing depression.



*“Even the greatest skeptic must now admit that a wealth of evidence exists to prove in the most stringent scientific terms that functions of the mind do influence the health of the body.”*

–Esther M. Sternberg, M.D.  
Former Director,  
Integrative Neural Immune Program  
U.S. National Institute of Mental Health

I have had two rare forms of aggressive and usually fatal cancers, and some years later, experienced a heart attack and triple bypass surgery. This is all in addition to my earlier struggles with the diseases of addiction and asthma. Thus the concept of ‘Immune Restoration’ has

inevitably been my daily companion for many years. It is awesome, humbling and amazing that my life today is vital and that I have the privilege to share it in this way with you.

In my quest for health, I have employed (though often reluctantly) almost all that medical science has offered. When I was strong enough to identify my deepest instincts and follow them, I have also declined medical protocols such as the drug AZT in its early years. Fine physicians saved my life several times, while well-meaning physicians came close to ending it on more than one occasion. I have appreciation for, yet also abhor, certain practices of clinical medicine.

Through all my illnesses, I incorporated ancient, spiritual and popular non-clinical disciplines. Their potency has transformed my life and every fiber and cell of my being knows that I am here today because of the combination of treatment options. The warm and nourishing experience of focalizing (even before it was named) carried me through often “cold” clinical treatment. And throughout this journey I discovered hidden messages and truths crucial to my personal healing.

### **Invisible Realities Come to the Rescue**

In his book, Healing Into Immortality, psychiatrist Gerald Epstein, M.D., explains that during the healing process the messages and truths that surface to guide us along the way are spiritual and invisible realities, not wishful imagination. These surfacings are the key to the remarkable power of energetic healing; it’s something already inside you. Epstein coined the term “mind medicine” and explains: *Mind medicine ... moves us in the direction of spirit, of the invisible reality. It is a medicine of truth and love ... a timeless realm, the experience of the eternal moment or instinct.*

Sadly, quite sadly, this has been a lonely journey for me. I hope that our Institute makes it less lonely for others in the future. When I was sick, weak and confused I was forced to create parallel paths of healing that did not support or respect one another-the allopathic and the holistic. Unfortunately, this is often the case with those visited by disease, and not everyone is as fortunate as I have been. I am certain that needless deaths and suffering have occurred because so many people have not been blessed with the resources that came my way. Happily, this is beginning to change.

And through new perspectives, these changes led to new experiences and understanding of ‘Disease Transformation’ and ‘Immune Restoration.’

### **Disease Transformation**

Disease Transformation is a personal metamorphosis we go through after being diagnosed with a serious illness. It is a process of accepting, feeling, and relating to a disease in a manner that

shifts our perception of the illness from one of disaster to one of neutrality or even respect. This movement allows us to expand our healing opportunities with an enhanced sense of well-being and hope. In this process, we are moved from fear and anxiety to resilience, clarity and then increased effectiveness. We come to recognize there are universal energies that run through us, allowing us to transform pain (physical and psychic) and disease through integration and acceptance. We become at once surrendered and empowered over both our desires and our reality. We find that love, passion and compassion, on a molecular level, diminish pain, suffering and dis-ease in real and tangible ways. Our illness becomes our teacher.

*Synergy in global or organic expressions means “to work together ...” Synergy in an organism is the essence of life, and it is intimately related to health. When for some reason synergy drops and the organism as a whole does not receive the full support of its many parts, it becomes ill.*

–Peter Russell

### **Immune Restoration**

Immune Restoration is the awakening and strengthening of the immune system. This occurs through integrating medical intervention, energetic healing and nutritional improvement into our daily lives. The immune system is awakened when physical and psychic stress is reduced through focalizing and other varied methods. It is strengthened as repressed, frozen body energies, from historical or illness-related trauma, start to thaw. Transformation of these repressed energies gives the entire human organism a ‘lift,’ reducing stress on the immune system and activating a natural, organic healing process.

I sometimes envision those of us involved in the healing process as a flower—show us the sun and we will naturally grow toward it. As a flower needs the sun, our healing needs a powerful vision to draw from. Esther M. Sternberg, M.D., presents a scientific view of such a healing vision in her book, [The Balance Within: The Science Connecting Health and Emotions](#). She writes of interconnectedness, communication, energy, patterns, and a partnership of medical and popular wisdom.

As former Director of the Integrative Neural Immune Program at the National Institute of Mental Health/National Institutes of Health, rheumatologist, and author, Dr. Sternberg studies the interplay of emotions and stress responses on our health. To comprehend our complex immune system, she trusts that: *By focusing on the minute connections between each part, and at the same time looking outward to the emotions and beyond, scientists and physicians will be able to*

*work out in intricate detail how the cogs and wheels fit together.* And in support of the body's defense against disease, Dr. Sternberg believes it is crucial for scientists and physicians to understand the many ways we effectively communicate with the immune system through reregulation of energy in our central nervous system.

In exploring the energy and interactive patterns in disease, Richard Gerber, M.D., focuses on the play of emotions and relationships we have with ourselves and each other. In his book Vibrational Medicine for the 21st Century he examines how addiction, cancer, HIV, heart disease, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, MS and most other organic diseases are, at least in part, caused by unhealed pain and trauma. Dr. Gerber examines how cultural and generational patterns dull our stress response and contribute to disease. I have experienced the reality of this first hand in my own life story and the stories of so many others. Thus, I know how essential it is for focalizing and similar methods to wholeheartedly tend to connectedness, communication, energy, patterns, and our inborn wisdom.

### **The Balance Within: The Science Connecting Health and Emotions**

I first heard of Dr. Sternberg from our board member Elias Guerrero, M.D., M.P.A., who had arranged for Dr. Sternberg to speak at the National Hispanic Medical Association conference. He was so enthusiastic about her sharing and the audience response that he bought me a copy of her book. I was very impressed by this landmark scientific work.

A thrilling scientific detective story, The Balance Within tells how researchers finally uncovered the elusive mind-body connection and what it means for our health. In this beautifully written book, Dr. Ester Sternberg, whose discoveries were pivotal in helping to solve this mystery, provides firsthand accounts of the breakthrough experiments that revealed the physical mechanisms—the nerves, cells, and hormones—used by the brain and the immune system to communicate with each other. She describes just how stress can make us more susceptible to all types of illness, and how the immune system can alter our moods.

### **Old Ideas Connecting**

As William James wrote in his 1902 book, The Varieties of Religious Experience (a primary influence in the founding principles of Alcoholics Anonymous), *Medical materialism greatly overgeneralizes its knowledge of the connections between physiological variables and mind states.* James, who taught physiology at Harvard, well knew that the current knowledge in physiology did not justify the conclusions being made by the pathology writers. As a corrective to their overstatements James wrote, *“It seems far more reasonable to ascribe them [experiences*

*viewed by some as pathological] to inroads from the subconscious life, of the cerebral activity correlative to which we as yet know nothing.”*

As educator Jeffrey Rubin, Ph.D., writes on James in The Journal of Humanistic Psychology, *“By calling a wide range of conditions that affect all of us in one form or another pathological, and then reducing mystical experiences to such pathological conditions, was, to James, superficial medical talk.”*

Bringing James’s thinking to current times, I think of Gerald Epstein’s ideas on ‘Mind Medicine’: *It lies behind our everyday sensory reality, the visible, objective, physical reality. You discover and experience invisible reality by turning your senses inward, when you use your imagination and its functional process of mental imagery.*

Since ancient times humans have felt intuitively that emotions and health are linked, and recently there has been much popular speculation about this notion. But until now it has been impossible to say for sure that such a connection really exists and especially how it works.

Now that evidence has been discovered.

## **Conclusion: Landing Well and Moving Forward**

The more that people are looking for answers and relief outside traditional psychotherapy methods, the more the concepts in this book are being appreciated, accepted and welcomed. This cutting edge approach to trauma resolution and recovery is bringing real and lasting relief to many around the globe.

The journey towards holism is multifaceted and has many paths. As the research shared in my first book suggests, the healing path is a [\*Journey Toward Complete Recovery: Reclaiming Our Emotional, Spiritual & Sexual Wholeness\*](#). The new and ongoing discoveries are the offerings at the [Focalizing Institute](#). Our premise is that it is unimportant where you start your healing journey, only that you start. Simply by earnestly holding the felt intention to heal, you ignite the process.

As suggested in the first chapter, this book outlines some of the places to start, or expand one's enlivening process. Additionally, the writing incorporates the Focalizing Institute's six "acquired wisdoms," as well as the constellation of "eight desires" that our observations indicate most individuals seek from a focalizing.

### **The Six Wisdoms for Dissolving Barriers to Holism**

The Wisdom of Authentic Process (being real)

The Wisdom of Community-based healing (two or more people)

The Wisdom of Shared Intention

The Wisdom of Shared Belief

The Wisdom of Grounding through Resource (Nature)

The Wisdom of Going Within to Move Beyond

### **Constellation of Eight Desires Sought from Focalizing**

- 1) A desire for help in identifying, expressing, and accepting complex feelings and barriers to wholeness
- 2) A desire to connect in more meaningful ways with others, and to be part of a community and/or other conscious collective of individuals

- 3) A desire to heal the deep internalized schism between sexual and spiritual (or love) energies
- 4) A desire to grasp our role in power dynamics, thereby resolving our difficulties with authority figures and intimates
- 5) A desire to sustain consistent loving relationships, and to experience real intimacy on all levels
- 6) A desire to achieve a *shame-free presentation of self*
- 7) A desire to discover our individual life purpose
- 8) A yearning to know “who we are” in a real and spiritual (or energetic) sense

A most recent and fascinating discovery is that the linear nature of these chapters can now be collapsed, and this can happen individually and/or simultaneously as we go further into the evolving focalizing technology. In this process all linearity is suspended—as are concepts of time and space. We trust our hearts and bodies when we allow to ‘surface’ whatever wants healing or clarity. This is done by noticing the felt sensations of one’s body and by creating conditions for these to organically self-resolve, by “giving space” and “resource” (pleasurable energy) to whatever comes up.

To give space simply means to allow the inner sensation *to be*—without judgment or agenda—give it all the space you can, to allow its fullest expression while you just notice, as a *curious observer*. Then, to notice whatever happens next. Allow for the sensation(s) or images to surface organically, give them space and then pendulate between any constrictive properties of what is being presented and of the resource energy (calm, happy, clear) that lives in happy body memories, in nature, and in the simplicity of gravity’s support. Having a partner or group to work with amplifies the resolution experience.

Even if only one healing or awakening occurred for you while reading this book, appreciate it. Notice what it was and allow yourself to sense it in your body. Give yourself permission to feel, with no agenda but perception. Take a few moments to recognize what your body is “saying.” After a few deep breaths, slowly open and close your mouth (like a guppy fish or eating cotton candy) three or four times. This action allows for deeper integration. We call this a “landing”—not an ending or completion. This landing empowers the body and mind to have a more integrated experience. This flow of energy will continue to have its own mysterious ongoing resolution, influencing life choices and effectiveness while moving forward, drawing to you good-feeling resources that can continue to grace this process. Once you experience an organic resolution you may want to peruse these chapters again and notice that whatever was resolved likely to be articulated in one or more of them. This can allow for additional insight and integration.

Thank you for letting us share these wonderments with you. It is a privilege to transmit our experience. Remember that it is important to thank your own inquiring self. To spend time and

intention listening to your body is a very beneficial focalizing practice and is an action that bolsters self-esteem. One can be proud of being courageous enough to look within in order to move beyond perceived limitations. Let these acts of esteem build as they transform and release contractions in your way of being. Such insights and resolutions mysteriously build on one another, exponentially making you clearer, more balanced, and more whole and content over time. *Slow is fast.* There is no rush and no finish line. Let whatever good feelings come up in you be positive resources that guide you along and your path.

We wish you a graceful journey and invite you to visit [www.theinstitute.org](http://www.theinstitute.org) at any time for further encouragement.

## About the Authors



Dr. Michael Picucci, PhD, MAC, SEP, brings decades of investigation and experience to his practice of Psychotherapy, Focalizing and Consulting. His professional expertise as a Psychologist, Licensed Psychotherapist, Master Addictions Counselor, Sexologist, Somatic Experiencing Practitioner and Organizational Consultant has led to multiple awards for his contributions. He continues his private practice, consulting and leading workshops internationally.

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