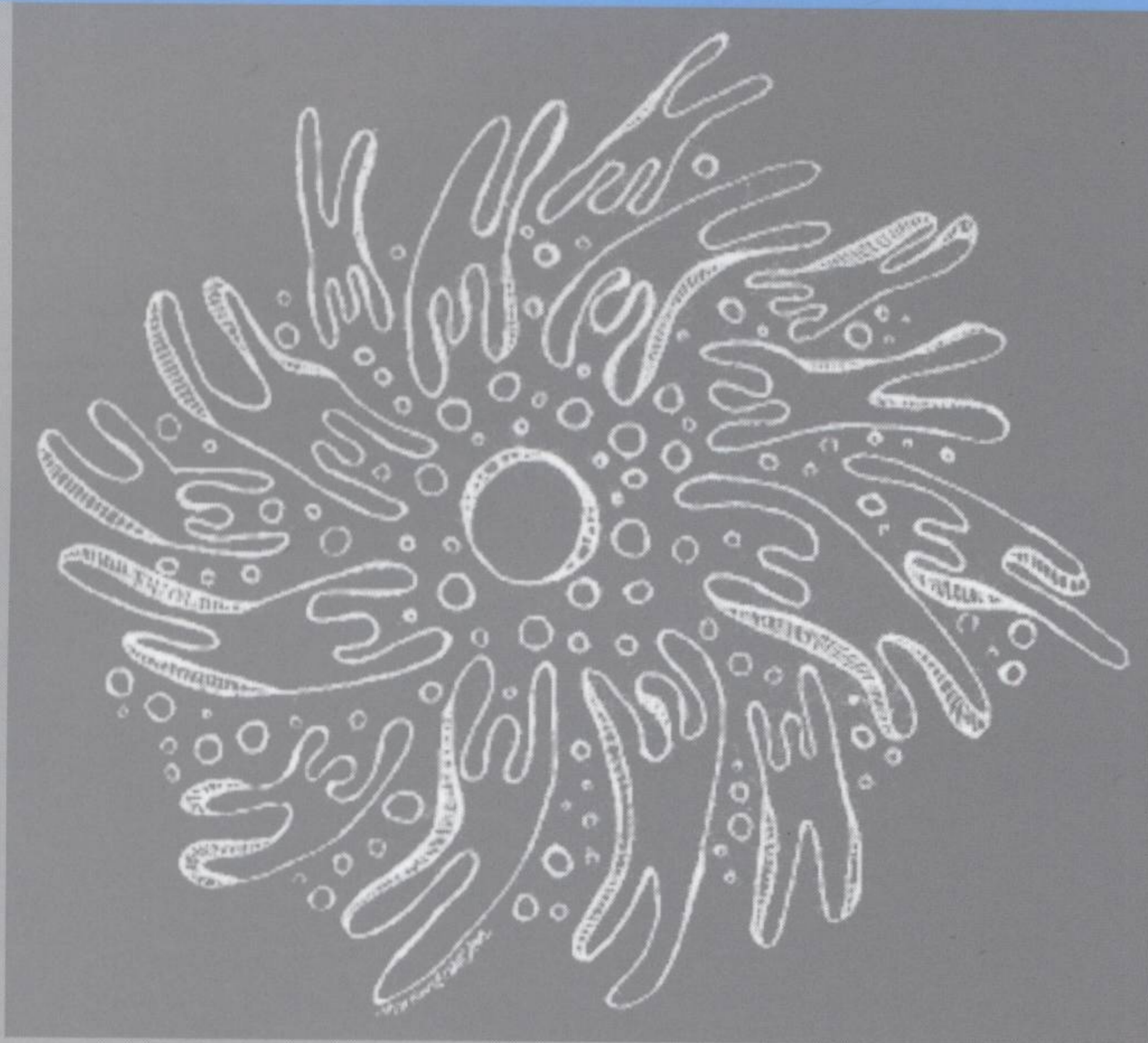


Stephen Gilligan, Ph.D., & Dvora Simon, Ph.D., Editors

Walking in Two Worlds



**the relational self
in theory,
practice, and
community**

What people are saying about ...

Walking In Two Worlds: The Relational Self In Theory, Practice, and Community

"*Walking in Two Worlds* is a rich and stimulating book. It is filled with examples illustrating the profound and wide-reaching applications of Stephen Gilligan's Self Relations work. The many varied articles, written by students and practitioners of the Self Relations approach, demonstrate how generative and deeply healing Self Relations concepts and skills can be for therapists, coaches and consultants. I myself have been deeply influenced by Gilligan and his work and recommend this book for anyone who wants to learn more about how to better bring together heart, mind and spirit in the service of healing and helping others."

Robert Dilts
author of *From Coach to Awakener* and
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"This book is a mosaic masterpiece of beauty, heart, and vision. It is a must for clinicians wishing to transcend the mechanics of therapy and open their inner pathways toward becoming healers. Beautifully landscaped, each teaching is a blessing, not only to be read, but more important, to be soulfully experienced."

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WALKING IN TWO WORLDS:

The Relational Self in Theory, Practice, and Community

Stephen Gilligan, Ph.D.

&

Dvorah Simon, Ph.D., Editors



Zeig, Tucker & Theisen, Inc.
Phoenix, AZ

STEPHEN GILLIGAN DEDICATES THIS BOOK TO:

The healing, health, and happiness of all living beings.

DVORAH SIMON DEDICATES THIS BOOK TO:

Stephen Gilligan, teacher and friend, for inspiration.

My father, Martin Simon, for curiosity; and

My mother, Magda Simon, for faith.

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All of the drawings for the chapters and book cover were done by Michelle T. Kinsella. Mish is an artist, Art Therapist, glass-fuser, and licensed counselor, with a knack for turning verbal exposition into visual images that display tremendous energy and acute psychological perspicuity. Her illustrations and artwork range from book covers to gallery art. A graduate of the Pratt Institute, she is presently doing dissertation work for a Ph.D. in counseling psychology at the University of Connecticut. Her primary therapeutic interest and her graduate work address children with disabilities and special needs. She is an adjunct professor in the Psychology Department at Saint Joseph's College in Connecticut.

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PREFACE

WORDS RISE UP FROM SILENCE (DVORAH SIMON, PH.D.)

Self-Relations therapy is an art of blessing. People need blessings because to be human is to exist simultaneously in two worlds: the inner world of feelings, memories, and dreams; and the outer world of action and social connection. Blessings are the bridge, the social witnessing and naming of the life of the inner world that brings that world into the life of the community. In the social world, as well, blessings bridge differences between self and “other,” healing the splits that divide us.

Stephen Gilligan (1997) first presented the theory and practice of Self-Relations (SR) in his book *The Courage to Love*. In workshops and presentations around the world, Stephen continued to teach and develop SR, sharing ideas and inviting dialogue. As part of this dialogue, Stephen invited the SR Community — students, colleagues, and friends — to write articles highlighting their uses of and reflections on this new way of doing psychotherapy. The result is this book — not merely an extension or elaboration of the premises and practices of SR, but an embodiment, as well, of the SR ideal of “multiple truths at the same time.”

SR synthesizes theory and practice from a number of prior traditions and streams; its defining distinction is a kind of meta-theory or meta-framework in which multiplicity (of meaning, form, presences, and so on)

can be held within an actively adaptive, aware and present relational self. The dramatis personae will vary from conversation to conversation, but what remains constant is the essentially relational nature of consciousness. As a theoretical description of the functioning self, SR highlights the dynamic nature of communication within and between “centers” of awareness; as a form of psychotherapy, SR steps in when the balance between the players has gone awry. When fear, shame, or judgment have shut down one part of a particular dynamic, so that only one voice may be heard, the silenced self finds another way to make its presence known. That way is through symptoms, whether the dynamic in question is within an individual, between two or more persons, or within a social structure, as will be seen in the chapters within.

How does a voice, a presence within the body of a person or social entity, get shut down? Why are we not more universally aware? SR describes the process both developmentally and incidentally; in order to evolve a balanced, unprejudicially aware self, one must have experienced “sponsorship” of all naturally expressed elements of one’s being. Sponsorship is a kind of naming and blessing that invites the instinctive parts of human experience into the social, witnessed world, giving it a shape and form and place in that world, mir-

rored in and mirroring the internal arrangement of self. Absence of sponsorship leaves key processes out, yielding a person without critical access to and acceptance of internal states. A relational self can also be thrown off balance through trauma — a breach of the safe and welcoming conditions that any human needs to feel whole, a kind of cursing of that self at the very moment when a welcoming blessing is needed.

The Art of Blessing

Trauma, by definition, is damaging, but the worst thing about trauma is not the damage it does. In fact, the very disorientation of trauma can instigate one to break out of fixed, limiting definitions of reality, and thus, with the proper guidance and care, is a potential initiation to wisdom. No, the worst thing about trauma is how hard it makes it, later, to take blessing. The very balm we need becomes suspect. Having been the recipient of tainted kisses, one can no longer tell the difference between the poison and love's innocent chrism. SR is an art of blessing that part of the self which refutes blessing precisely because it needs it so badly — the very notion of having what one wants above all else but believing one cannot have it creates an arc of pain. As such, SR Therapy encompasses the harrowing double description of pain and hope: by definition, one who comes to therapy must bear both, or else, why show up?

SR speaks of the self as essentially relational. More than a description, Self-Relations teaches its practitioners an experiential art of maintaining simultaneous awareness of multiple presences in the service of breaking the lock of monadic description. Self and other, present and past, somatic and cognitive, child-self and adult-self, dream-world and action-world — at any given moment, a conversation is occurring, and in the space between the components of that dyad, meaning arises, dimensional and dynamic.

Words Rise Up from Silence

The language of Self-Relations is intimately poetic for the same reason that poetry is necessary: some things can only be spoken of indirectly, in the spaces and rhythms between the words. Self-Relations speaks with the words that rise up from silence: the rich, bur-

dened, and fruitful silences of disenfranchised self-fragments. There is a special character to this language, notable in its organic relationship to breath, pauses, and the physical rhythms of the body. "Naming" in Self-Relations is the art of touching something by describing it, not from an external perspective, but from within a relational connection to it; not tagging it into a category or conceptual frame, but rather letting its own structure act on the listening field. In the way the field itself changes and responds, the essence of the named thing is revealed. Thus, the art of naming is also the art of receiving that-which-is — listening without prejudice to the spoken and unspoken forms that any person brings with them into any interaction.

Naming and blessing describe an arc of being and becoming, almost retroactive in its power. While naming touches that which always was (albeit exiled from awareness) and releases it into a conscious, felt presence, blessing creates that which it names in the moment of its calling. Between the potential and the real, wholeness is born.

The wholeness is temporary; fluid, the self will always find new dialogue, new ways to be two, not one. This is not a problem: it is precisely in the gap between the two descriptions, the two players in the game, as it were, that dimension, meaning, and connection are made. In the space between the two, love and power, surrender and self-realization tumble, fracture, and reform. The fracturing of the self into two becomes a problem only when the dialogue between the "two" becomes a monologue, in which one element dominates, and the other becomes subordinate or even exiled from conscious awareness, a "neglected self."

Cultures and traditions, too, contain within them dominant paradigms and their complement, cultural or societal "neglected selves." In the West, disenfranchised cultural selves have included ethnic, sexual, and religious identities, the Feminine, and the consciousness and experience of children. Mystical and spiritual practices are intrinsically subversive of conventional reality, and can provide a route by which that which is unvoiced may be sought out and heard. In the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabala, the concept of the Shechina, the Feminine aspect of God, brings balance to the Male images with which most of us are familiar. And yet,

even in this balancing, the “voice” of the hidden goddess is not always apparent.

Tzipporah Heller beautifully evokes the qualities of Shechina, the Indwelling Presence of God:

... “Shechina” describes God’s presence within each of us. The inherent nature of the Shechina is hidden, internal, and at times silent. At other times, it is articulate through spiritual inspiration and awareness. Her presence is hard to evoke in words. In fact, the external nature of speech to a certain extent defies the internal nature of the Shechina.

While Heller speaks eloquently of the spiritual value of the Shechina’s silent, internal presence, one is left with a yearning to hear Shechina’s voice. If She could speak, in words and not only inner inspiration, what would She say? Likewise, within each of us there are presences that are “hidden, internal, and at times silent,” whose nature is “hard to evoke in words,” because of the “external nature of speech.” The challenge of Self-Relations is to find words that match the internal nature of the unvoiced goddess, child, animal, or any of the other myriad presences within for which there has been no clear entry into a voiced, social, and conscious existence. Not to force a kind of external, intellectualized naming upon an inward presence, but rather to learn to listen intently to the Voice of that presence, in and of itself, and make a place for it in the outer world.

Shaping the Sacred Moment

The craft of SR — naming, blessing, and holding “both at the same time” in uncritical awareness — is learned experientially — optimally, in community. Giligan’s training workshops have been the laboratory in which the skills of the relational self are practiced. Self-Relations is taught in small, “hands on” workshops in which all participants have a chance to experience many roles — as helper, client, consultant, learner and teacher — a responsible participant in the voicing of the whole. The experience of the different roles, and the laboratory of multiple voices within the group, vividly anchor the principles being represented.

As with any “new” approach, there is a certain enthusiasm and charisma to the communal identity. Beyond that, certain boundary conditions apply within the training groups — comparable to the boundary conditions of psychotherapy — that allow a certain magic to transpire. Shaping the sacred moment comes from a clear sense of beginning and end of a ritual space: there is always an invitation into the space together, separate from ordinary space, time, and obligations; an attunement to the present moment through rhythm, voice, meditation, somatic awareness, music, and so on; focusing of intention through statements of desires and goals; and the laying out of any rules of behavior that need to be maintained. These might include specific rules such as when to participate in commentary on clinical demonstrations, or more general mores of group culture (e.g., respect, confidentiality, taking responsibility for oneself, etc.). At the end of the set time together, discussions begin to fold awareness back into the world of ordinary goings-on. The group is closed in a final circle, with statements of what was learned, blessings given and received, and other activities which create a ritual of both bonding and release. The importance of such structure cannot be over-emphasized: the vulnerability of deep inner change work, and the protean fluidity of meanings that emerge in those moments of vulnerability, is such that without a clearly demarcated container, the danger for harm from a careless phrase or failure of attunement is too great.

Within a safely contained form, however, within the rigor of protection and structure, the imagination can soar, the inner world blossom like a flower. In that space of welcome, language can be new and fresh, can cross the boundaries between the inner life of the unvoiced presences in the somatic body-mind and come up into the social, human world: the flesh made word. Self-Relations is a practice that fosters the balancing of introspection and action, the dream-world and the social world: this is what it means to “walk in two worlds.”

A Living Multiplicity of Meaning and Form

In your hands is the fruit of much loving labor; a multiplicity of vision and practice and song, a living embodiment of “many voices.” Self-Relations is a prac-

tice of balance; at any given entry point, what is needed to create that balance will differ depending on the direction of the prior imbalance. Thus, some authors chose to focus on the spiritual and theoretical aspects of SR, to complement a focus on rationality or on behavior divorced from a framework of meaning. Others focused on the wisdom of the body, or on creative expressions, to balance pure intellect or verbal learning alone. Visual art complements the written word. Poetic and other creative narrative expressions of personal insights and journeys balance more scholarly productions, while chapters on business, community, and work with couples balance a focus on individual psychotherapy practice. Scholarly and philosophical pieces keep us on track with the intellectual underpinnings of Self-Relations. As Gilligan (1997) quotes in *The Courage to Love* (the Errol Flynn principle), "Not too loose, not too tight."

No one chapter "is" Self-Relations; in his invitation to his community of learning, Stephen Gilligan practiced what he preached, allowing a communal relational self to be born. Each voice, each manner of speaking, each cadence of logic, imagination, poetry, art, discourse, humor, and spirit, has its place in the whole, evolving "self" of Self-Relations.

We begin with an overview of Self-Relations in Stephen's Overview, "An Invisible Presence is Awakening." The book continues in 5 sections of chapters interspersed with poetic interludes with poems by Dvora Simon, Cindy Franklin, Beverly Voss, Chuck Holton, and Mary Mulvihill, and drawings by Mish Kinsella. The interludes and visual art represent "multiplicity" not just in content but in modalities and styles of expression.

In Section 1, The Self-Relations Approach, Chuck Holton puts a human face on SR therapy with clinical tales told with a storyteller's touch. Dave Stern brings a philosopher's perspective to the solution implicit in the problem. Muriel Singer shares a personal journey of transformation in an SR framework. Cindy Franklin explicates the spiritual basis of a Tantric path of integration with includes both ascending and descending journeys. Dvora Simon introduces the idea of spiritual trauma and initiation.

In Section 2, we turn to focused clinical applica-

tions of SR. David Aftergood delineates a treatment approach for anxiety; Dan Burow reviews trauma and how to address it; and Jean Hernandez describes her approach to patients with pain. Saralee Kane presents an SR approach to working with couples. Leonard Bohannon shows how SR principles apply to the supervision of psychotherapy, and Julian Russell and Cynthia Indriso do the same for business settings and organizations.

In Section 3, we bring the focus to connections between spiritual paths and SR. Celia Bockhoff writes of the recovery of the voice of the Goddess; Sandra Lydick describes spiritual journeys with an SR perspective; Kate Marshall takes it to the streets with her piece on Buddhist-inspired care of homeless people, seen as a societal "neglected self"; Sharon Mijares draws comparisons between SR and Sufism; and Jack Bloom shares psychological and spiritual perspectives on being a rabbi.

In Section 4, Dimensions of SR, Rob Rossel discusses archetypes in theory and treatment, Ray Cicetti focuses on a Buddhist-informed mindfulness as a key element of SR practice, and Carol Fitzsimons demonstrates the influence of alien voices and the treatment of the neglected self. Mary Massaro brings in voices from the SR email list-serve and workshop communities to develop a picture of the living dynamic of SR in practice. Finally, Ulrich Hoenig articulates the distinction between a state and a field in human consciousness and clinical practice.

Section 5 takes us to Expressive and Somatic approaches and SR. Kylea Taylor writes of Holotropic breathwork, Abbe Miller elucidates an SR approach to art therapy, Jeff Weakley treats us to a bit of comedy in the service of creative expression, and Molly Guzzino explores creative expression as self-sponsorship. Selene Vega describes movement therapy as a means to connect with the wisdom of the body, and Charlie Badenhop introduces Seishindo, a somatic-based approach to therapy drawing from Japanese martial arts traditions. Jessie Shaw and Bill Hedberg complete this section with a piece offering an explication of SR ideas and their relationship to artistic performance.

In the Coda, Stephen Beck takes us on a hallucinatory, magical tour using SR, family therapy, and a little help from some (living and non-living) friends.

After much gnashing of teeth, grace is found.



This is the sort of book to be read randomly or in sequence; selectively or consummately. As editors, we have deliberately striven to keep each author's voice their own, rather than forcing every chapter into one sort of format or tone. We hope you will find some-

thing within to make you smile, or think, or drop into a fruitful silence, or find within yourself a path through an unvoiced territory of soul.

Peace.

Dvora Simon,
New York City,
July 4, 2003

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*Snap**

(Dvora Simon)

Sun finally clears
winter's lingering finger:
Earth and mind snap wide

* (for Ruth)



*An Invisible Presence is Awakening:
Key Ideas in Self-Relations*

Stephen Gilligan, Ph.D., is known internationally as an author, a teacher, a presenter — and the creator of the Self-Relations Approach to Psychotherapy. His work is designed to reconnect mind-body processes and encourage and support radical change. Steve Gilligan is the author of numerous articles and books, including *The Courage to Love* and, most recently, *The Legacy of Milton H. Erickson*.

OVERVIEW

AN INVISIBLE PRESENCE IS AWAKENING: KEY IDEAS IN SELF-RELATIONS (STEPHEN GILLIGAN, PH.D.)

Two Zen students were talking as they watched a flag waving in the wind. The first observed that the flag was moving; the second countered that it was the wind that was moving, not the flag. When their master arrived, they asked him which of them was correct. "Neither," the master replied. "It is your mind that is moving."

The mind is always moving, swirling with images, thoughts, perceptions, feelings. And as it moves, it can suffuse us with feelings of delight, passion, love, or curiosity. Consider, for example:

- cradling a sleeping newborn baby in your arms
- playing with a favorite child or pet
- enjoying great sex
- experiencing a piece of beautiful music or art
- being held gently by a trusted person
- walking in nature
- conscious breathing
- anything else that really connects you deeply to yourself

Of course, the mind may also move in the other direction. We can get lost in its fantasies, frozen by its images, thrown by its fears, tortured by its ideas. Imagine:

- being criticized harshly
- worrying about an upcoming public presentation
- feeling grief over a loved one's death
- remembering a traumatic event
- being filled with rage and resentment

Both types of events, positive and negative, may be seen as extraordinary states of consciousness, that is, experiences that take us beyond the ordinary "identity state" we usually occupy. Self-Relations (SR) therapists are especially interested in such experiences for two reasons. First, without the proper skills, a person can become mired in suffering or distracted by endless fantasies. This is often what is happening for people seeking psychotherapy. Second, and equally important, a skillful relationship to extraordinary states of consciousness can allow deep transformation and success in creating what in SR is called the "4-H Club": happiness, health, helpfulness (to others), and healing (of self and others). So

the stakes are high, and how we approach the experiences is important.

In SR, extraordinary states of consciousness, both pleasant and unpleasant, are viewed as essential and vital parts of a person's developmental growth, moving individuals out of the "box" of their normal identities, and allowing new possibilities and identities to emerge. Moreover, such experiences are noted as being especially prevalent and relevant at times of major identity change, being the vehicles by which identity moves through a "death and rebirth cycle" into its next stage. How the human relationship to the experiences determines their form, meaning, and unfolding is also emphasized. That is, a negative attitude and unskillful relationship can make such experiences ugly, unhelpful, and seemingly of no human value; conversely, a positive attitude and skillful means can make the same experiences helpful, valuable contributions to a person's development.

This chapter is devoted to elucidating this basic idea in practical terms. The first section gives contrasting examples to indicate how similar experiences can be harmful or helpful, depending on the human relationship to them. The second section provides an overview of six basic premises of the SR approach. The third section suggests how these basic premises indicate three different types of mind within the Relational Self: (1) the *Somatic Mind* (and the principle of centering), (2) the *Cognitive Mind* (and its capacity for sponsorship), and (3) the *Field Mind* (and its archetypal wisdom). We will see how each Mind has two distinct levels — Basic and Generative — and how the Generative level integrates three Minds into a Relational Self that has the capacity to navigate extraordinary states of consciousness. We will see how whereas the Basic level is more or less capable of dealing with ordinary circumstances, the Generative Level is necessary for dealing successfully with extraordinary experiences. Taken as a whole, I hope this can sketch the outlines of a Generative Self that is capable of happiness, helpfulness, healing, and health.

I. Human Relationship Is the Key:

Contrasting Examples

Some years ago, I was teaching in Japan. One of my books had just been translated and published there,

and my publisher had arranged various media events, including an interview with a national daily newspaper. The reporter mentioned a number of problems regarding violence and Japanese children, and asked me if my work might be relevant to understanding or solving such situations. One of the stories concerned a 12-year-old boy who had taken a samurai sword and, during the night, decapitated one of his schoolmates, a mildly retarded boy who had been the object of much teasing by the other students. The boy then ceremoniously placed the head on the school steps for everyone to witness when they arrived the following morning. He was soon discovered to be the perpetrator and taken into custody. Upon searching his home, the police found diaries the boy had kept. In numerous entries, he described an "invisible presence" filled with rage who lived inside of him. Nobody seemed to notice it, it didn't seem possible to talk about it, and all attempts to subdue it failed. The diaries indicated how this "invisible presence" had become increasingly enraged, culminating in the decapitation ritual.

Most astonishing to the reporter, however, was what happened when the newspaper printed the diary entries: Hundreds of readers wrote to the paper, saying that they could relate to the notion of this "invisible presence," and that they too felt such a presence within them. They did not condone the murder, of course, but somehow they could empathize with the boy's struggle with some experiential process that society could not properly name or legitimize. The reporter asked me what sense I could make of this.

I responded by saying that I agreed with the readers. *There is an invisible presence that lives within each of us.* Call it what you will — soul, spirit, center, core, essence — but do name it and nurture it, I said, for without a connection to it, much can go awry. But with a connection to it, much can go right: happiness, health, healing, and being helpful to others. With regard to the boy, a much better fate might have been his had someone been able to help him to connect to, listen to, and harmonize with that "invisible presence."

For example, a client of a student of mine was brought into a small weekly supervision group I was leading in my office. My student was a therapist at a

clinic on the outskirts of the large military base near my office. A young Marine sergeant had come to the clinic with a difficult problem. When she and her sister were young girls, they had been sexually abused by a neighbor. Each time it happened, the neighbor would warn the girl that if she told anybody, he would kill her sister. As she grew up, the woman felt compelled to keep silent about the abuse, although she did not forget it. When she joined the Marines, she was assigned the specialty of small weapons demolitions expert — that is, working with small bombs of mass destruction. After a while, she received clearance for access to these small bombs, and that's when the fantasies visited her: thoughts of going back home with a small bomb to use on the perpetrator. She really didn't want to do it — she didn't want to take a human life, and she knew that her own life would effectively be over if she did — but the fantasies kept visiting her.

She decided to seek help, and went to the off-base clinic, where she was assigned to my student. When she reported the situation, the therapist felt overwhelmed and tried to offer relaxation suggestions. But the nervous demeanor with which they were offered only served to upset the client further. Luckily, the therapist was in a consultation group, where she brought up the case, along with a cry for help. We discussed some ways in which she might handle the situation, but she finally confessed that she didn't feel up to tackling the case by herself. I suggested that she invite the client into our group, where the therapist and I might work with her together for a couple of sessions. Both the therapist and client accepted this as a good idea, and so the following week they arrived together.

Greeting the client in the waiting room, I couldn't help but notice her curious dissociated appearance — thick glasses, a shy smile, a few teeth missing, withdrawing posture. We chatted a bit and then joined the other therapists. As I sat down across from her, I remembered to take the time to develop a relaxed focus. Sitting silently, I attuned to a basic principle of Self-Relations: *Something is waking up in this person!* That is, a person with a “disturbance in (their) field” — a crisis, a symptom, a problem — is someone who is experiencing a major shift in identity. *The out-of-control, difficult-to-*

comprehend experiences of a problem are heralding some major shift in a person's consciousness, some major “waking up” in their awareness. In SR, “crisis” is seen as representing the double meanings of its Chinese characters, both “opportunity” and “danger” — an opportunity (and, indeed, often a necessity) for major growth, but severely dangerous if the disturbing energies are not properly received and channeled.

As I sat with the young woman, I really tried to concentrate on how I could sense and receive what was going on for her as “terrible gifts” that were calling to be opened. I pondered her ordeal of enduring the repeated abuse and then being forced into silence about it. As I became curious about how her present “disturbance” might be an attempt to heal that trauma, it became clear that images of homicidal rage would be a healthy first step in that healing. Dangerous, to be sure, but also understandable and having integrity. After all, if you had been brutalized for years and were just beginning to recover from it, peaceful images of serenity hardly would be the first things to pop up. Seeing the homicidal images as solutions, not problems, I focused on how to create the “proper conditions” for them to be realized as such.

Feeling a sense of affection for the young woman and her strange smile, I said, “So I understand you want to blow up some mother-fucker?” Her eyes widened, as if to say, “I didn't know you could talk like that in here!” She smiled, before covering her eyes, like a shy young child needing to hide. This is typical: When you touch a person's wounded self, he or she usually can handle only a couple of moments of connection before having to turn away. That's okay. When the client needs to hide, the therapist allows it, but stays with him or her.

I paused for a few moments, focusing on centering and attuning to a relational connection with the young woman. I then asked, “What do you think your best technique might be?” Again, she looked at me wide-eyed, and then she seemed to think of something and a small smile crept across her face. “Yes, *that one*,” I said, “What was that one?” Another smile appeared, a bit more playful as she turned away this time.

A few more moments of silent connection passed

before I asked, "How about a pipe bomb up his ass?" This time, she looked at me, and kept looking, a sense of full absorption setting in. This signaled to me that I had found a "resonant naming," a verbal word or phrase that was able to connect with the deeply felt sense of an unnamed or unspoken wound. So I proceeded in a slow, intense voice, "Well, I don't really know which image or images you will find most interesting and helpful today, and in the days ahead, but I am certain of one thing: That place from where the images are coming speaks with great integrity. You were very hurt, and what happened was wrong! You were forced to stay silent about it, and something inside of you is beginning to heal. It's okay to listen to those images and to use them for your healing."

I asked her to sense some of the disturbing images and to notice where in her body she felt the center of any feeling. She immediately touched her solar plexus. I nodded, and asked her to close her eyes and to keep her hand there for a few minutes. As she did, I soothingly suggested that her body had its own language, its own experience, its own logic, and that the angry images that were beginning to arise came from a place of integrity inside of her. I suggested that she could find connection and comfort with this center, and create a safe place in which to notice the images, as well as other healing experiences. This began a threefold healing process: (1) claim the disturbing experiences as attempts at healing; (2) develop a safe place within and around your person to hold, contain, and open to such experiences; (3) connect the experiences with cognitive/social competencies and traditions that would allow them to become valuable human expressions. Over the following weeks, she and her therapist found ways in which to help her to integrate the images and to begin to reclaim her life and reconnect with her resources.

The approach used to help the woman is the topic of the rest of the chapter. For now, the main point is to note the similarities and profound differences in outcome in the two cases. Both the Japanese boy and the young Marine sergeant were troubled by insistent negative experiences that, if not dealt with properly, could mean major trouble. In the first case, the "resonant conditions" were not present to allow for the transformation of the disturbance into a solution; in the second case,

they were. As you can see, the stakes are high. Therefore, a major focus of SR is to examine and implement "resonant conditions," so that whatever life gives you, you can use for growth and development.

To do such work, one needs both rigor and imagination: rigor in relational connection; sensitivity to subtle energies and cues; a clear understanding of how (and why) to change negative experiences into positive ones; imagination in terms of many ways to do this; flexibility in adapting to unique process; and openness to relational thinking. Self-Relations is an approach that seeks to find the ever-shifting center point where imagination and rigor are partners, where they balance and support each other. To clarify this, we now turn to the basic premises of SR.

II. Six Basic Principles

The Self-Relations perspective is especially interested in receiving and expressing the basic energies of life. To understand how this might be done, we start with some basic premises. As these have been laid out previously (Gilligan, 1997), the following is a general review.

1. *Each person has a center.*

We begin with the notion that there exists within each person an intelligence other than intellect. We referred to this above as "the invisible presence," but it can be called by other poetic names as well. We emphasize this primary intelligence as being based in somatic knowing and experience. The experience of love, the sense of connection, the intuition of how to proceed, the intense feelings of identity change, the mammalian language of belonging, the creativity of art — all of these languages, and more, are based in Somatic Mind. They are the platform for cognitive knowing, relational understanding, and subtle wisdom. When a person is connected to this language, good things tend to happen. When a person is disconnected from it, bad things tend to happen.

For too long, it seems, Western consciousness has been dissociated from somatic knowing. But the notion of knowing only in the head (intellect) is slowly crumbling. The systemic revolution that began half a century ago, which emphasized that intelligence was spread throughout a system, that no single part of a system

could dominate the whole, that there were multiple truths and multiple perspectives, has finally made its way to neuroscience. It is now recognized that there are multiple brains in the body. For example, Gershon (1998) describes the evidence for a second brain located in the stomach. This neuroenteric (“enteric” meaning “inside the stomach”) brain is believed to provide the “gut instinct” that operates distinctly, but interrelatedly, with the “head brain.” The heart as a brain has been described by various scientific investigators, including Schwartz and Russek (1999), Pearce (2002), and Pearsall (1998). Candace Pert (1997) reviews evidence proposing both the immune system and the endocrine system as distinct “brains.” This evidence for multiple brains further suggests a multiphonic somatic intelligence that is ancient and wise.

Somatic intelligence is especially prominent during times of identity change, and tends to be realized through experiences of “felt sense” (Gendlin, 1978). Experiences both of well-being and ill-being feature somatic knowing, especially in terms of a “center.” That is, if you ask individuals who are having either really good or really bad experiences where in their bodies they feel the core of the experiences, they usually point to a place in their belly, solar plexus, or heart. Similarly, if you ask performance artists — dancers, athletes, sculptors, or actors — where they sense their core base for creative expression, they often indicate a similar somatic “center.” Self-Relations practitioners are interested in the nature of this somatic center — how and why it activates, as well as how it can be utilized positively for creative responses to challenging situations.

2. *The river of life flows through the center.*

From a Self-Relations viewpoint, life is a river that flows through a person, entering through the center and bringing the person a multitude of experiences. This idea becomes very clear when you spend time with young children: They seem to “channel” virtually every aspect of life. It is easy to see why they sleep so deeply at night! In the same sense, when we work with a person in SR, we attune to how life is bringing that person many different experiences. We notice how these experiences enter the body, how they are held in the body, and how they are expressed through the body.

As we will see, all this is part of what is called the art of *sponsorship*: transforming the rushing river of life into the valuable experiences of a human being. In this process, many things can go awry. For example, a person can say “Damn you!” to life — that is, building a dam to block the river — by shutting down. The easiest way to do this is by tightening the muscles and inhibiting the breath. This is the typical “fight or flight” response that occurs under stress, and it can easily become a chronic condition, wherein a person is “shut down” to the flow of life. The condition can happen in response to many circumstances — trauma, formal education, “fundamentalism” (where ideology is considered more important than relational connection), consumerism (where the emphasis is on ownership, rather than on relationship), and so on. The important thing is that when a person tries to stop the flow of life, for whatever reason, problems develop — alienation, anxiety, depression, stuckness. A central challenge of SR is to help to reopen the channel to allow the energies and patterns of life to flow through.

3. *The river brings both happiness and suffering.*

One of the reasons people close down to life is the inevitability of suffering that comes with it, at least some of the time. No matter how much money we have, what religion we practice, or what political party we support, we must at some point endure times of suffering. Illness develops, failures occur, friends and family members die, violence erupts. To be in life invariably is to be touched by suffering. And we never really know when it will hit.

How do we deal with not knowing when the next hurtful experience will occur? Most of us seem to try to hedge our bets by setting up “guardians at the gate” that attempt to monitor the environment, trying to determine whether something or someone is “good” or “bad,” and then opening up only to the “good.” This strategy usually results in a controlling consciousness that lives outside of the flow of life, with all the consequent experiences of alienation and unhappiness. In order to enjoy and contribute to life, we must *be in life*.

Still, it seems that there must be a way to “defend” our life, right? What is the best way to orient to possible hurts and suffering? Although the “fight or flight” re-

sponse is instinctual, SR emphasizes a third way of “protection” that is based on centering, extending life energy, and keeping relational connection. This approach is modeled in part by political prisoners such as Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and Jesus. It is also influenced tremendously by the Japanese martial art of aikido, which I have practiced for some years. In aikido, the training helps us to find a connection with one’s own center, with the relational field as a whole, and with those who enter into the field. It is a study concerned with how to receive disturbed energy and let it flow through you in ways that are safe and transformative for both the receiver and the sender. We will discuss this approach in more detail later; for now, the main idea is that it is possible to open to suffering as the best means of not becoming diminished by it.

4. *To navigate the river, a second (Cognitive) self slowly develops.*

We begin with a Somatic Mind, and slowly develop a second Cognitive Self. This “second coming” of the Self is a distinctive feature of human consciousness, and the relationship between the Cognitive Self and the Somatic Self is a focus of Self-Relations. Indeed, the “Relational Self” of SR is realized each time the Cognitive and Somatic Selves are resonant with each other.

While the Cognitive Self is often thought of as an intellectual, distanced, analytical presence, SR emphasizes that this is just one of many different manifestations. For example, notice how people talk to their pets or to their children. When a person who has been in his or her head all day comes home to greet the dog, it is usually not with cool analytical distance! Or watch someone with a young granddaughter: such beautiful warmth and resonance in how they connect. These illustrations show a feature of the Cognitive Self as being one of extending human presence to “touch” another with kindness and love. The SR perspective emphasizes this cognitive mode because of how important it is to connect with the Somatic Self, both in others and in one’s self. We will see that a major challenge in each life is to find a resonant connection with the Somatic Self, to achieve a “hook-up” that returns the Cognitive Self to its larger and deeper Relational Self that is capable of

participating in the “4-H” Club — happiness, helpfulness, healing, and health.

From a developmental view, one’s Cognitive Self is initially held by others. When young, a person’s Cognitive Self is not sufficiently developed to perform the social/cognitive operations needed to navigate one’s life in the world. As Jung noted, the first half of your life belongs to other people; the second half belongs to you. In other words, one initially internalizes, and is guided by, the Cognitive Selves of others. One of the challenges of “growing up” is finding one’s own Cognitive Self. The passage from one to the other can be a most interesting experience, as we will see.

5. *When the two selves harmonize, a third (Relational Field) self emerges.*

Self-Relations emphasizes that consciousness exists not only within a person, but all around (beyond) the person. It suggests that there is an intelligence greater than the intellect, not only within the Somatic Self, but also within the *Relational Field*. The Relational Field has many levels and forms. If a person experiences it through social connection, it might be sensed as “community”; if through prayer, as “God”; if through walking in the forest, as “nature”; if through singing, as “music”; if through sports, as “the zone”; if through intimacy, as “love.” In such contexts, a felt sense of something greater than the individual is realized as vibrant and alive. The SR lens emphasizes the intelligence of this “field” as a third type of “mind.” It notes that when people “feel most like themselves,” or when they need to “get back to themselves,” they engage in activities that bring them back into the Relational Field — walking in nature, meditating, taking a bubble bath, listening to or playing music, gardening, and so forth. Engaging in such activities moves a person from self-absorbed, self-contained states into more relaxed, open connections with the “field.”

Of particular interest in SR is how a person can activate and trust this “Relational Field” under different circumstances, not only positive ones where it feels safe, but also adversarial ones where a person feels threatened or overwhelmed. At such times, we typically withdraw from the field in a self-protecting stance. Although un-

derstandable, this blocks us from being able to draw upon the resources of the field to meet whatever challenges we face. So a central focus of SR is how to support individuals in staying connected to both their center and their Relational Field as a means of responding effectively to the ongoing challenges of life.

6. *So many roads: Find a path with a heart.*

Once we move out of ideology and generalities into the particulars of experience, we see how unique each person is. Your way of being, thinking, behaving, and relating has never been seen before! The greatest legacy of my teacher, the legendary psychiatrist/hypnotherapist Milton Erickson, was that of appreciating and utilizing the unique features of each person. Your differences and distinctiveness are what make you an individual; they are the basis for both your happiness and your helpfulness (i.e., your contribution to the world). This is in marked contrast to the mainstream expectation that each person should somehow fit in to expected norms and frameworks. The problem with such expectations, of course, is that no person can ever really fulfill them. Indeed, one of the roots of suffering and self-hatred lies in the difference between what you think you should be and how you actually experience yourself to be. While recognizing that this gap is inherently unbridgeable, SR emphasizes the importance of noticing, accepting, and supporting all the individual aspects of a person.

For example, one young man I was seeing for therapy was interested in meeting women. He went to nightclubs and watched other young men who were apparently extroverted and skillful in attracting women. His stated desire to transform himself into such a guy contrasted poignantly with his shy and tender temperament. This shyness was the basis of much self-disgust and hatred, as it indicated to him a lack of manliness. Therapeutic exploration of this tender quality revealed its basis as a strength, not a weakness, in intimate relationships.

A major principle in SR is that "the problem is the solution." That is, what a person believes to be his or her weakness is, *under proper conditions*, the basis for solutions and resources. The caveat is, of course, the qualifier "under proper conditions." *In SR, we seek to create*

the conditions that allow that which keeps asserting itself as an apparent "problem" to be realized as a solution. As we will see, the principle of sponsorship speaks to the type of relationship with a "problem" that will allow it to transform into a solution. A person's idiosyncrasies, the things that seem to set the person apart from others, are prime bases for this transformational process. Thus, we especially support a person's "deviancy," the ways in which he or she can't be "normal," the ways in which the person can't do it "like he or she is supposed to." We see in these persistent deviations from the norm the seeds of a person's unique contributions.

III. The Triunal Mind in Self-Relations

These six premises allow us to distinguish three minds: (1) the Somatic Mind (as a local embodied intelligence), (2) the Relational Field Mind (as a nonlocal or collective intelligence), and (3) the Cognitive Mind as a sort of bridge between the two worlds. A further emphasis of SR is that there exist two levels of each Mind: (a) a Basic Level, concerned with remedial operations; and (b) a Generative Level that occurs when all three Minds are harmonized and aligned. The Generative Level is a subtle meta-field that holds all the basic operations with awareness and skillfulness, while adding other features that transform its form and function in significant ways. While the Basic Levels are sufficient for ordinary adaptive functions, the Generative Levels are needed to navigate and transform the extraordinary states of consciousness that occur, intentionally or unwanted, in each person's life. Thus, if individuals are going to continue to grow, they need to develop some capacity to achieve Generative Levels of each Mind.

In Generative states of well-being — when a person is happy, healthy, helpful, and healing — the three Minds align and integrate to form a Relational Self capable of many interesting things. A person in a Generative state is embodied in a unified (centered) way, open and receptive to the larger, surrounding fields of intelligence, and thinking in creative and transformative ways. Conversely, these domains are shut down and functionally dissociated in states of ill-being. A person stuck in a problem may be observed to shut down or dissociate from the center, contract from relational fields,

and think in rigid and nonrelational patterns. Self-Relations thus is the study of how to cultivate and sustain the Generative Level of consciousness needed for positive growth and development.

The Generative Level of consciousness pervades and expands the Basic Level of consciousness. Moving within and beyond a Basic Level requires (1) special awareness; (2) special knowledge patterns (e.g., skills and understanding of how to hold conflict, how to “be with” something without disturbing it, and how to see the underlying goodness and gift in the essence of a person); and (3) a subtle feeling of energetic connection with a process (e.g., when a musician or athlete performs with expertise, or a person holds a baby). We will address in greater detail how to develop and maintain these aspects of Generative Mind.

Each Mind has different characteristics when integrated with the others and operating at the Generative Level. For example, connecting cognitive presence to somatic centering gives cognitive presence a more intuitive, relational capacity, when compared with the isolated intellect. Similarly, the somatic center connected to field consciousness gives a complementary experience of both a local felt sense and a nonlocal (expanded) awareness. Thus, a basic goal of Self-Relations is to both differentiate and integrate these three systems, thereby significantly transforming the form and function of each, resulting in a much greater capacity for happiness, helpfulness, health, and healing. *The three Minds operating together at Generative Levels is the experience of the Relational Self.*

To change a problematic state into a generative one, we can focus on shifting patterns in each of these three domains, in terms of both their internal and interconnecting states. An SR approach maintains that this creates the “resonant conditions” for generative change. The next sections suggest a few ways in which this might happen.

IV. The Somatic Mind and the Principle of Centering

It may seem a hapless truism to say that without embodiment, consciousness is impossible. But all too often our Western traditions regard the body (and the environment) as a dumb ox to be treated brutally, rather

than as an intelligent presence that needs to be listened to and harmonized with. The heavy price of living away from the Somatic Mind is revealed in symptoms, where the abandoned or neglected body reacts with debilitating responses — pain, anxiety, addictions, uncontrollable outbursts. In the SR view, such symptoms are attempts at healing, the Somatic Mind’s efforts to balance or reorganize a person’s identity. As Jung used to say, the unconscious (or Somatic Mind) is always trying to balance the bias of the conscious mind. For example, a woman whose parents worked at “110% effort, 100% of the time” developed narcolepsy-like symptoms, where she would fall asleep periodically throughout the day. Hypnotic investigations revealed these as possible psychological attempts to find relaxation for the client and her family’s compulsive overdoing. Sensing that, she was able to transform the narcoleptic symptoms into conscious meditation practices. The “problem” of the narcoleptic symptoms was appreciated as a Somatic Mind “solution” to the imbalance of the core identity.

We always begin with an appreciation of the Somatic Mind as the basis for consciousness, as the first mode of knowing, as the foundation for creative activity. At its Basic Level, the Somatic Mind operates with mammalian instinctual drives for food, sex, territory, and hierarchy. It carries an emotional history that guides its behaviors. In stress, it uses fight/flight/freeze responses. It is especially connected with the limbic system and its mammalian orientation to relational connection (see Lewis, Amini, & Lannon, 2000); that is, it knows how to “hook up” with, and be in subtle resonance with, others. It does most of this without self-awareness, meaning that it responds to a situation in either an instinctual or a conditioned (learned) way.

However, in extraordinary states of consciousness something more is needed. For example, say your mother or father dies . . . or you are under extreme stress at work . . . or you are going through a divorce . . . or you are traveling in a dangerous neighborhood and feel exceptionally vulnerable. In such instances, your Somatic Mind needs more capacities. It needs to be able to hold confusion, to experience intense challenges and emotions, to tolerate contradictory emotions, to shift into states of rest, to relax while staying alert, to attune to intuitive and nonrational wisdom, and to take crea-

tive action. At such times, a Generative Level of Somatic Mind is needed.

One general method for entering this advanced level is *centering*. Centering is a process of unifying mind and body in order to quiet and focus the mind, relax and attune the body, and align with the energies of the relational fields. Centering is a form of balancing attention, finding the point where complementary qualities are simultaneously present — inner/outer, relaxed/focused, intentional/effortless. When this happens, a simple “awareness beyond opposites” may emerge. It is a field of awareness that extends beyond the body to the environmental field in which the body is operating. One simple method of centering is to find a quiet place to sit and settle. One can then follow a four-step cycle of (1) sensing good posture, (2) relaxing the muscles, (3) focusing attention through the solar plexus, and (4) imagining breathing one’s thoughts into a liquid that moves through the body, and then out into the world. Repeating these four steps (with eyes opened or closed) can help a person shift into a felt sense of quiet, alert awareness. One might then remember an experience of great well-being, say, in nature, with a loved one, or by one’s self. As you breathe the memory of well-being through your body, notice where the core feeling of the experience is felt in your body. Most people experience it in their belly, or solar plexus, or heart area. These are different possible “centers” to which one can attune. To attune to the felt sense of the center, people often find it helpful to touch the place on the body that is affected — perhaps the heart or their belly, for instance — in order to hold the awareness and to integrate it more fully.

The process of centering has many values. First, it promotes calm, yet alert, awareness. Internal dialogue reduces and somatic attunement increases, thereby allowing more effective responsiveness. Second, centering can stabilize attention under stressful conditions. For example, imagine you are standing before an aggressive person who is talking to you in an intimidating fashion. Centering allows you to give “first attention” (Gilligan, 1997) to your core in a grounded, relaxed way, rather than have it locked onto a stressful person, memory, or internal image. You can then open and extend your awareness beyond the stressor, so that a spacious feeling of openness beyond the problem is experi-

enced. Third, centering allows unitive, nondualistic experiencing. The typical “either/or” splits of mind versus body, self versus other, good versus bad dissolve into a more integrated sensing of “what is.” This allows consciousness to align with the life force energy — the “ki” of aikido, the “chi” of tai chi, the feeling of “the zone,” the grace of “spirit,” etc. This doesn’t mean that the capacity for cognitive differentiation is reduced; rather, it is reconnected with its deeper platform of natural intelligence in a way that promotes the experience of concentrated “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and integrated functioning. Control is replaced by cooperation, domination by resourceful utilization, and clashing by harmonizing. This can be done even under stressful, antagonistic conditions, as the martial art of aikido is able to show.

The relaxed intensity of centering also allows one to think without muscular tension. *Self-Relations* suggests that this skill, which is a central part of extraordinary experiences, such as meditation, art, and trance, is one of the key characteristics of a Generative consciousness. Thoughts, perceptions, and feelings can flow through one’s being as a subtle field, rather than being trapped by the gross tension of typical thinking. With this capacity, one has the freedom to “be with” any and all experiences without “becoming identified with” or feeling overwhelmed by any of them. For example, say a person reexperiences a traumatic memory. Typically, such a negative stimulus will trigger a “neuromuscular lock” (Gilligan, 1997) in a person, resulting in a tense, breathing-disrupted state that unwittingly reenacts the trauma. In this important sense, the “fight or flight” state of muscular tension that underlies most thinking paradoxically creates the very experiences a person is trying not to have happen. Through centering, experiences don’t get trapped by reactive thinking; they are able to “flow through,” releasing a process of change and freedom.

What emerges is a felt sense of one’s identity as the whole environmental field. In aikido the connection is felt with one’s self *and* the attacker *and* the environmental space holding both. *One’s identity is with the whole field, not just a position in the field.* This allows a feeling of openness, a greater sensing of intuitive knowing, since one feels relational connection as the first mode of knowing.

This expanded, subtle field of awareness also fosters a sense of a “second skin”; that is, a sort of bubble or energy space around the body, sometimes referred to as a “body buffer zone.” It allows a feeling of safety through the extension of one’s life force. One can see excellent examples of this in political prisoners such as Nelson Mandela, who was able to withstand the brutality of an evil system, not through muscular force, but through the connection with, and extension of, a more subtle life force. Conversely, trauma victims often have that “second skin,” a sort of a psychological immune system, torn or ripped away by the trauma, so that to show oneself is unbearable. Such individuals can’t distinguish between being visible (a good experience) and feeling exposed (an intolerable experience). The difference lies in whether one can sense the “second skin” of a subtle mind–body field that extends one’s presence safely into the world. Learning how to center can enable a person to do exactly that.

To be sure, maintaining a centered state of openness in the face of difficult experiences is a challenge. Centering is a skill that requires significant ongoing practice, especially in its use in adversarial circumstances. Coaching or therapeutic support may be needed in certain areas, but with diligent practice, centering can reap enormous benefits.

Centering also allows one to distinguish between two levels of one’s somatic center: context and content. The context is the open space that receives and holds each experiential content. In one moment there may be a feeling of sadness, in the next, a sense of interest, while in the next there is an old memory of happiness, and so on. Think of the contextual level as like a parent holding a child. When that child comes rushing into the house screaming about a cut she had just sustained, a good parent will provide a lap for the young child to climb up into. After a few minutes of being held and attended to, the child usually moves through whatever experience was overwhelming her, and is out the door seeking her next calamity. In a similar way, centering allows a holding space that can receive and transform all sorts of experiences. For example, a person experiencing a recurrent fear may use centering to create an inner space in which that fear can be held, listened to, and transformed into a helpful gift. This process of “sponsor-

ship” will be described in the next section. For now, let us appreciate the capacity of the center to serve as a sort of “sanctuary,” a safe place in which to hold and heal experiences.

This Generative process also allows one to use the center to attune to archetypal resources in the field. This can be seen in a special performance of art or athletics, where the person is drawing from a deeper well of knowledge. A centered person in a challenging environment may report different types of experiences “just coming” from another place, a special type of wisdom that sometimes visits a person when mind–body centering has been achieved. A feeling of being a part of something greater, or being guided by mental processes beyond one’s individuality, may be described. All of this increases one’s capacity for happiness, health, helpfulness, and healing.

To summarize, developing the Generative Level of Somatic Mind yields many additional properties: a relaxed, focused calm; integrated, unitary awareness; non-muscular “subtle energy” thinking and processing; an expanded sense of self; a “second skin” that extends and protects one’s sense of self; an “inner sanctuary” within which difficult experiences may nest and be transformed; and increased access to the well of archetypal wisdom.

Access to a Generative Somatic Mind appears whenever experience takes one outside of normal identity parameters. This can involve either experiences of well-being or of ill-being, such as a trauma. In both cases, the disruption of an identity state activates the Generative Somatic Mind and its centers, thereby amplifying nonrational archetypal/emotional processes. If a person is disconnected from Somatic Mind, the resulting experiences may be frightening, overwhelming, and confusing. *Reactive measures to control such uncomfortable experiences are what create symptomatic experiences.* Alternatively, a centered person can welcome and work with the emerging experiences in ways that transform identity. To understand how this is done, we now turn to the Cognitive Mind and the principle of sponsorship.

V. The Cognitive Mind and the Principle of Sponsorship

The Cognitive Mind constitutes a second type of human intelligence. In healthy development, the Cogni-

tive Self “transcends, yet includes” (Wilber, 1995; Pearce, 2002) the somatic self; in unhealthy development, the cognitive self disconnects and opposes the somatic self.

As with the Somatic Mind, two levels of the Cognitive Mind may be distinguished. The Basic Level involves the processes used to navigate the social/psychological world: plans, strategies, rules, frameworks, schemata, social roles, etc. It also holds the shared meanings of social life, and the fixed values of an individual identity. Generally speaking, the Basic Level is responsible for social adaptation, control of environment, advancement of self-interest, and maintenance of self-identity. It generally operates by taking a fixed point of view, holding some intention (consciously or unconsciously), and then acting to realize that intention. It is a crucial aspect of healthy functioning, one that needs continuous attention and practice.

The Basic Level is generally sufficient for ordinary circumstances, but it will fail to meet the challenges of extraordinary experiences. The Basic Level of Cognitive Mind has difficulty with thinking “outside the box.” It gets locked into a particular point of view, and finds it difficult to allow creative chaos, multiple points of view, contradictory points of view, or conflict. It cannot easily surrender to “death and rebirth” experiences. For example, say you have a daughter who is entering adolescence, and all of her “sweet young girl” behaviors are being replaced with hip-hop music, an intense interest in boys, and a need for greater freedom. Or imagine that you are in a multicultural environment, where clashing views of religion, freedom, and ethics are being expressed; or that you attempted to get rid of some undesirable experience or behavior, and it keeps returning with a vengeance. In such contexts, a Generative Level of Cognitive Mind is needed to navigate such experiences and their inherent challenges successfully.

The Generative Level of Cognitive Mind includes, yet transcends, the Basic Level, allowing creative thinking, systemic (i.e., field-based) identity, and resonant intentionality. This level maintains rationality, intentionality, strategic planning and acting, and social meanings; but expands beyond them to include something more. This advanced level is more a metacognitive principle and process, something referred to in Self-Relations as

sponsorship (Gilligan, 1997). The principle of sponsorship is the cornerstone of all SR work. The word “sponsorship” comes from the Latin “*spons*,” meaning, “to pledge solemnly.” Sponsorship is a vow to help a person (including one’s self) to use each and every event and experience to awaken to the goodness and gifts of the self and the world, and the connections between the two. The Self-Relations perspective suggests that experiences that come into a person’s life are not yet fully complete; they have no human value until a person is able to sponsor them. This is the creative process of art, culture, therapy, parenting, or self-development: to receive and absorb the river of life in creative ways. This relational process literally transforms an experience that seems to have no human value into something whose value is evident.

In this sense, a Self-Relations viewpoint emphasizes the potentially positive aspects of problems and symptoms, considering such disturbances of the “normal order” as evidence that “something is waking up” in the life of a person or community. Such disturbances are double-edged crises. On one side, they are (often hidden) opportunities for profound growth. *To move from one identity state into the next, often one must go through a “betwixt and between” state of uncertainty and chaos; sponsorship is what allows one to navigate these challenging passages in positive, productive ways.* (Most of us can recall negative events — a death, divorce, illness, or addiction — that led to significant positive change in our lives.) On the other side, such disturbances can be very destructive. We can get lost for long periods in depression, acting out, or other problematic behaviors. In Self-Relations, the difference lies in whether or not a disturbance is “sponsored” by a skillful human presence.

There are many ways to practice sponsorship. The “yin” (receptive) aspect of sponsorship involves receiving, allowing your heart to be opened, bearing witness, providing place or sanctuary, soothing, gently holding, being curious, deeply listening, or beholding a presence with the eyes of kindness and understanding. The “yang” (active) aspect includes relentless commitment, fierce attentiveness, providing guidance, proper naming, setting limits and boundaries, challenging self-limitations, and introducing the sponsored experience to other resources. Through a skillful combination of these and

related sponsorship processes, an experience or behavior that seems to have no value to the self or community can be transformed from an “it” that should be destroyed to a “thou” that can be listened to, appreciated, and allowed to develop within the self and community.

For example, consider a person who is challenged by angry outbursts. In Self-Relations, we would see such rage as unsponsored fierceness, and seek to create ways by which that fierceness could be integrated. Processes of centering might be used to set up a calm inner sanctuary into which the rageful presence could be invited. Questions about its emotional age, its value, its human needs, and its appearance (e.g., color, place felt in the body, ongoing changes) might be asked, with careful attention to ensuring that it was held and felt in a safe, positive way. Processes of connecting Cognitive Mind with Somatic Mind to create a Generative Mind would then be developed. The resulting resonant connection would be the “Relational Self” of Self-Relations.

To create this Relational Self, multiple aspects of the skill of sponsorship are important. For example, we noted earlier the capacity of the Cognitive Self to “touch” something or someone with human presence, as with one’s pets or small children. This process of “cognitive touch” — i.e., to use a loving presence to “hook up” with an experience — is essential to positive sponsorship. For positive sponsorship to work, cognitive touch must be cultivated. I have found that while a person may be initially unwilling or unable to do this with his or her own experiences, he or she can usually do it for a loved one. In such cases, individuals can be helped to access experiences of sponsoring loved ones, which can then be transferred to other experiences (e.g., “problems”) with which they are struggling.

Another important aspect of sponsorship is what might be called “both/and” thinking. The working assumption of Self-Relations is that the basic psychological unit is relationship; that is, nothing exists on its own — something is known only in relationship to something “other” than itself. The simplest relationship is complementarity: black/white, good/bad, presence/absence, soft/hard, young/old, and so forth. In any experience, this means there are four basic pieces: (1) what’s being focused on (e.g., times when I feel bad); (2) its comple-

ment (e.g., times when I feel good); (3) the relationship joining them (e.g., cooperative, antagonistic); and (4) the context in which they’re held (e.g., curiosity, control, sponsorship). To practice sponsorship, all four elements are sensed and worked with.

Say a person’s presenting self is “happy,” always smiling, cheerful, positive. The Self-Relations question would be about its complement — that is, what is the opposite identity? The Greek theatre masks of comedy/tragedy capture it well. Perhaps the complement is depression or anger. Maybe this comes out in the person’s “problem state” that he or she is trying to “get rid of.” (“If only I didn’t get depressed, my life would be perfect.”) Or perhaps this complementary state is held by a partner or an enemy with whom a person is emotionally connected (“I’m nice, but my partner is always angry”).

Once the two “opposite” identities are identified, SR is curious about their relationship. It will often look as though one is “good” and the other is “bad,” but SR emphasizes finding other frames in which the values would be reversed. If this split exists, creative growth will be difficult, as “good” and “bad” are really two sides of the same coin. Furthermore, when complements are functionally opposed to each other, they have very different characteristics than when they are in a “both/and” relationship. For example, happiness isolated from sadness tends to be more brittle, overly positive, and incomplete; but when joined with sadness, it can take on poignancy, deep acceptance, and endurance. Tenderness by itself can be sappy, weak, and sentimental; however, when integrated with complementary fierceness, it can become vibrant, strong, and potent.

In Self-Relations, everything contains its opposite, and a “both/and” relational connection is what allows an experience to be positively sponsored. When a person is stuck in a negative state, the sponsorship lens is focused on what “either/or” relationships seem fixed. What is labeled as “good” and what is labeled as “bad”? Through centering and curiosity, one can “deconstruct” the frames — let go of the labels and meanings — and begin to sense first one complementary experience, then the other, and then the integrated holding of the two at the same time.

In this sense, there is growth of consciousness and development of self-identity through cycles of self-realization. The field opens up, and an experiential presence moves into a person's life as a "gift" to help him or her grow and develop as a human being. At first, one side of the experience is more prominent (e.g., happiness), with no awareness of its complement. Then the complement appears and becomes dominant, either as a "problem" or as an "enemy," or just as a different experience. As the complements begin to touch each other in an intimate way, again without a person's awareness that they are two sides of the same coin, a relationship struggle (which side is "better" or "right") may result, that can deteriorate into a battle (one or both sides trying to destroy the other), and ultimately lead to a destabilization (some inner or outer "war"). The pain and costs of the negative "either/or" relationship, it is hoped, become so great that some attempt at reconciliation is made. This can lead to an integration that absorbs both sides into a unitary experience that helps a person to grow to a new level. This complementary experience is now realized as part of one's Self, and is available as a major resource. It is in this sense, I believe, that we realize the old Gnostic saying that "the Kingdom of God is within." Sponsorship is the loving means by which deeper realization of Self is accomplished.

VI. The Field Mind and the Principle of Field Resonance

In addition to the intelligence of the body and of the intellect, a third type of intelligence may be seen: the relational fields in which all consciousness and identity are embedded. For example, the physical environment may be thought of as a living "Gaia" field of intelligence, at many levels. Family and culture are fields within which each person operates. Art, science, and religion are fields that organize and inform many activities. The history of consciousness, what Jung called the "collective unconscious," may be thought of as a field of archetypal patterns. Many other "fields" may be distinguished: one's immediate surroundings, personal history, social circles, mood states, physical states, and so forth. All of these are contexts that shape, constrain, guide, and create the texts of local and focal awareness.

The fields have tremendous influence on a person's consciousness.

At the Basic Level, these fields operate primarily as constraints, helpful or unhelpful. They shape, limit, and guide the flow and content of consciousness. At the Basic Level, one can operate within the boundaries established by previous creations. This is not a bad thing, of course: it allows one not to have to reinvent the wheel every day, and permits successful approaches to be replicated. But at the Basic Level, a person's Somatic and Cognitive Minds are attuned to the Field Mind in set ways, such that only particular types of field-based information are received in certain types of ways.

However, when an old pattern or identity needs to be transcended or transformed, or a significant creative effort is desired, the Generative Level of the Field Mind is required. In such instances, a person needs to be able to sense and receive from the Field Mind in many different ways. To achieve this, consciousness must radiate "through and beyond" the surrounding fields, creating an experiential "field of fields" that is beyond any specific content or form. As with the other domains, this Generative Level is a subtle energy meta-field that "transcends, yet includes" all of the informational fields of the Basic Level.

For example, in the martial art of aikido, one trains to: "Never give your eyes (or Mind) to the attacker." In other words, you let your eyes become soft and extend beyond the antagonist, so that you're not locked into a reactive mode. It is easy to try this experiment by centering to establish relaxed, attentive awareness. Then orient to some focal point (a person or an object), but let your eyes be soft and let your perceptual awareness open outward, extending infinitely even as you sense a connection with the perceptual object. You likely will find a different way of sensing the object, one that allows it to be included within your experience, but not limiting your attention. This actually permits you to better sense the subtle details of a person's movement, while also keeping yourself opened and connected to the larger field. If you continue this experiment, you can begin to sense an implicit space beyond what your conscious attention can focus on; this is an example of opening to the Generative Field. You can train yourself

to do this while interacting with a person, or focusing on a specific subject (e.g., a poem to be written, a problem to be solved). By focusing on this “open field” fashion, you will have the pleasant discovery of being “fed” creatively by fields of information beyond your local self.

A similar experience can be sensed through the hypnotic exercise of the “magnetic hands,” or the “Golden Ball” technique of Tai Chi. In this activity, a person relaxes, centers, and then extends their hands as if holding a magnetic “energy ball.” I have done this simple exercise with many groups, and found that most people can sense some version of it in a very short time. I then ask them to notice what happens to the “energy ball” when I shift my voice to, say, a harsh critical tone, or a whiny, self-pitying voice. Most people find their “energy balls” falling apart in some way, breaking into pieces, collapsing, or disappearing. I then ask people again to center and generate the “energy ball,” but this time to gently concentrate on the energetic field while I move back into the negative tone. That is, to give attention to the space around the stimulus, not to the stimulus itself. This time, most people find the energy field of the ball able to expand, settle, vibrate, or otherwise absorb the incoming pattern in a positive way. *In other words, concentrating beyond the problem, in a space bigger than the content, allows a meta-field to arise that can absorb whatever is coming in.*

It is in this way that the Generative Level of Field Mind operates. It is the Zen “mind of no mind,” the Buddhist “emptiness beyond form,” the open, resonant Field that can “include, yet transcend” the many dynamic fields of the Basic Level. This allows the capacity to “be with” something without identifying or “becoming” that something; it allows a creative dialogue with the many voices of the collective field; it allows one to confidently hold the chaotic patterns of a self-identity-transformation. Thus, for example, in SR one is trained to sense the space beyond a problem, the field bigger than the mind’s focal content. This “field of fields” creates the context for the Relational Self’s expanded awareness.

Another experience for cultivating Generative Field connections is the Buddhist exercise of connecting to one’s different ancestral lineages. In one version, for instance, you center into a quiet and receptive state. A

bell rings, and you begin the first “field lineage,” for example, your land ancestors. That is, you go back through time progressively for, say, a couple of hundred years, sensing all the generations of people who have cared for and tended the land on which you live. You then sense that lineage moving forward in time, generation by generation, with gratitude for how each generation passed on its learning and experiences to the next. As it passes through you, you sense your connection to both the past and future generations, feeling gratitude for what you have received and commitment for what you would like to give to future generations. Then a bell rings, you come back to a relaxed centered position and rest for a bit until the next bell rings, whereupon another lineage — perhaps religious traditions, biological family, work disciplines (e.g., science, art) — is traversed. In each lineage, one feels both gratitude for what has been passed on and compassion for any “unlucky” events or people that may have become caught in negative patterns (damaging behaviors). In this way, a person’s sense of identity moves to the Generative Level of Field Mind, where many patterns and connections of human knowing are absorbed and transcended. This process allows the patterns to become resources for meeting the ongoing challenges of life.

VII. The Relational Self: A Generative Consciousness

In our postmodern society, it is fashionable to dismiss the notion that life is about consciousness, about a basic sense of living presence. Indeed, traditional psychology has done much to discredit the notion through fundamentalist ideas of self as a fixed or literal entity rather than as an energetic presence that encompasses all psychological forms basic to human consciousness. And the industrialization of consciousness fomented by both consumerism and fundamentalism has disconnected us from a felt sense of being alive. But anyone who has held a newborn baby can’t help but sense the amazing life force that is embodied by the infant. And anybody who has sat beside a person who is dying knows that there is something deeper than the intellect, something more basic than the persona.

Self-Relations is an approach that seeks to sense and connect with this life force, this consciousness, curious

about what creative human forms may arise out of the relational connection. This paradigm does not set mind against nature, but rather it argues for what Bateson (1979) called their necessary unity. It emphasizes that the stakes are high in this relationship, sometimes literally a matter of life and death, and that we either sense the "invisible presence" that is trying to awaken into consciousness or suffer serious consequences.

To meet these challenges, we have seen how consciousness can be described in terms of Somatic, Cognitive, and Field Minds; how each Mind has Basic and Generative Levels; how Basic Levels are sufficient for navigating ordinary experiences, but not the extraordinary experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant, that destabilize identity. We examined how Generative Mind is essential for navigating these latter experiences, and how its cultivation can give rise to a Relational Self capable

of optimal performance and transformational ("death and rebirth") processes. Some of the properties of Generative consciousness include: field-based identity; subtle energy thought and action; centering; translucence; openness; sponsorship; expanded identity; focused but flexible intention; integral and relational processing; and archetypal wisdom. Such experiential properties increase the capacity for happiness, health, helpfulness, and healing.

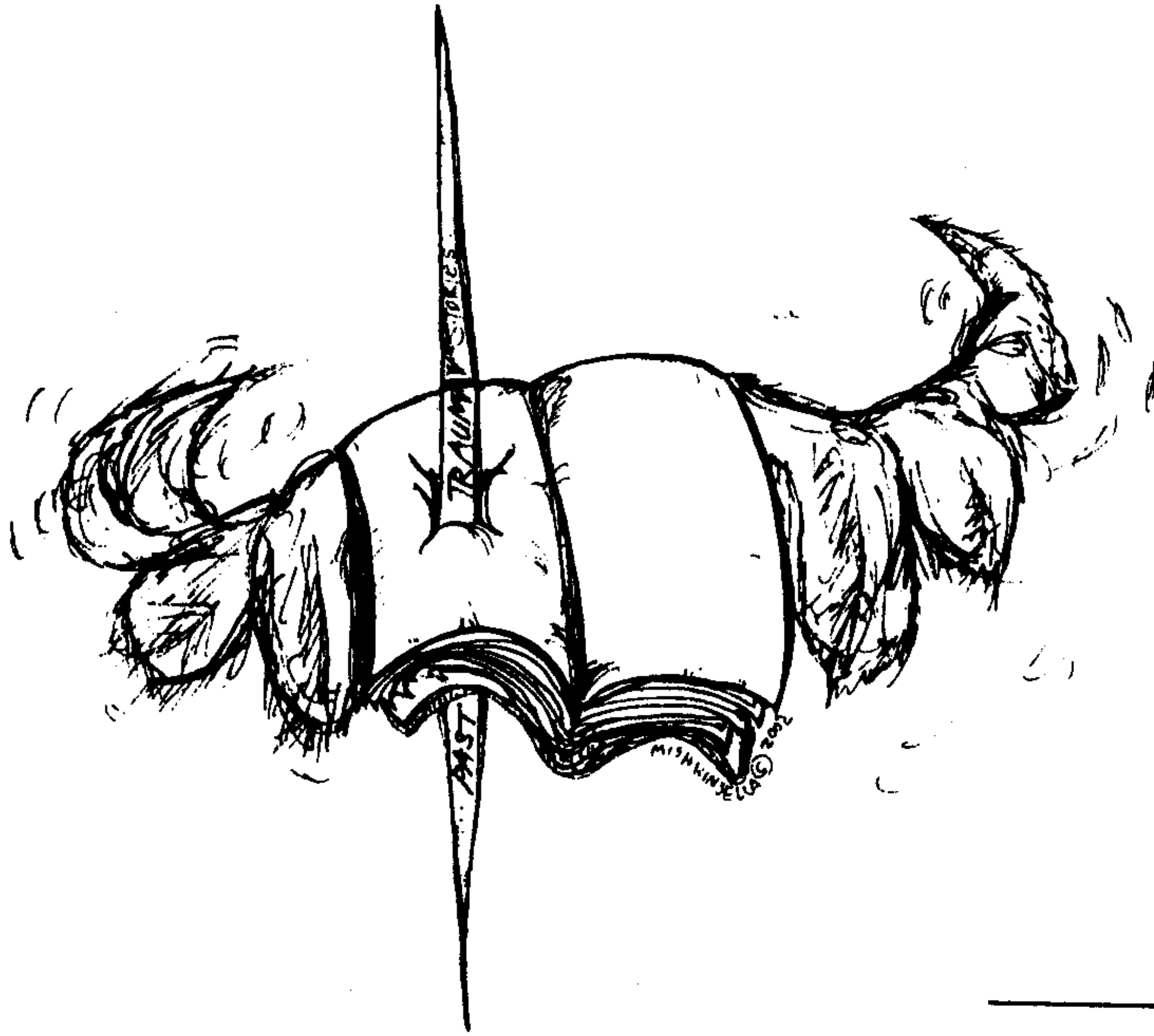
In closing, I want to emphasize that cultivation of Generative Mind is part of an ongoing practice. It is not a technique that one learns in a day; it is a commitment. Sometimes students and clients say, "You seem to be asking a lot." The response is, of course, "What else are you doing with your life?" If we engage in such practices, our lives deepen and improve; if we don't, we may feel victimized or disappointed by life. It's good to have a choice!

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SECTION I

THE SELF-RELATIONS APPROACH



Self-Relations Stories

Charles Holton, L.C.S.W., is a psychotherapist in private practice with offices in the research triangle area of North Carolina. He blends Self-Relations, mindfulness, hypnosis, and cognitive-behavioral approaches in his work with adults, children, families and couples. Clinical interests include trauma resolution, dissociative disorders, pain reduction, depression and anxiety. He has written about and taught Ericksonian psychotherapy, Narrative therapy, and clinical hypnosis. His writings are available at his website, www.chuckholton.com. He lives in Durham with his wife Victoria Sánchez.

SELF-RELATIONS STORIES

I've been a psychotherapist in a county mental health center, a staff-model HMO and in private practice since the mid-1980s. I began studying with Steve Gilligan in 1993, and was immediately struck by his use of the *aesthetic* as a way to describe not only a way out of rigid symptom systems, but as a description of the felt sense of connecting with the unawakened potential of clients and of the unfolding of the therapy process itself. For me this honoring of the artistic, visceral, intuitive qualities latent in therapy comes to life in the practice of sensing the goodness of the symptom and of the therapist's own neglected self as a precursor to speaking directly to the client's neglected self. There is danger in this dance, as the magical and hypnotic sensibility it springs from and generates are more than metaphors, but can devolve into concrete and literal regressions when not balanced by grounding in everyday experience.

As often as not, I've been surprised by interventions that arise effortlessly from the connection with clients and afterwards remark to myself, "Ah! That was Self-Relations!" The process feels similar to other collaborative artistic experiences, and involves similar disciplines of mindfulness and responsiveness.

I'm sharing some clinical vignettes, with the customary disguised client identities, hoping to do more than just illustrate how Self-Relations has found a way into my practice in a variety of settings. I want the stories to convey something of the lively flow of relationship when

therapy is going well — how it involves more than a clever therapist delivering a well-thought-out intervention. I hope they convey how the relational field between therapist and client creates a third intelligence, and how that feels. And I hope they inspire other therapists to develop their own intuitive art forms to balance the conceptual models of professional training. If they do, I will have passed on some of the inspiration I've received from Steve.

One

"Awp. There's that hypnotic voice again. Cut it out." My supervisee was wagging her index finger at me in mock shaming while she smiled. We had been exchanging ideas on alternate endings to suggest to a client of hers bothered by trauma-related nightmares. I had gotten lost in imagining my suggestion of her client becoming twice as big as the perpetrator and wondering what she would want to say to him from this position of strength and safety. I was aware of neither the shift in my voice tone as my own consciousness entered a more imaginative state, nor of the inadvertent invitation to enter this hypnotic reverie. My supervisee sensed where my attention was coming from, and held her own position well; she even gracefully and with a touch of humor held the relational field on course in the arena of intellect and conscious intention, where she enjoys processing information and learning.

Two

My colleague's client had survived two traumas: sexual abuse by her step-father, and her mother's stated belief she brought it on herself by being a sexually provocative child. Both therapist and client were puzzled at what course to take when her granddaughter reported getting slapped in the face by the client's mother, and begged her to keep it secret. Therapist and client puzzled it out together, listing the plusses and minuses of telling, of confronting, of keeping the secret, of encouraging the child to speak up. Finally the therapist spoke to her client this way: "I just don't know what the best solution is. But as I think about what it must be like to be that child, what I would want most from you would be to be able to keep your trust, to be able to have a grown-up I could confide in safely, to know that I would be believed when I told difficult truths, and to know my sense of what I needed would be listened to and valued even when what I said made the grown-up uncomfortable. You've given all that to her already, and your presence keeps giving that to her. It's quite a gift."

The client was silent for more than a minute, eyes slightly downcast. What was she thinking? Finally, she gathered herself, looked up and stated with the earnest firmness of a child discovering her sense of agency for the first time, "I'm going to take piano lessons. I've always wanted to." She did, and enrolled in college, too, asking her therapist, "Is happiness really this easy?"

I like to think about this as an example of speaking not only *about* the client's granddaughter but also *to* the client's neglected self, to the restored relationship between the client's mature adult presence and her neglected self, naming the healing of that relationship. The safety this creates allows the emergence of the "child ego state": *here is a place you will be believed*. The result is not simply the emergence of unformed *fressen* energy, though. Liberated enthusiasm for life is mediated by an adult awareness that holds and blesses it. The client's adult presence senses the presence of a desire (the connection with the neglected self), and provides three acts of sponsorship of this capacity to know what she wants. She assesses that it's a good and healthy thing, blocks the usual alien curses, and announces the intention to act: "I'm going to take piano lessons." The connection of

adult and child energy made the decision both responsible and joyful.

Three

Nancy is a 33-year-old married African-American mother of two children who came to one therapy session about six months ago and then a second appointment two weeks ago. In the second session she disclosed a litany of problems that were feeling out of control: smoking stopped and restarted despite her intense motivation to quit for good; eating binges followed by periods of avoiding food; moody periods of intense irritability; and recently, episodes of taking impulsive one- or two-day driving trips to the beach, out of state, to the mountains, virtually disappearing without explanation from work and family obligations. She reported feeling frightened of the increasing frequency of the day-trips, and of their impulsive, out-of-control quality. She was also feeling more hopeless and depressed as she repeatedly failed in her attempts at changing or controlling her behavior. She had described a history of sexual abuse in her first session, and wondered if these current problems were the result of this history.

The number and intensity of the problems she was reporting suggested to me that addressing them individually would be impractical if not interminable. Besides, her own attempts at using will power and behavior change strategies had not worked. The connection she made with her history of sexual abuse made sense and provided a unifying conceptual approach for explaining the symptoms, but didn't necessarily suggest how to prioritize treatment.

What seemed the common thread in her story and presentation was her attempt to obliterate various desires (for distance, food, nicotine, escape and assertiveness), and their uninvited rebound into consciousness with ferocity. What seemed lacking both in her historical experience and her current demeanor was any tenderness toward these needy, primitive, somatic aspects of her self.

In talking to her about how I was thinking about her difficulties, I maintained a felt-sense of connection with her competent, adult self while holding a sense of tenderness for the deprived and neglected aspects of her self closed down since the sexual abuse. I spoke of the

urges and compulsions as wonderful news. All the abuse could have killed her, or killed her spirit, but it hadn't. *She's still alive. The symptoms prove she's still alive.* I talked about supporting the emerging awareness children have of what they want and their ability to ask directly for it, while lovingly setting limits and guiding them to acceptable choices. "If a child wants cotton candy for breakfast, you can tell her that you're glad she understands that food is to be enjoyed, and that you're glad she knows she likes sweet things, that jelly on the toast and orange juice are sweet things she can enjoy at breakfast. And you can tell her that you're really looking forward to going to the fair soon and eating some cotton candy, and you know she can also enjoy the rest of the good food at breakfast as well as looking forward to eating cotton candy at the fair." I spoke of the need for her to really touch that place in her consciousness, in her body, that wanted things, that wanted what she wanted, and really appreciate it that *it hadn't been killed. It had survived.* Nancy was nodding in agreement.

I talked about how we all adapt to traumatic circumstances as kids so we can survive, that we all take on more than we can emotionally handle and so have to shut down parts of ourselves just to be able to make it. I read her part of the Antonio Machado poem Steve Gilligan quotes in *The Courage to Love* (1997):

Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt — marvelous error! —
that I had a beehive
here inside my heart.
And the golden bees were making white combs
and sweet honey
from my old failures.

I talked about how letting those longings speak brings them into the light of day so that they can find the forms that are useful to us in our adult lives.

She liked the ideas, and the tone of the conversation. She lit up, she smiled, and was thoughtful in both receiving the ideas and in wondering how they would turn out to be helpful to her. I don't know if it occurred to her how actively and directly I was communicating with both her cognitive self and her neglected

self, but she was clearly reorganizing her attitudes about these "impulses."

Wanting her to be fully informed about available treatments, I mentioned the medications frequently prescribed to people with trauma-related symptoms to help stabilize mood in the presence of intrusive symptoms. Her face became sharp and her voice hard: "I will *never again* put anything in my body that I don't want there!"

I smiled. I almost winked. "There she is," I said through my grin. "You feel her, don't you?" She smiled and said yes. "You know, whenever you notice very passionate responses like that flowing through you, especially when they're kind of 'either/or' responses, or self-protective responses, that could remind you consciously to connect with that young, spirited energy that really knows what she wants. *I'm so glad she survived.* We don't have to go through a lot of stories about your history to get to that energy. It's in you right now. I expect you're going to have some interesting conversations with yourself in the next couple of weeks." In this moment of the psychotherapy session I felt myself most informed and guided by Self-Relations in that I didn't *talk about* her "neglected self" as a concept or *interpretively notice* that she was angry, or connect the response explicitly to historical abuse. I literally felt the emergence of that energy as a wonderful blessing, one weaving protection and individuation and the will to live with fear and hard-earned suspicion. Rather than reduce it to story, history, or concept, rather than reify it into a "part" of her or an "inner child," I felt its goodness and spoke to her and it, and invited her implicitly and explicitly to connect with it affectionately. *Fall in love with the goodness of the symptom first, discover how it's essential. Set limits on its harmful expression second, while simultaneously cultivating curiosity about how its purpose can blossom in even more useful and helpful ways.*

When I saw her this week she laughed about her husband teasing her for talking to herself so much lately, and recounted with some pride the kinds of conversations she was having with herself. She called it "reasoning with herself," but acknowledged an infusion of tenderness and compassion for the wants and needs she was just beginning to be aware of consciously. "Taking a drive would be a *good thing*, but we should include the

whole family on a weekend day like this . . .” As a result of including more of herself in the conversation, she was feeling less out of control and less depressed.

As I thought about the two recent sessions afterwards, it seemed to me that there was another marker of the integration she was accomplishing. The sultry, somewhat oversexualized demeanor that was intermittently present in the first two sessions was absent in our last meeting, replaced with a more consistently clear and direct style of relating, a presence I would characterize as quietly buoyant.

What seems unusual to me about the work we did was that *my direct sponsorship of Nancy's neglected self* activated *her* sponsorship of this energetic presence in her consciousness. Although this was combined with a conversation that wove through many themes inviting changing attitudes toward her feelings and impulses, there was no explicit directive to identify and change those attitudes. And there was no explicit behavior-change work. The *shift in her relationship* with her impulses and feelings — from “frustration with failure to control” to “delight with success in guiding” — was a fundamental one that produced a broad band of healing across mood, behavior, impulse control, and hopefulness.

Four

His wife had alerted me he wasn't coming back after this session. I had been working with her off and on for three years, and although her waxing and waning depressions had responded to supportive and cognitive interventions, she had never been able to confront her verbally abusive husband about the impact of his critical and intimidating style on her, and now her depression was back with a vengeance. Even his six children cutting him off one by one had not driven him to look at how his manner distanced and alienated those he loved. But he agreed to come in and talk for a few sessions to find out how he could help his wife with this most recent depression, characterized by her sleeping most of the day away and having little energy for interaction, and barely enough for chores.

Initially I had handled his guardedness and hair-trigger “Oh, there we go again — it's all my fault!” exclamations with a mixture of easy friendliness and a serious, intellectualized approach to discussing the systemic dy-

namics of their marriage: how his emphasis on discipline and structure and her emphasis on connection and pleasant interaction had polarized over the years into his tyranny and her conflict-avoidance. This had helped him feel less resistant to the therapy process, but allowed him to tell their friends that I had explained how the marital problems and cut-offs from the children were actually her fault, not his, for not being disciplined enough. So much for the liberating power of intellectual inquiry.

So in this session, being very attached to the outcome of his working on being less verbally abusive, and forewarned it was my last chance to work with him, my confrontation may have been a bit shrill, and my energy a bit desperate. I met his “Oh, so it's all my fault!” with “No, only the parts that *are* your fault.” I improvised a metaphor to de-focus the conversation from blame and emphasize changing behavior productively: “If you were trying to spear fish and didn't understand how light refracts in water, you'd keep stabbing away at the fish and never catch one. I'm telling you if you thrust your spear over here instead of where the fish appears to you to be, you will actually catch a fish instead of starving. Your children have all but disowned you, and your wife would leave you if she didn't feel obligated to stay. She sleeps the day away and dreads your outbursts when she's awake. I'd say you're on the verge of starving.” I just knew I'd gone too far, and was nearly floored when he asked if I would see him individually.

During our first individual session I spent most of the hour waiting. His defensive review of how reasonable all his decisions had been as a father (“Don't children need *some* kind of limits?”) was generating in me irritation, disappointment at the backslide, and a resistance to offering support for this shoring up of his defenses. I did not want to act from this quality of relationship with him. Then, about forty minutes into the session, his eyes became moist and his speech became soft and gentle. “I just worry that years from now,” and I knew he meant after his death, “my kids will want to have a relationship with their father and it will be too late.” I knew somatically this was an opening of his soft, tender center, and felt a deep and genuine sense of connection with him. I could speak from this place well. “I really sense how deeply you love your children, and your wife. It seems to me a great tragedy that throughout your life, they

have only been able to sense it as control. I have certainly sensed it as control before, and I know they have. But just now as you talked about your children's lives *after your death*, you had only their well-being in mind, not one iota of selfishness or control. And their loss opened up your sadness, for them, not for you. That's real love. It's so terribly sad that they have always experienced that as control. It's such a loss for all of you."

When I saw his wife the next day she told me he liked my "soliloquy on love." She thanked me for helping him become more patient, loving, and less abusive and controlling. "It's just less and less an issue between us." She was profuse in her thanks to me, and I deflected the praise with an emphasis on how it was *his* work that made the difference, but she was stern and firm in her response. "Look here. *You* made the difference. He was

abusive for forty years before he started seeing you and he's not now. You are the only difference that mattered." It was nice to hear her so decisive, and I moved my discomfort aside to accept the praise. I became aware as we talked of a great sense of relief, a burden having been lifted. I was realizing that it took all my skill and experience to help this family; and we had, in a sense, just barely made it over some minefields. The relief I felt was my own adult self letting myself off the hook for not having pulled off a similar kind of healing in my own family when *I* was a kid: if it took a grown, experienced therapist to set this broken bone, no wonder I was unsuccessful as a kid, try as I might. *And before this moment I was not even aware it was an issue for me.* It was one of those moments when the therapist gets therapy from the client. I felt close to tears myself, and well blessed.

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The Problem is the Solution: Return from Exile

David J. Stern, Psy.D., is a clinical psychologist, healer, and therapy teacher. Through "Thinking-Heart" skills training, Dr. Stern teaches us how to restore the relationship between our cerebral intelligence and the intelligence of the heart and between everyday life and the living and palpable intelligence with which all of life is imbued. Through this process, our problems become a path to peace and true freedom.

For the past 15 years, Dr. Stern has presented at regional and international conferences and has consulted with medical organizations, state agencies, and local faith communities. He is a skilled and engaging public speaker and has been on the faculty of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Association of Rhode Island and the New England Center for Existential Therapy. He currently resides in Providence, Rhode Island, where he has a busy psychotherapy, healing, and consultation practice.

THE PROBLEM IS THE SOLUTION: RETURN FROM EXILE

"The stone that was rejected by the builder, became the cornerstone." — Psalm 118:22

When our lives break down, we experience pain. Every breakdown brings us face to face with the ways that our everyday, finite existence is surrounded by and permeated with eternal, mysterious, and, according to most spiritual traditions, fertile darkness. In the face of this pain-filled awareness, we tend, naturally, to flee. However often we flee, circumstances will, time and again, bring us back and give us another opportunity to make peace with this reality.

In his book, *Works of Love*, philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard (1847) speaks of the "the temporal and the eternal" and he suggests that "it is love that really binds the two" (p. 24). He further suggests that we are commanded to love. This command is, for Kierkegaard, more than a biblical injunction. Existence itself enjoins us to love and to dwell lovingly at the meeting place of the temporal and the eternal.

When we avoid this call to dwell, with love, on the line that marks the boundary between our everyday lives and that which is somehow beyond, suffering is born. In the expression "the problem is the solution,"

Self-Relations (SR) offers one description of how the temporal and the eternal are, in our everyday lives, joined. Because problems are solutions, they call us to treat them with compassion and curiosity. The problems become our teachers. When we recognize that "the problem is the solution," and act accordingly, we suffer more effectively.¹

That the problem calls us to love suggests that the problem is imbued with a kind of intelligence. SR suggests that an intelligence greater than our own exists in the world. This chapter will explore how this intelligence makes itself known in and through the vicissitudes or problems in our everyday life, and will explore as well the question of how the problem can be the solution. It will look at the relationship between our everyday lives and the fecund darkness and uncertainty that permeate this "everydayness" (Heidegger, 1927, p. 258). Throughout this chapter, clinical descriptions will add flesh to the bones of theoretical discussion.

The River of Life²

As the oak that is latent in the acorn, the fully incarnate human being is latent in all the earlier forms of the developing self. The primary goal of the Oak is to

¹ In *The Courage to Love*, Gilligan refers to a Thomas Merton comment that speaks to the notion of effective suffering.

² This expression refers to the ways that Life, vis a vis life, keeps on coming. There is no stopping the flow. We can seem to hold it back or divert it, or simply ignore its relentless forward movement, but really, we are only kidding ourselves.

manifest itself fully. Alongside the many other trees in the forest, the oak is part of a world system of trees that is one piece of a vital and complex planetary organ system.

Each life has a specific, time-bound existence. Each life is imbued with something that is eternal. In all of its specific manifestations, Life³ presses for an ever-greater fullness of manifestation. Life, per se, is only knowable within the context of and through our temporal existence. It is through all the specific forms of life, that the eternal qualities of Life are made manifest. In his magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger announces “the priority of existence over essence” (p. 42). That is, it is only through our time-bound lives, that the essence of our lives, that Life, can be disclosed. Somehow, our lives are a meeting place of the temporal and the eternal. The axioms below describe some essential and irreducible characteristics of human existence and, when we are thinking about symptoms as solutions, are helpful to keep in mind.

Axiom 1

We humans are driven by an irrepressible inner impulse and longing to manifest our gifts and occasion the reciprocal awakening of the gifts that are latent in our fellow humans and in all of life.

This impulse is a form of love and is both unique and universal (temporal and eternal). It can be thought of as

a small sliver of God’s love. My daughter says, “Daddy, look at me.” She waits to see if I am with her. When I am, she shows me her latest trick and waits to see what brand of delight she awakens in me. My delight is both her gift to me and my gift to her. When I say, “that is wonderful, show me again,” I bless her with a welcoming love. This blessing is way-making. My welcoming love activates the relational field in which her spirit can be assured of a place to play and create and grow.⁴ The energetic river of Life flows in this reciprocal awakening of the play of spirit.⁵

In the Jewish tradition, one of God’s names is *Ha Makom* (“The Place”). When we participate with our children and fellow humans in the reciprocal sharing of the gifts of our spirit, we co-create a place where spirit can flourish and find its way into a fuller incarnation. When we do this, we are God’s emissaries. Our way-making gives reign to the dance of spirit.⁶

Axiom 2

The world calls forth from each of us some unique set of gifts. These gifts grow in a reciprocal dance with the world’s needs.

When we are called, our whole being responds automatically. Our hands move to fix what is broken, and to stroke what is hurt, soft, and alive; our hearts resonate with the pain of others; and our minds go on alert when we hear a new cry of upset from someone nearby. It ac-

³ I will capitalize the word Life when referring to a quality that is essential, irreducible to any particular instance of its expression, and, therefore, somehow, eternal.

⁴ There are many ways to describe relationships between people. Each description emphasizes particular characteristics. Relational field has a spatial quality. It also suggests that human relationships function in ways that are similar to some of the kinds of fields that physics deals with (e.g., magnetic and quantum fields). At times, I will use the term relational and attentional circuitry to describe the various kinds of circuits or channels, within the relational field, through which our love flows. When circuits are complete, energy flows freely. When love circuitry is complete in any way, then the river of Life flows more freely.

⁵ I use the term spirit to describe the flow of Life through the circuitry of this reciprocal dance of love. Something moves through this transaction that is not reducible to any element of the transaction. The transaction is the occasion for sensing the life of spirit. It is also an expression of the life of spirit and the spirit of Life.

⁶ I use the term dance to describe the aesthetic quality of the play of spirit. The impulse towards manifestation is not machine-like. While there is great precision there seems also to be art and play in the unfolding of spirit. When we watch the interaction of parent and child, we see this play, this dance that seeks only the mutual expression of Life through the particular and ever changing life-dance.

tually requires effort to shut off our organic responsiveness to the world.

When my daughter sees that her brother is sad, her whole nervous system immediately resonates with his upset. She is drawn to comfort him. She has been called by her world to attend to her brother's pain. Her voice will lilt in rhythm with his suffering and her hand may, automatically, reach out to touch him.

Axiom 3

The human spirit calls for a blessing. We all need to be blessed by a love that welcomes the full expression of these gifts.

The human nervous system requires a relational field in order for its humanness to develop (Siegel, 1999). Even though our identity has its home base within the folds of our flesh, human identity is also thoroughly field based. Humans live not only within the interactional confines of basic animal impulses. We spend much of our time beyond these basic animal concerns in a rich dialogical stew that lives within and between us. Our self is utterly bound up with the human community. Heidegger (1927) calls this radical intimacy of humans with one another, "Being-with," or "with-ness" (p. 153).

We can only come into a relationship with ourselves through the witnessing gaze of another. Children share their experiences with us in an unmediated torrent of emotion and action. When my son was young and assaulted us with cranky tiredness, we embodied and shared our witnessing ways by listening and speaking to him. We would ask, "Are you tired?" He would nod and reach for one of us to pick him up and take him to bed. We had given him a name that fit his experience. Later, he would say, "Momma, I am tired." He could now recognize and represent his own experience. The self-dialogical relationship with his own tiredness was born in dialogue with his parents.

The river of Life flows through and occasions the establishment of the circuitry of this reciprocal and ever changing dance. The river of Life drives the dance to find ever-new forms of realization.

Pain

"Life is great, but sometimes it hurts like hell" (Gilligan, 1997). Self-Relations offers us an invitation to face and accept the fact that pain is a necessary part of life. This is something that we always already know. However, as a culture, we have conspired to flee this knowledge. Our skill at fleeing is so pervasive, that we have come into a collective forgetfulness about what we are fleeing. When we say that the "problem is the solution," we invite ourselves to attend, through the problem, to neglected aspects of self, that carry memories of experiences of pain that was not touched by a healing love. SR reminds us of what we have always already known.

One of the things that we all learn very quickly is that the river of Life not only brings new things to life but also carries things away. The origins of the river are shrouded in mystery. Where the river ends is equally mysterious. Our lives are bounded by and permeated with mystery.

In the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tse (604 B.C.) describes the darkness as a "deathless valley of mysterious motherhood" (p. 28). In Buddhism, it is called *sunyata* ("fertile emptiness"). In the Jewish mystical tradition, it might be called the Eyn Sof, a name of God that means "without end." This quality of God dwells beyond all thought and is the source of all creation. In our everyday lives, we know this darkness as uncertainty, as possibility, and as death.

For spiritual adepts in each of these traditions, the darkness is fertile and all life somehow arises from and returns to that darkness. This darkness is permeated with a primordial intelligence that is responsible for the play of light and dark. When we lose a loved one, we may forget that this darkness is a "deathless valley." At these times, we may see only the unfathomable darkness that has claimed the life of a friend.

A human life emerges from shadow, has a brief moment in the sun, and then passes away. When we see the first crocuses poking their flowered heads through wet spring snow, we feel delight. How can anything so delicate and beautiful survive this early spring chill. The next time we look the flowers will have wilted. The pleasure we take in this event contains the fullness of both the arising from cold wet snow and the anticipated wilting to come.

I watch my children sleep. I feel a certain joy. Nestled in the bosom of this joy, I also sense the promises of the many possible and inevitable kinds of loss. There is a vivid awareness of all the loss that lies ahead and I feel a deep sadness. Then suddenly, from hidden and dark depths, the precious beauty of this dew-like moment shines forth — I am watching them sleep and I see and sense how fragile they are. Their lives are not solid and fixed things. They could, so easily, be taken from me and from this life. God forbid! I also know how quickly they are growing. How long will it be before they are grown and gone to college or to some life of their own? How long will I be able to watch their peaceful sleeping? All of this, the certainty of the passing of this precious moment, as well as the aliveness that fills this moment, are part of what makes watching our children sleep almost painful.

In a way that we can never finally grasp and master, the eternal animating way of Life permeates this play of light and dark, this time-bound dance of life and death. Heidegger (1971) says the following about pain: “The more joyful the joy, the more pure the sadness slumbering within it. The deeper the sadness, the more summoning the joy resting within it” (p. 153). He goes on to say, “The play which attunes [sadness and joy] by letting the remote be near and the near be remote is pain . . . Pain so touches the spirit of mortals that the spirit receives its gravity from pain. That gravity keeps mortals with all their wavering at rest in their being.”

If we truly sit with our life and all that we have come to know and love, then we must face the pain which opens our hearts and minds to the play of joy and sorrow. Life calls us to the place where we are able to feel the play of pain through the registers of our thinking heart. When we let ourselves be brought to the center of our lives and agree to sit with our pain, this play exercises, strengthens, broadens and deepens our capacity to be fully human. As Heidegger suggests, it provides us with gravity or groundedness and even a vantage point from which we can fully enjoy the play of birth and death, light and dark.

The juncture of the eternal and the temporal is marked by pain. In this moment where we feel so alive, we feel the darkness that permeates and promises. It is the mysterious and fertile darkness that makes this jewel-

like moment sparkle with magical brightness. The jewel-like sparkle also calls us to wonder about the origins of this light, calls us to peer into the darkness, that “deathless valley,” seeking, beyond our situation to the Source of life.

Pain and Sponsorship

The capacity to sit with our pain takes skill. This skill is developed through what SR calls sponsorship. When we see some experience that is overwhelming our child or friend and we agree to practice skillful loving-kindness towards that experience, then we are practicing sponsorship. When we demonstrate a willingness to sponsor this experience, we are also teaching that this experience has a place in the human community and we model for our child or friend how to practice loving-kindness towards themselves, how to practice self-sponsorship.

The same is true in clinical work. When we resonantly respond to the pain of our clients with some appropriate form of love, we become the occasion for our clients to experience a new way of being with their pain and with themselves as individuals who have and will experience pain again simply by virtue of their being human.

The ability to turn and face the darkness requires courageous and skillful sponsorship. When young children first hear the thunder of a loud storm, they often become frightened and race for safety and comfort. When a toy breaks or a pet dies, they feel pain and confusion and seek comfort and understanding.

Our natural impulse is to resonate with the pain of our fellow humans. The pain that begins in the other travels through our nervous system, awakening our own memories and living awareness of pain. Life calls us to sponsorship. When we feel the pain of another, it is natural that a connecting cry wells up in us. We are called to sing a raw song of compassion. Our stomach and heart will likely have registered the pain first. The diaphragm automatically presses upward nudging the lungs to action. Our heart’s resonance sends messages to our breathing, which, in turn, sends vibrations up the throat. Our vocal chords are deployed and our mouth shapes itself to transmit our song. A gentle “ooohh” arcs through the field and bathes our child in this connecting river of song.

As a parent, when that other is my beloved child, I feel called to transform our sympathetic pain into song and send it to my child. After I “ooohh” for a while, the “ooohh” might become a lullaby. I might sing about a baby rocking on a treetop and falling, cradle and all, to earth. Representing the reality that my child is beginning to face, the song mingles life and death, light and dark. Encompassing both life and death, song says that Life as spirit continues beyond life and death and we will sing beyond life and death.⁷

I have, on a number of occasions, felt called to sing to my clients. I sang during a very brief treatment with one client. We had done Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) and some structured SR work. During one of the five sessions that we had, I felt that my client’s grief kept getting stuck and swallowed. When it welled up again, I began to sing the melody to “Amazing Grace.” My client began to relax and weep openly. During our last session, I asked the gentleman what he felt had been most useful in helping him resolve his grief. Without hesitation, he responded that my singing had made it possible for him to tolerate the pain of his grief. He felt that the song made a place for his pain and also gave him comfort.

This transformed circuit of pain and pain is an expression of spirit and love. If we return to Heidegger for a moment, we will remember that in pain, the remote is brought near and the near is made remote. In our pain, the light of our everyday life and the mysterious darkness that surrounds and permeates this life, are

attuned to one another. This is something that we can feel in the interpenetrating and nuanced play of joy and sadness. Returning to Kierkegaard, we recall that love joins the temporal and the eternal. The temporal refers to life with a lowercase “l.” The eternal refers to Life or even to darkness understood as a “deathless valley.” When pain arises in the world, we are called to sponsorship. When we agree to sit with our own pain or the pain of someone else, when we submit to the call to love, the world becomes whole. In love, the temporal and the eternal are joined. In love, the light of our everyday lives and the dark mystery that permeates that life share a common home. In and through the love of sponsorship, the human spirit deploys itself and dances its dance, as, in, and through the relational field.⁸

Pain and Exile

Pain is an integral part of life. The confusion, hurt, and fear that we experience are simply a normal part of life. However, if as children, our pain is met with abuse or neglect, then pain ceases to be an opportunity for connection and for the life of grace to move through the circuitry of love. Instead, the confusion, hurt, and fear that may arise with pain come to be associated with abandonment or violence. Beyond the feelings of hurt, confusion, and fear, pain now becomes the occasion for feelings of isolation, self-hatred, and hopelessness. Instead of pain being the harbinger of love and grace, pain is the harbinger of existential isolation and/or psychological death.⁹ When we feel pain, we no longer feel that

⁷ This kind of song stands in stark contrast to Disney-like songs that cling only to the light. Like so many of the children’s stories remade for popular consumption, darkness may have a central place in the tale, but, by the end of the story, its place is always overcome by the light. These stories are meant to entertain. Their perfect endings leave the mind flaccid. Darkness has once again been banished. We can relax. Unlike Grimms’ tales or the above mentioned lullaby, the young mind is left with nothing of reality to chew on. There is no grit in this clam from which some more substantial gem might emerge.

⁸ From a biological standpoint, sitting with our reality and the pain that we find there literally exercises our brain. It increases the range of emotions that our limbic system is able to experience and express. It increases the capacity of our higher cortical functions to live in a dynamic relationship with our emotional brain and provide a dialogical space within which our emotions can play and find a home. Our basic fight or flight responses and the complementary abilities for the brain to calm, soothe and achieve repose are also exercised and given a chance to practice more skillful autonomic self-regulation.

⁹ When you break down the term psychology into its component parts, you get the root words, *psyche* and *logos*. *Psyche* translates as spirit and *logos* as reckoning or, as Heidegger painstakingly explains, discourse. Based upon this etymological breakdown, psychology means the discourse or dialogical unfolding of spirit. Psychological death means a death of the unfolding of spirit.

we no longer feel that we are a part of the circle of life and the wisdom and grace that the spirit of Life imparts.¹⁰



For us and for our children, when the experience of pain is met with neglect or abuse, it marks the beginning of exile from the center of our being and from our sense of belonging to the human community. Because our experience has taught that pain leads to assault or neglect, when we feel the very normal vicissitudes of life and feel the various kinds of pain that lie at the center of life, we will have to flee.

How does this flight work and what are its consequences? When flight from pain becomes an established way of life, how does life or Life work?

Clinical Example, Part 1

A child who will later become an alcoholic grows up in a household where both parents drink, in what might be called a problem fashion.¹¹ The father comes home from work and he and the mother sit down and have two or more stiff drinks. One or two beers or glasses of wine accompany dinner and are followed by after-dinner drinks. By the end of the evening both parents have consumed 6–10 ounces of alcohol. Before dinner, the boy is expected to leave the parents alone while they drink and chat. By the time they are ready to notice the boy, both parents are quite inebriated.

The child is full of life/Life and wants to tell his father how his day has been, what has happened at school, or what he wants to do this weekend. His father has been away all day and the boy wants his father's attention. He sees his parents talking together. They are impatient with him and put off his efforts to join in the conversation. When his father is ready to listen, he is glazed, distracted, friendly but not really listening. He

yesses his son until his son quiets down. At some point in this young boy's life, somewhere between the ages of 5 and 8, he stops trying to talk with his father.

This marks a beginning of this young man's exile. His impulse to talk and share the events of the day is a vibrant expression of his irrepressible spirit seeking *spielraum*, a place to play. The parents seem unable to make way for the vibrant life of spirit that animates their son. His spirit is denied a place in this familial playground. In the relational field of this family, we can say that the relational circuitry is not well developed. We can also say the efforts of spirit to awaken and activate the circuitry of love are thwarted.

The river of Life flows from children to parents, and then, back again. We have referred to this as relational circuitry. We can also see how this movement traces a kind of circle. Spirit finds expression in some experience that is transmitted to the parent. The parent feels something of the spirit of their child and their own spirit is awakened to a process of connection and love. This awakened love impulse moves to complete the circle and the circuit. However, for this young man, the circuit or circle has not, within the confines of his immediate family, been able to find completion.

Unable to find what he needs at home, he looks for connection in the larger world beyond his family. He finds a community of friends with whom his spirit has room to play. At the age of 13, he and his friends discover alcohol. They have fun. They get rowdy and talk a lot. They try to repeat this pleasure as often as possible and within a year the group and this young man are drinking almost daily. This goes on for years. The young man is quiet in school and quiet at home. He becomes almost invisible to all but his drinking buddies. When he is drinking, he is animated and visible. When he doesn't drink, no one can reach him and he can reach no one.

¹⁰ As we already discussed, when our children feel pain, or for that matter any strong emotion, it occasions automatic responses in our nervous system. Their pain awakens, in us, the memory of past pain and our awareness of pain that we feel in the present. If our experience of pain was met with neglect and violence, when we see pain in our children, we will react to our own empathic impulses with violence and neglect and we will be prone to react by rejecting this experience in our children.

¹¹ This clinical case is a fictional case. It is a composite that draws from bits and pieces of the experiences of many of my clients. While my clients might see something of themselves in bits and pieces of this description, they will not find any specific correlation with their own lives.

One of the SR axioms that Gilligan (1997) articulates goes like this: "The River of life moves through us except when it doesn't." We can also refer back to the axioms that were articulated earlier. The first axiom speaks of an irrepressible inner impulse and longing to manifest our gifts. What arises in this young boy and in all of us, cannot be shut off. It is the movement of spirit and of Life that seeks a welcoming love. The third axiom states that we require a welcoming love. For our spirit to manifest, it must be made welcome. It requires a relational field in which to express and find itself. In the absence of a welcoming love, the river's flow is turned aside.

The circle and circuit that has been described so far, is more complex and needs further elaboration. Spirit, as something that is, somehow, eternal and irreducible, requires a specific and nourishing relational field as a context within which to find a temporal expression. Without a rich relational field, the human spirit cannot come into a relationship with itself. We cannot have a relationship with our own spiritual aliveness without that spirit first finding a welcome in and through the nervous system of other loving human beings. The circle that is completed between human beings simultaneously traces a circle between eternity and temporality, between the irreducible and mysterious qualities of the human spirit and its emergence into the field of human relations. These two circles are different dimensions of the same circle. One aspect of the circle traces the interpersonal circuit and the other traces the circuit that links the transpersonal to the personal dimension of existence.



For the young boy in our story, the movement of his spirit into the relational field is not received. Instead of one circle that joins the eternal aliveness of spirit with the specific temporal context, joining parent and child in the relational field, there emerge two nearly disconnected circles. The boy's irrepressible and irreducible core longings rise up with rhythmic regularity. The river presses for free flow. Anticipating the pain of rejection,

his body and mind attempt to quell the upwelling of his spirit. In the face of anticipated rejection and, held in place by muscles and habits of mind, the initial impulse wisely submits to this suppression and subsides a little. This rising up and settling back down describe one aspect of this new circular movement. It is an almost closed circle.

The emerging pattern of drinking describes the development of a second circle. The first drink depresses inhibitory brain functions and allows spirit to slip out and dance for a while. In the absence of parental sponsorship of spirit, alcohol becomes the de-facto sponsor.

Mediated by the new de facto sponsor, the second circle looks like this: The young man experiences some vague discomfort or restlessness. What once was keenly felt as an inner impulse to connect and commune is long forgotten. This impulse triggers the memory of pain that was never graced by love. However, over years of responding to the first signs of this pain with a drink, even that pain is forgotten.

So, hidden in darkness — a darkness born of profound forgetfulness — the spirit rises up in its rhythmic motion towards full manifestation. On the surface the young man begins to feel uneasy or restless and immediately his mind flees to the next opportunity he will have to drink. Driven by the inner movement of forgotten longing, his thinking circles around and takes refuge in this pattern and plan to drink. With the first drink, comes the familiar moment of pleasure and release.

The pattern is this — the unease arises, finds refuge and momentary release in the drinking, and then subsides. This describes and completes the second circle. The inner and outer circles almost connect, then he flees and the circles are sundered.

Before going on, it might be useful to say something about alcohol's form of sponsorship, which is sloppy and incomplete.¹² First, it allows the spirit to dance without providing the balancing holding that human sponsorship offers. The river of Life not only needs place to flow; it needs the banks of the river to give shape and coherence to that flow. Human sponsorship helps us

¹² There is perfection even in this form of sponsorship. The inadequacy of alcohol's sponsorship sets the stage for an eventual and necessary breakdown which must take place if true sponsorship and healing are ever to occur.

become a skillful presence to ourselves and to the mysterious life of our spirit. It helps us stay with our pain and within the attuned balance of joy and sorrow. The absence of this kind of holding can be disastrous. Most of us have seen the wildness of the human spirit when it is channeled through an alcohol-soaked nervous system.

Human sponsorship brings two spirits into resonant relationship. In this dance, each circle contributes its unique gifts to the life of the other. The two circles find an evolving balance in the dance and a new wholeness in and through the other.



As a very different kind of 'spirit,' alcohol frees the human spirit to dance alone. This is the second way that the sponsorship of alcohol is dangerously incomplete. Cut off from the larger relational field, this dance quickly becomes empty and lifeless. Without the corrective functions of the human communal dance, the individual life becomes unbalanced. If you watch people who are drunk and who are having a conversation, it is easy to see how little connection exists between the people. At first glance, they seem lively enough. But upon closer inspection, this aliveness shows itself to be quite hollow. Alcoholism creates and reinforces painful isolation. It is a form of exile from the human community from which it is often difficult to return.

The de facto sponsorship of alcohol is hard to let go of. We prefer the devil we know to the one we don't. Because alcohol brings some reliable and momentary freedom from pain and despair, it is hard to give up. Also, when our young man first felt the rejection of his parents, he was powerless to do anything about it. Drinking gives him a limited but very real sense of control over his experiences of pain. He may live alone in his alcoholic world, but it is a world over which he has some margin of control.¹³

Symptoms and the Mobius Connection

The parallel circles of which we have been speaking

can be represented by a loop of paper. If we take a strip of paper and attach the two ends, we find that we have a simple loop of paper with two surfaces, one inside and one outside surface. These surfaces are separated from one another. There is no way to get from the inside to the outside. This is the apparent situation that we find ourselves in when we are trapped in symptom patterns and disconnected from the spiritual ground of our lives.

Now, undo that loop and, holding the two ends, give the paper a twist and then reconnect the two ends. This simple twist is the occasion for a marvelous transformation. No longer does the loop have two sides or surfaces. There is now only one surface. You can demonstrate this by starting at any point on the surface of the loop and then start traveling along that surface. You will find that no matter where you begin, you will traverse the entire surface area of the loop. Inside and outside are now, somehow, one and the same. This twisted loop is called a mobius strip and it offers a wonderful and somewhat more accurate picture of the reality with which we are wrestling.

Though the distinction between inside and outside quickly disappeared, when we initially twist the paper, we are connecting the inside with the outside and the outside with the inside surfaces. Before they were connected, inside and outside were opposing surfaces. After the connection, the difference evaporates.

We tend to forget who we were before the original patterns of wounding drove parts of our spirit into hiding. Because we have made use of our symptom patterns for so long, we find ourselves trapped in those symptoms. It is as if our parallel circles have become separated by a chasm that we cannot bridge.

We feel trapped and can't seem to get past the looping surface along which we are traveling. Due to our profound forgetfulness, the other side, the side of spiritual connection, seems unreachable. How can we make what seems to be an impossible shift so that we leave this miserable side of the loop and get to the other side, the side that is apparently free of problems?

¹³ The control is relative. Alcohol is a powerful 'spirit' and, in a sense, exercises its own control in the relationship. In Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), the first step towards recovery involves recognizing that one is powerless over one's addiction. In the last analysis, the alcoholic has simply exchanged one form of powerlessness for another.



When we fail to heed the call of our inescapable pain, which is the voice of our core wounds, then symptoms develop as a way that the body–mind tells us that something is wrong. When our core being is made to feel unwelcome, when who we are is assaulted or neglected, we cry out in pain. Our body–mind lets the world know that something is wrong. If the world fails to hear this cry, our body–mind exercises creativity, fierceness, and persistence to protect the wound and the ongoing, unmet core needs. It also continues to let the world know that the self-system is in need of healing: the presence of a wound or unmet need is announced by the development of symptoms. Symptoms protect and call attention to our wounds. Through their presence, symptoms call attention to the very thing that is NOT present. For example, in the case of the budding alcoholic, each drunken state reveals the longings of a free, vibrant spirit that are otherwise hidden. The relationship with alcohol also reveals the longing for some other vibrant spirit that is the occasion for a sense of freedom, comfort, and belonging. Symptoms are messengers from the inner circle to the outer circle of our life. Although inner and outer surfaces seem to be separate, the symptom marks and disguises the place where the loop of life is twisted. Like a mobius strip, the inner and outer circles of our lives are always connected.

Symptoms protect us from the recursive qualities of remembered pain that has not known grace, solace, or healing. Pain that is without the experiences of grace or healing is surrounded by hopelessness. Symptoms are the self-systems' attempt to protect us from further injury and from the hopelessness that we anticipate will accompany further injury. Aspects of the symptom disconnect us from that part of ourselves that has been wounded. This disconnect protects us from feeling constant pain and hopelessness.

In more ideal circumstances, pain is the occasion for deepening and strengthening human community. Pain can be the occasion for a succinct and clear communication that announces something true about existence and calls for and wins love. The symptom is therefore a coded form of communication, encrypted to protect the core from violation, but also from the blessings that

might come from validation. Usually, though not always, the coded form is designed to win the attention of someone or some community who is genuinely and skillfully curious. The symptom seeks a new relational field where the play of spirit will be welcome and where inner and outer circles can be joined. The symptom is a convoluted channel through which the pressure of the river's flow is felt and communicated.

When we are bound up in looping patterns of symptom behavior, we generally are not conscious of the core wounds and the neglected aspects of self that are still waiting for healing. Not only did these original patterns of injury give birth to the symptoms, but it is also the ongoing presence and aliveness of that tender core that was wounded and the repeated triggering of the pain associated with that wounding that energizes the symptoms. Symptoms, or problem behaviors, stand between us and a more direct experience of the original pain. This is both the good and bad news. Symptoms protect us from being overwhelmed by the full force of the original pain even as they link us to the original pain. Symptoms are both a path and an obstacle to healing.

We can think of the problem behaviors as the outer surface of the moebius loop and the ongoing aliveness or spirit that animates the 'neglected self' as the inner surface of the loop. Inside and outside are apparent strangers to one another. When inner pain is once again triggered, the symptom pattern commences. Because the symptom behavior is designed to avert pain, it never touches the core wound. When the symptom pattern reaches its looping conclusion, nothing is fundamentally changed. Because the core impulses to experience and express love persist, we continue to experience that pain that has never been blessed by a healing love. When we respond to the pain with our symptom pattern, we disconnect from some aspect of our own life and the longing that presses for love. That impulse collapses in on itself (circle one) and the symptom completes its course (circle two).

There is some momentary satisfaction. We have once again escaped our pain and the hopelessness that permeates that place. However, we have not answered the fundamental questions of our being; they persist and when next they arise, so will the symptom pattern.

Clinical Story, Part 2

Let us return to the young man who has now been drinking for 10 years. He is 23 when he meets his future wife at a club. They drink together and have a great time. He is able to talk and play and have fun with her. Whenever they go out, he has a drink right away. When he is with her, he doesn't want to be that invisible, untouchable, and unreachable person. He doesn't want her to see the kid that was silenced by his parents' neglect. Sometimes when he drinks, he has a few too many and he becomes fuzzy. It is hard to see her, to stay in the conversation or the dance. She worries about his drinking. He worries about it too and tries to keep a lid on it. He doesn't want to scare her away.

This works for a while. They get married and continue to drink together. When she becomes pregnant with their son, she stops drinking. Suddenly, he feels alone and out of sync with her. At day's end, he no longer has a partner with whom he can drink and talk about the events at work and about his hopes and dreams.

Some part of him has vague memories of the aloneness he felt watching his parents drink and talk. He remembers feeling left out. He remembers failed efforts to join in, to be heard and seen. He feels the hopelessness and loneliness again.

His wife invites him to join her and not drink. He tries and becomes quiet, sullen and invisible again. Without the alcohol, he doesn't know how to be visible. He doesn't know how to talk and be a part of the world. He is silenced by his own memories. She is confused by this change in him, pulls back and begins to turn all of her energies toward their son. He starts drinking again. He drinks alone and watches television. Sometimes, he stops at a bar and has "a few" before coming home. He meets some buddies there and has a good time. His visits to the bar become more regular and longer in duration. He begins to come home late almost every night. He and his wife are becoming strangers to one another.

For the moebius analogy to be truly useful, we need to add at least one more dimension. We need to add the dimension of time. We travel this moebius strip in time. Symptom loops are not simple repetitions. They change over time. We are, in a sense, the looping moebius. With each new circuit of the loop, our body-mind brings the experience of our last circuit and this changes

the loop. However, the loop is still fundamentally the same and we find ourselves repeatedly traveling the same slowly morphing problem pattern.

Because we are attached to some aspect of the outcome that our problem behavior brings, we persist in the behavior. Our alcoholic friend chases the forgetfulness of unrequited love and the sense of social ease that comes from the uninhibiting effects of the alcohol. To preserve his place on this safe side of the mobius loop, he ignores the longer-term negative consequences of his drinking. He ignores the depression that inevitably follows the good time. The negative consequences of the drinking accumulate. They add layers of despair to the past circuits of despair. The positive experiences become fewer. Except for the first few drinks and the immediate sense of relief they bring, the dis-ease associated with his drinking is growing worse. He cannot move forward and he cannot move back.

Redemption and Healing

"One can never step twice into the same river" (Herakleitos, p. 14). However, it is still the same river. The river is both the same and never the same.

The acts that we commit are, in a certain sense, unredeemable. If during the course of our problem behaviors, we accidentally break something, we cannot undo the break. On the level of concrete physical reality, our time and our world move relentlessly forward. The water flowing down the river is never the same.

So how can we say that the river is a river at all? What about this river is the same? Kierkegaard described reality as a meeting of the infinite and the finite, as a meeting between what is eternal and ongoing and what is provisional or temporary. What is finite cannot, within its own domain, be redeemed. However, within the domain of the infinite, there is the possibility for redemption.

The gentleman of whom we have been speaking is mired in the depths of alcoholic behavior and may, over time, destroy his marriage and shatter his family. His wife may not be able to wait for that time when or if he is able to find his way into a meaningful and durable recovery. Even if he recovers from his alcoholism, their marriage may be beyond repair. The river is never the same and the water flowing to the sea waits for no one.

However, once he is sober, this same alcoholic may one day return to his former wife and his estranged son and communicate his love, his profoundest regrets, and his wishes to make amends. In *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the 8th step calls upon the recovering addict to make a "list of all the persons that [have been] harmed and become willing to make amends." The 9th step asks the addict to make "direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

In doing this, the alcoholic reconnects the inside and outside surfaces of the loop. The interior life of a once neglected or wounded love and longing now illuminates and transforms the meaning of the alcoholic behaviors. The shining forth of that interior love and longing is a blessing and it reveals the dimension of existence that is eternally present. Irrepressible longing and the love that it calls forth constitute aspects of that infinite domain out of which all finite actions emerge.

Most problem patterns emerge out of wounding or neglect of the early and varied expressions of these essential impulses (axioms one and three). Wounding or neglect leads us to disconnect ourselves from this eternal dimension of existence. These core impulses, aspects of the river of life/Life, continue to flow and so does our reflexive disconnection. When we reconnect with this dimension of existence, when we connect our everyday finite actions with the infinite, we participate in bringing the infinite dimension of life into the world. We become a servant and sponsor of that Life that is somehow eternal and, in doing so, become a beacon that shines for all to see.

The finite life that we called home may have been shattered. The divorce is final. But the infinite dimension, that place where we are more truly and lastingly at home, cannot be shattered. In this context, with or without his former wife's blessing, this alcoholic may find redemption. Should his wife be open to the blessing offered up by the ex-husband, she also has the opportunity for a kind of redemption. Understanding may penetrate the gloom of those years and bring some measure of peace to a heart wounded by those years of suffering.

The key to understanding how the symptom is, finally, a gift that might allow this man to find true con-

nection with others rather than the false consolation that alcohol allowed, is that through the whole long journey of his life, he was never able to escape his desire to connect. By always dangling the (false) fulfillment of connection, the symptom actually held and kept alive his longing for that connection. He didn't deaden himself to that longing, as he might have. He didn't shut down. The work to transform and redeem that longing to a form that blesses and enlarges his life remains and will be arduous, but would not be possible at all without the seed of hope paradoxically kept alive in the symptom itself.

The Problem is the Solution

Symptoms are the keepers of our life's primordial and irrepressible energies and impulses. The rising up of these impulses and the energetic and fierce habits of disconnection are the domain within which these impulses exercise themselves and find room for ongoing, if vicious and self-defeating, play. The intensity of symptom patterns tells us of the quality and vitality of life, even if this life is not allowed to flourish and bloom in the soil of a larger relational field.

As long as we are alive, the rhythmic looping patterns of life continue. Our patterns of mood, thought, and behavior travel their familiar paths. The core drives that animate our every action persist in their own unique rhythmic pattern. Our hunger for love and attention, our need to be made welcome, and our core impulse to manifest or share our gifts with our world cannot be turned off.

Symptoms work and they don't work. They work as keepers of the story of our wounding and neglect. They are containers for the life energies that await a proper welcome in our lives. However, they don't TRULY work because they never adequately answer the call for love and sponsorship. Symptom patterns devolve over time: eventually, the homeostasis they provide breaks down. In ways that are often hard to decode, their call for love and sponsorship leaks out into the world.

If the world can recognize and provide the proper answers to the call, then healing can begin. If not, then the symptom devolution continues. This devolution becomes an ever more urgent call for healing and constitutes a move towards breakdown. *Alcoholics Anony-*

mous also speaks of the dangers that attend this devolution. In AA, they speak of the alcoholic hitting "his/her bottom." There is a clear realization that the alcoholic is on an eroding path that is always a step away from prison, a mental institution, or death.

Individuals who have suffered childhood abuse or neglect are often able to create a self that functions well in the world for many years. Then some life transition, the birth of a child or the loss of a job, becomes the occasion for a violent return of a forgotten past; a past that is alive with the pain of unrequited and often violated core longings. When this eruption occurs, what was a kind of stalemate between inner and outer circles, becomes all out war. The symptoms of anxiety, depression, and the difficulty regulating affect and patterns of thought and memory are the embodiment of this war and are a loud cry for help.

If the symptom bearer is able to survive the breakdown, when it comes, the curse can now offer blessing. If the call finds a proper hearing and home, then healing can begin. But if the core of our being cannot find what it needs, then the impulses that animate this core will drive us to some manner of death. The system (and the symptom bearer) may self-destruct. It will kill the life that refuses to make a place for Life.

Without our symptoms, we are in danger of remaining asleep to our deepest spiritual or existential vitality. The more ruthless the symptoms, the more dangerous and difficult it is to ignore the wake-up call.

When the breakdown or breakthrough finally comes, symptoms can be mined for all the resources necessary to effect rapid and comprehensive healing. The structure and patterns of symptoms exactly reflect the structure and patterns of wounding and neglect that have been directed at the core of the symptoms-bearer's being. As such, they provide a map that can guide the healing process. With perfect precision, the symptoms tell us of the kinds of love and sponsorship that are needed.

When the symptoms win world-sponsorship and, with that, the possibility of self-sponsorship, then the energies animating the symptoms are free for the process of healing. With the map provided by the symptom structure and pattern, Life energies are able to flow along paths that make for a process of healing that is shockingly efficient and effective.

Conclusion

In love, the eternal and temporal are joined. Our clients' symptoms are a strange expression of love and they call for love. They are the stone, initially rejected, that becomes the corner stone, the foundation upon which to build a life that is imbued with a skillful and energetic love.

If we look at the structure of the particular struggle that is going on in our clients, we will find a magnificent dance of disconnection. The dance of disconnection is always precisely choreographed. It is the result of the Life of love and longing relentlessly pressing for a place in the world that bumps into the self-protective efforts to banish or sequester this Life/life. This is a dance that has usually gone on for years, and the structure is the product of a unique spirit struggling for expression and working with and against persistent, creative, and fierce efforts to contain that spirit. This polarized state can often seem hopeless and fruitless. However, from a larger perspective, this dance communicates everything we need to know about the person. We can see qualities of fierceness, creativity, tenderness, and intelligence at work. Because these qualities are warring with one another and are disconnected from one another, their wisdom forms may not be immediately apparent.¹⁴ But, again, if we, as healers remember that all life is imbued with wisdom and if we are faithful to that knowledge, then it is possible to become calm, curious, open hearted, and fierce sponsors in the face of even the most violent struggle. When we do this, the wisdom that permeates even apparent insanity will make itself

¹⁴ In his book, *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism*, Trungpa Rinpoche speaks about how all our actions have a wisdom and a neurotic form. When our actions are understood as expressions of the primordial intelligence that pervades all being, then the wisdom form arises. When we fail to see in our actions the workings of that primordial intelligence, then the neurotic form of the action is all that we have access to.

known. Then we can serve as conduits for this wisdom to become accessible to the warring self-system. Then the warring energies will naturally flow into a dance of connection.

When our clients come to see in their symptoms the frustrated play of spirit, when they can sense, in and through the elaborate and brilliantly crafted structures of their symptom-patterns, the intelligence that is at work, then they begin to see themselves and their suffering in a new light. Somehow, their life is the expression of an impossibly vast intelligence that requires *spiel-raum*, room to play. Even their symptoms, that which they wanted to reject, bear the indelible stamp of this primordial wisdom.

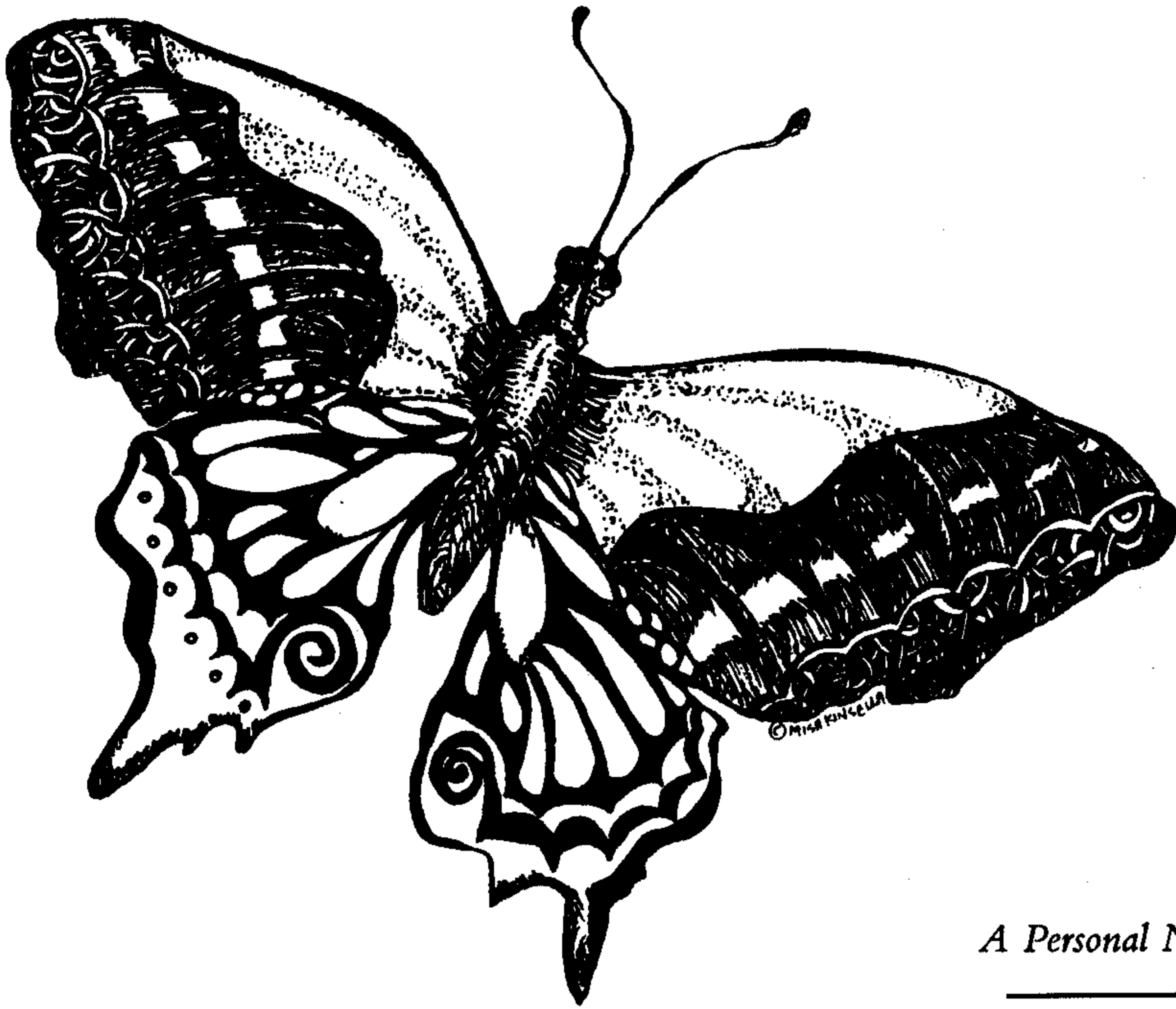
Understanding that the problem is the solution is crucial to discovering an almost hidden bridge between the finite and the infinite, between the inside and outside surfaces of the loop, between our everyday involve-

ments and the animating calls of our soul. Once the bridge is discovered, the way back home can be traveled. The more we travel this path across the bridge and back to a wholeness that is always nearby, the more does our wholeness manifest. This is true whether you think of healing as a spiritual, psychological, or physiological/neurological phenomenon.

Within the context of loving community and skillful sponsorship, this new perspective can take root and grow. With this new awareness comes a greater capacity for hope, love, and patience towards oneself and the world. Symptoms are teachers. Their elaborate structures tell us stories of wounded and neglected parts of self and point the ways to the kinds of healing and forms of love that are needed. When we listen to our symptoms with an ear for grace, then we will hear the songs they sing. Latent in every symptom is a song of Life. The problem is the solution.

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A Personal Narrative of Self-Relations Therapy

Muriel Singer, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Family Therapy at Kean University in New Jersey. She has a private practice in New York City. Her interests are in family systems health care and trauma and family resiliency.

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF SELF-RELATIONS THERAPY

What is to give light must endure burning.

— Victor Frankl

I grew up in a trance. I can recall sitting in class at P.S. 194 in Brooklyn, gazing out the large windows and completely losing my orientation to time and place. I was the type of child who could spend hours staring dreamily into space. I spent my free time wandering the streets of the neighborhood by myself, feeling like an exile, lost and dislocated. My father would often come upon me daydreaming and say to my mother in frustration, "Lily, I swear, she's unconscious!" I believe his assessment was correct, although I always wondered what, in fact, he really meant. Now, forty years later, I am finally rubbing the sleep dust away from my eyes and making my way toward consciousness.

I first heard Stephen Gilligan talk about Self-Relations therapy in 1995 at a Brief Therapy Conference in Orlando. At the time, I was completing my doctorate degree in marriage and family therapy and his ideas seemed to be based on some rather unique assumptions about the nature of problems and their intrinsic value. Gilligan, poker-faced and solemn, yet with a generous dash of playfulness, warned that we are all incurable deviants and beware, "It is only going to get worse!" He made pathology and symptomatology seem quite respectable and highly regarded. "The symptom is a solution under proper conditions! Suffering is a harbinger of new

life." He said that our wounds unearth a channel to our souls, and to the longing for wholeness that is awakening in us. Trauma and pain bear hidden gifts. They seize our attention and arouse our awareness. The pain we feel is feedback from our inner core informing us that what we are saying or doing in our lives does not honor or serve our highest selves. There is a sense that we cannot go on as we have before, with business as usual. Our symptoms are both a warning and an invitation to wake up and take notice of the tender soft center that lurks within, where the gift of life shines, longing to be held and blessed. This human spirit is at the heart of all our wounds, yearning to heal the break in belonging. Rather than seeking to change people, Self-Relations helps them become more like themselves.

As I listened to Gilligan, real and present, speak about Self-Relations psychotherapy, he called forth a disowned part of me that yearned for recognition. I felt as if he was trying to uncover regions of life and ways of understanding human suffering that had been disregarded or ignored. He seemed to be moving toward another landscape of consciousness with directions that the cognitive mind could not read or had failed to follow. Now, I watched in awe as Gilligan navigated the tributaries of his client's mind like an expert skipper, traversing passageways and corridors that appeared to be sealed and unpassable. With consummate skill and creativity, he was able to transform an impoverished experience

into one of resourcefulness. He reminded me of the Wizard of Oz, enchanting people with his magnetic charm and then miraculously giving them back the very same gifts that they already possessed, but had neglected to notice. I wanted to be able to work more like he did, by tuning into both the cognitive and the somatic zones of knowing. I realized that my family therapy training had engaged me intellectually and conceptually, but had never really touched my heart. I had spent many years thinking about therapy. Now, Self-Relations offered me a way to *be* in therapy. But did I have what it takes to really be with my clients? Did I have the guts to be with myself? Self-Relation's attention to the mind as well as to the body spoke to me on many levels. These were wild and crazy ideas. They stirred up all the irrational, demented, guttural, primordial parts of me that didn't have a voice within the psychotherapy nomenclature. Could all these primitive, untamed forces really have some intrinsic value? And, if so, could I ever learn to transcribe their meaning?

It would be three years until I got to hear Stephen Gilligan speak again. When I heard him this time, my heart was breaking and my life was falling apart. I had just found out that my husband was having an affair and we were getting divorced after 26 years of marriage. My youngest child at home was graduating from high school and preparing to move out and leave for college. My cherished dog was having seizures and had to be put to sleep. To make matters worse, I was about to turn 50 and my hair was turning gray! My whole life had been catapulted upside down and I was terrified. When I heard Gilligan say, "Something inside of you is waking up!" his words went straight to my soul. I wondered if it would ever be remotely possible to welcome this crisis in my life as a blessing. The irony and the pathos here is that when you are going through a major life crisis, you need all the strength and the courage you can possibly muster just to get through it, yet it is precisely at these times of upheaval when you feel the weakest, the least courageous and the most incompetent. It's a double whammy!

I sensed that before I could be relationally present for my clients, I had to reconcile my own severed mind and body. Before I could practice Self-Relations, I had to not only understand it in my head, I had to feel it in my bones and get to know it from the inside out. Self-

Relations demands total presence and the capacity to listen truly, madly and deeply to whatever clients are saying and feeling, or transmitting energetically. It entails emptying out, opening up and being with another human. Self-Relations therapy guides clients along new pathways that may be beyond the borders of their usual, constructed identities. It heals by restoring those forbidden parts of our beings that have been scattered, hidden, distorted, or denied. The simple permission to know oneself without self judgment seems crucial. In this chapter, I will talk about my own crooked pathway following Self-Relations therapy and how I made sense of this model in my head, and in my body. Come along as I embark on my own Self-Relations experience, as I listen for those ineffable places of disconnection and longing within myself. I mourn who I can no longer be. I celebrate who I am becoming. This is a dangerous opportunity.

In Self-Relations therapy, change takes place experientially, rather than cognitively. It is guided by a belief in the wisdom and integrity of intuitive knowing and sees the potential for wholeness in the integration of a more encompassing mind. Self-Relations emphasizes a field-based consciousness and a felt sense to our wounds and longings. It embraces a sense of a world and a wisdom that exists beyond language; a knowing that cannot be articulated directly by the cognitive self, but one that can be experienced and can transform our way of being. The essence of this model is a dual consciousness which provides a double description and a place for differences to be held despite discrepancies and oppositions. Self-Relations invites both sides of a distinction to be experienced and held simultaneously within a cooperative context where opposites can find some common ground. The practice is the experiential correlate of both/and logic where everything from joy to gloom has equal presence and belonging.

Self-Relations therapy is based primarily on establishing and sustaining contact in a relational field that generates solutions to be sponsored and integrated. One enters a context where connections are primary, like trance or stories or falling in love. Self-relations is healing because it speaks at the level of relationship; one is relative, one is in relation. Its language is metaphoric and primary. There is always an exchange that gives rise to an experiential unity. The learning in self-relations takes place within a wider, more embracing context. People

are able to change when they can connect with thoughts and patterns that go beyond the single problem or feeling. They change when they can embrace the boy and the girl, and the grown up that inhabit them. There is a constant interweaving of order and disorder in learning new things. What brings healing is the integration of multiple levels of mind and feeling. If neglected selves and feelings are sponsored and integrated, they no longer feel out of control and overwhelming. Dark, forbidden parts of one's being can transform when one is connected to them, rather than holding them at arm's length.

In Self-Relations, the relationship to self is the means by which a person can change by transforming a strict relationship to a problem, to a relationship that's playful and compassionate. Thought and feeling are both refined by making them more flexible and responsive. Gilligan's model of therapy is a freewheeling, disciplined improvisation tinged with playfulness, sorrow, and sardonic irony. There's an interplay between the logical levels of description and experience as one sashays between the knowing of the mind and the wisdom of the body. Self-Relations entices you to get in rapport with your body, touch the deepest part of your being, and come more fully into yourself. It converses in language that is both buoyant and earthbound, alternating between the precise prose of the intellect and the rhythmic poetry of the soul. Self-Relations invites you to swallow experience whole and taste it all. You enter Self-Relations therapy like a poem, with your whole body, letting it provide a taproot into the vast sanctuary of your inner being.

Each of us has been undermined or diverted from ourselves by a series of small assaults from various sources and incidents in our lives. Many of our "fight/flight" responses are laid down in early childhood in our emotional memory with no access to introspection. Some memories, though fixed and frozen, are still alive in the present, but bereft of context. In the last two years, I've learned more about love and heartbreak than I ever cared to know. I have been struggling to make peace with various regrets and losses in my life. Using self-relations as a guide through my suffering has helped me drop my mask and strip away many dearly held illusions. SR ideas have helped me reclaim the fierceness needed to face the truth of my life and also to be with it tenderly. They have helped me to keep my heart open and, every now

and then, to find myself in the delicious joy of the present moment. The following is my own lived experience of Self-Relations therapy, my personal account of recovering the wholeness of my relational being. Self-relations as therapy and benediction; I am falling into life.

As I take my first tottering step, my first glimpse into emerging consciousness, the truth and the deceit of my life seep through my pores. This awakening has cut through to the core of my being and left me feeling raw and naked. I am going through a major identity crisis. My whole way of knowing myself is no longer available. I am deranged — disordered. My life as I know it is over. Kaput! The taste of fear is sharp on my tongue. My energy is leaking out through all my wounds, draining my vitality. How heartbreaking is it to watch your husband fall madly in love with another woman? I have been through this with him before, but this time, I know in my soul that I cannot live like this any longer. I want to live in a way in which I do not hurt myself or others. My life with him hurts badly. He has been riding roughshod over me for years and I have finally opened my eyes. The freedom and the terror of this realization are present like an aroma. I watch my whole sense of myself crumble. My soul is in clinical shock. The enormity of the betrayal has left me spent and wasted. I have tooth marks on my psyche.

I know I am a fool, a cuckolded imbecile. What is wrong with me? There is a hole in my heart the size of a truck. I have been swallowing and swallowing and swallowing, and now I feel sick and nauseated. My throat tightens as I taste the bile of all those bitter feelings stuck there. I want to retch and puke it all out. I need to purge this obliterating sorrow and rejection. I have been gagging on it for so many years; the toxins have polluted my system. I am repulsed by my own emotional treachery, all the subterfuge and artifice I practiced on myself. After 26 years of self-deception, I realize I am worth nothing to him. If I begin to trust my feelings, I am taking a risk. It means accepting their validity, and opening up to a terrifying world of disillusionment. I know all too well that crushing fear that leads to numbness.

Like a dutiful daughter, I am carrying on the lineage that my mother has passed on to me. I was not enough for her and now I am not enough for him. I am lacking some key ingredient, some vital hormone or

chromosome. There is something inside me that's missing or broken. My biggest fear is that they know the secret truth about me. The sordid, undeniable truth, which my mother knew right from the start, even while I lay in her womb, is that I should not have been born. The powerful grip of this unholy curse, constructed in childhood and confirmed in womanhood, will never fully leave me. If only he could love me, if only he could hold me, if only he could want me. . . . I would be so happy. My soul is crushed under the weight of my misery. There is something pernicious and self-fulfilling about sadness. I wear my pain like a tattoo. I am falling headfirst into the deep, savage morass of my most primitive fears.

In a way, this descent into my somatic being is an act of surrender, a plunge so deep that it embraces comprehension, as well as incomprehension. I have lost my whole life. Everything I know has dissolved. I am walking around with my heart ripped wide open. There is a heavy blanket of sorrow covering my chest. I pull it up to my chin and the sorrow gets wedged in my throat. My despair is inescapable. I'm walking submerged in an ocean — each step requires tremendous effort and there is enormous pressure. I think my heart and my soul will wash away on some other continent too far to reach. I am being swept along into deeper and deeper currents. The weight of what I did not let myself know is hitting me with the force of a tidal wave. I have lived a life of dishonesty. I've been playing it safe which has turned out to be extremely dangerous. There is a huge wall of grief rising within me. I feel like I'm caught in the undertow of the waves of the ocean. The more I struggle, the more panic grips me. Every time I get up, I am slapped back down by the ferocious surge of another brutal wave.

It's so hard to stay present with so much anguish. I try to let the feelings come and go at their own pace, but I am not at the point where I can just watch them with any degree of detachment or affection. They come: dark, uninvited, fierce. I let a flash of fear bubble up and then shoot through me. There is this constant undercurrent of grief that gnaws at me. I sense a familiar, neglected presence living within me who's filled with self-loathing and untold sadness. Right now, this invisible presence feels about six years old, but her isolation and

disgrace have visited me at every age. At any given moment, there is the me you can see and then there's my small self (the self that's not seen). I am trying to pick up the self that is not seen, but who is shriveling up and collapsing to the ground. I want to mesh her back together with my larger self, but she is crouching in the corner, too frail and puny to stand up on her own. Her muscles are weak and flaccid. I'm afraid that she's unreachable. When I feel her wounds and her immense and unmet longing for love, yes, I do lose my center. I lose my mind. Her hunger to be touched and wanted is so vast and pathetic. I may slip over the edge and fall into her underworld.

Primitive societies believed that the cruelest punishment of all was shunning; to ignore someone and not recognize them was worse than death. And I have shunned her, even though she is so clearly part of who I am. I want to reach out and let her know I'm here with her. . . . but, I am no longer here with her. I have left her again, mute and stranded. And though I can still sense her small, yet powerful, presence deep inside my body, I do not offer her any sign of comfort or acknowledgment. All soothing words disintegrate. She longs for light and breath, but I don't know how to be with her. My field of consciousness is narrowing as my cognitive self splinters off from me. I turn my head away and my mind begins to wander. Soon, it wanders off completely. I am shrinking away, growing small and insignificant. The loneliness, the hunger, and the ache are all welling up inside of me. I am peering out from the eyes of a cranky six year old. The woman who I am has faded, and the little girl in me is left alone and frightened. The tightness in my chest is my only link to her neglected, voiceless presence. She has no tongue and she only speaks through images of color and dishevelment.

There are times when I am imprisoned within myself and other times when I live in exile outside myself. When I am disengaged from my normal self and from the world as I am right now, I stop believing in myself and in the universe. I lose all faith. I feel inside me all the damage and debris of a lifetime. I am a stranger and alone now. I have no defenses. I fall prey to powerful alien forces that invade me and take me further from my inner core. I am such an easy target. They see me feeling weak and helpless and they snicker and attack me.

They are breathing down my neck, howling and clamoring to get in. Within moments, they take control and begin their reign of terror.

These demons are an all-devouring menace that move across my belly like a plague of hungry locusts. They wreak havoc in my life using tactics of domination and damnation. They wake me up in the middle of the night with their yelps of blame and fury. What do they want from me? They see a small opening and they charge forward, surrounding me, hissing and hurling horrible insults. The aliens are having a hey day, laughing uproariously and calling me names. They are jumping on my back and kicking me around. Their taunting leaves me spaced out, brain dead. I am lost in a thick fog. I can barely see or hear now. Who speaks and on behalf of whom? I can't decipher which voices are my own, and which ones belong to others. What does it matter? There are so many unsavory characters who inhabit my soul. They are all part of me. Their nagging presence calls attention to all those cursed parts of my being that long for mercy and forgiveness. Maybe if I look them straight in the eye, they will quiet down and back off. I try to give everyone a chance to speak, but these aliens are such ruthless bullies. This is by no means a polite conversation. I stop to listen and let them have their say. Perhaps there is some merit to all their endless propaganda. Okay, I am really stupid and pathetic. I breathe it in and take the blow. Yes, I'm fat, I'm old, a total fake — a fucking failure! Now, I'm panting, Lamaze style. What's that? My life is one big colossal mess and there's not a shred of hope that it will ever get any better! Well, I can't entirely agree with that. I mean, it is a mess. Yet, there are times when I feel happy and connected. I think I'm making some headway when a familiar voice shrieks out, "Who are you kidding?? No one will ever love you!" and I cave in. Poof! I am back on my knees, down and out for the count.

There is a division in my life between my mind and body, a striking rupture. When I feel, I can't think. And when I think, I can't feel. I wonder if it is possible, self relationally, to be 50 years old and 6 years old at the same time. Can these two selves become partners? Can I hold them both together and somehow achieve a poised balance? All these parts of me have different knowledges of my reality which, if pooled, can enrich my being

immeasurably. In my pursuit of Self-Relations, before I sink too deep, I need to reengage my head and connect it to my body. I am attempting to recover myself. I'm in a state of prolonged recovery. I am trying to see my way through this heavy mist of clouds and stupor, this hip hop ringing of alien voices. The recognition of sudden and contrary meanings is colliding in my brain. If I can find my way back and keep both my mind and heart open, I can reclaim my small self (the self that's not seen) and give her breath and shelter. I am scared shitless! I'm not sure how to hold the mini-me's together: the old one and the young one, the mistress and the maiden. I am trying to find a way to honor their differences and strengthen their relationship. I want to pull myself together. This is a time for gentleness and mercy, for miracles and wonder.

As I struggle to realign my belly and my mind, I quiet the noises in my head and I strain to listen to my inner core. At first, it is just a murmur, half spoken and half heard, whispering to me about who I am and who I yearn to be. It is an art to listen, to breathe, tune in, and be attentive. It has taken me so long to begin to temper my reactivity. The idea is to stand back, farther and farther within, and quiet my mind to be able to hear more clearly. The quieter I am, the more I hear. The more I hear, the more space unfolds for all my muddled, mixed-up feelings. If I can settle into that slender opening, breathe in its air, a deep center of calm soon appears. It steadies me and keeps me centered, surfing on one moment and then another. It is a blessing to have painful feelings emerge in this wider home and to be part of a field of energy that is alive and nourishing. This sacred space is what is needed for healing. It is all that can fully receive the depth of my wounding and my heart's desire for wholeness. I can feel my insides growing wider, making a place for all my unincorporated parts, young and old, strong and weak, scared and daring. Every small opening allows more opening. The weight of the sorrow in my chest is growing lighter now. My body softens and my mind expands. A soothing presence fills me, circling around the corners of my mouth, electrifying the top of my head, lifting my being to its celestial roots. I am opening wider and there is enough space within and without for all my selves to be included and welcomed. One part of me does not can-

cel out another part, nor does the co-existence of several divergent parts mean that one or another is inauthentic. They all have a home. It is bliss to know this peace and grace, even if it does not last.

Now, in the dense jungle of my relational being, words that wrap themselves thickly around what I feel and experience dissolve, transforming all that I am into something of my own that, nonetheless, seems entirely separate from me. Sometimes, when I can hold on to my different selves simultaneously, I become more than who I am. I seem to achieve a state beyond thought. It can't be divided into words. It is important not to harm this state of union with brittle words. I watch myself think. Life is supernatural. It allows me to taste the elusive and delicate privilege of being. I have not breathed for 20 years and I am gasping for air and visibility. There is a progression in my awakening awareness that is not by chance, but seems completely serendipitous. Occasionally, I see things in a sudden flash, as startling as a loud knock at the door. Sometimes, there are vast stretches of sadness bejeweled by moments of exquisite clarity and grace, opening my heart to a deeper level of tenderness. These days, I perceive a slanted reality, one seen through an oblique slice. Before, I saw only through straight and parallel slices. I didn't notice the artistic, slanted slice. I am beginning to appreciate the vast web in which we are all working.

As I grapple with all the forces stirring inside me, there is a complementary creation, a give and take, a coming together, and a separating that take place all at once. There is both surrender and expansiveness. It is a more primary, inclusive way of relation than the analytical, either/or logic of my intellect. I am learning to trust my intuitive wisdom, as well as my analytic mind in learning how to survive, because my analytic mind alone cannot really handle the complexity of my present situation, this unraveling of my identity. So, I go from moment to moment listening, paying attention, trying to figure out what to do next.

At times, the somatic part of my being is able to take the lead and make associations, raw and green, and vital, until the rhythm settles in and ideas begin evolving. I ride on that rhythm until my own being takes possession of it. Radiance smiles in the air and I breathe in unison with the world. The air is light and luminous-translucent, like the membrane of an egg. I feel slightly

unreal and vertiginous. I walk and the trees and the sky provide a balm for my wounded soul. In this state of grace there's a clarity and a lightness. It's the clarity of someone who doesn't have to guess anymore; who knows effortlessly. And there's a sense of physical well-being. My body is transformed into a gift. And I feel it's a gift because I am experiencing directly from the source, the suddenly unquestionable gift of miraculously and materially existing. Everything takes on a kind of halo that's not imaginary, but palpable. I have come to feel that everything that exists breathes and exhales a very fine splendor of energy. I want to hold this space for my grief to come out into the light and be held, recognized and blessed.

As I wrest the wreckage of my life into this more expansive human context, I realize all the ways my somatic and cognitive selves have each protected me throughout my life: my somatic self with hypnotic trances, always pulling me back inside to sustain my connection with some neglected presence; and my cognitive self by spinning tales to shelter me from the harsh reality of my aloneness. Sometimes, my neglected self feels very frail and barely audible. At other times, she's like a tiger with a fatal arrow nailed in her flesh, slowly stalking me to see if I will have the courage to come close and relieve her of her pain. Can I approach the beast without being afraid to touch it and pull out the embedded arrow? Is it possible not to be afraid of myself anymore? So much of my terror comes from the part of the shadows that connects me to the world and to the vast resources of my creative unconscious.

In life, it is one thing to understand something logically and quite another to assimilate it organically. I am finally letting go of the dream of my life, and the model of that dream, into just what is. I am now willing to enter territory that feels unsafe and unfamiliar. I want to hold on to this state of relational integrity for as long as I can, but my mind is like a four-star general, threatening to level the ground of my somatic awakening with each encroaching step.

As I write this, I am packing to leave the house I've lived in for 20 years and raised my family. I am giving away most of my possessions, leaving my work and saying good-bye to all my dear friends there. I am moving to another state, beginning a new career, and finalizing my divorce. My life is changing one hundred percent and

nothing is the same. Every morning, I have to breathe life into my terror. I try to gently probe and sense its nature, and penetrate into its heart to surround it with space and openness. Each day I try to figure out anew, how I can honor my fears, yet not get caught up in them. If I connect with those sensations that come bubbling up immediately, things unfold differently. I know that I cannot go to war with my feelings, no matter how painful, and annihilate them because that means going to war with myself. I know that I can't just control my feelings as a method toward wellness because that's what got me into this bind in the first place. The break-up of my marriage opened up, what seemed to be, a bottomless pit of heartache and sorrow. Although I would not wish it on anyone, it forced me inside to new levels of awareness and appreciation and deepened my compassion and my connection to others.

While my children were growing up, I always welcomed the nightly ritual of bedtime stories because it reminded me that the world was wide and full. After a long day, it energized me to remember that the dark was filled with voices, that there were castles in the sky, and trolls and gnomes beneath the ground, that animals could speak, and that when people needed to, they could fly. I believe that it is here, in this magical domain that lies suspended between fantasy and reality, where our many lives are transformed, that the countless stories of our lives still unfold. Each and every story contains a wealth of different versions. Each and every person carries within him or her a diverse cast of characters capable of taking many roles and pathways. This crisis in my life has become a tool of revelation that pushes beyond old horizons and permits me to enter a field of vision that I could not have otherwise apprehended.

Each day I try to carve out sacred time for myself. I look for the simple moments of grace that touch my life and try to be open to them. When I take walks, I am reminded that there is a Spirit larger than myself at work, a universe larger than my immediate self and concerns. I am drawn to things that bring me closer to that sense of unity and beauty, that recharge my faith and trust. I am learning to read my body. The mind in my head and the mind in my belly have begun short stretches of daily cohabitation. It is a new, strained relationship and they are often not on speaking terms. My intellect is used to being in charge and thus tries to tear apart this

fledgling union. But my somatic being, having had a taste of freedom, is determined to come out more.

I believe that I have to practice Self-Relations on a daily basis in order to stay awake and live my life authentically. My struggle for wholeness is demanding and relentless. Some days I am energized into my higher self and I soar. Sometimes, I crash and fall to pieces. I am learning to be a fool gracefully. My coherence and understanding are pulverized every day by the immediacy of life. There are times when the hurt and anger of a lifetime can be galvanized in a moment's notice and I close down. My battle with aliens is like a virus with recurring fevers, skirmishes and flare-ups. Sometimes they run amuck and other times I thumb my nose at them. We never know what's around the corner. Each new day has the potential to bring experiences that hold both curse and promise, balm and wound. My chosen strategy now is to move into reality rather than turn away from it. As I practice keeping my relational self in balance, I am better able to handle the ups and downs of living, all pushing me toward my best intended life. I am beginning to believe that my work on myself is part of what my gift is to my fellow human beings. When you add into the stew of the human condition some iota of peace and joy and presence and clarity and light, you're adding a lot into the world, in the midst of darkness, doubt, confusion and fear. The process of reclaiming neglected parts of myself requires constant balance and attention. Each day I contract and expand, as does my sense of possibility. My many selves have to be continually reclaimed and reconstituted to stay vital. Many of my sorrows haven't changed, but they are living in a bigger space now.

Self-Relations helps me embrace a wider definition of who I am and be conversant with the different languages that these parts speak. The struggle is in holding both the pain and joy in a place where my hunger and gladness can meet. Each experience is more grist for the mill in my healing.

My disillusionment and pain put me on a path of deepening love and compassion where I would not have gone willingly, yet it has enriched my life immeasurably. The ache in my heart is bittersweet. Each day I touch the wholeness of my being and each day I lose it. This is my own life Reality Show and I'm staying tuned in (turned on) and (fully) sponsored.



Self-Relations as a Tantric Spiritual Practice

Cynthia Franklin, M.S.O.D., is an executive coach and organizational consultant who specializes in change management and leadership development. Her focus is on fostering embodied learning that leads to greater fulfillment and effectiveness. She has taught undergraduate and graduate students at New York University and American University, and is co-author of *Awakening Purpose and Vision*, published by MasteryWorks. She has been a presenter at the National conferences of the Multicultural Institute, the Organizational Development Network, and the Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution.

SELF-RELATIONS AS A TANTRIC SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

When I began studying Self-Relations 10 years ago, I had somewhat recently become an organizational consultant and executive coach, steeped in organizational and psychological theories familiar to members of my profession. I subsequently discovered how the Self-Relations approach offers extremely valuable insights and tools in my work as an executive coach and consultant. Sometimes when people do not achieve or perform at the peak of their potential, relatively superficial interventions help. In such cases simply teaching new skills or adding new perspectives is often enough. Fairly often, though, executives know exactly what they should be doing differently, but little understood internal blocks make it feel impossible for them to make the changes they know they must make to more fully thrive and contribute in work. At such times, the insights of SR have proved indispensable to me in helping clients bring about deep and lasting improvements in their level of work performance and satisfaction.

I also, however, brought with me to my study of SR a background in yoga philosophy and practice . . . and this is what I'd like to explore more fully here. In earlier adulthood I spent years studying the beautiful Shaivite Tantric scriptures with a teacher who was steeped in that tradition. Tantric approaches to spirituality use disturbing experiences and ego states as gateways to achieving the goals of spiritual practice — more profound and full self-knowledge, well-being, compassion,

and connection to the mysteries of life. In studying SR, I immediately felt the similarities between SR as an approach to therapy or coaching, and the Tantric spiritual practices I had studied and engaged in. I also felt that SR provided some crucial skills to embodying this Tantric world view relationally. Finally, SR has also provided me with a secular way of understanding the transformation process that made some of the deep insights from my previous spiritual practice much more accessible for me to use in my current coaching work.

Non-Tantric Spiritual Practices

I'd like to begin by differentiating Tantric practice (and SR) from non-Tantric approaches to spirituality and personal transformation. Non-tantric schools of meditation tend to exhort people to dis-identify with their thoughts and feelings. A meditator may be asked to contemplate, "I don't really exist," or, "I am not the body, I am not the mind." He may be told, "Let go of your thoughts. They are not really you, and not really yours. They are to be cut off like hair, like nails . . . they will continue to grow but just continue to cut them off. They seem to be part of you but are really dead and have nothing to do with you." These practices are helpful in getting people to experience states of pure consciousness (and as such may be used as an initial stage of practice, even in Tantric schools). But once in pure consciousness, these practices, if continued, don't give

people a very useful relationship to the “smaller self” that is also present — the self that pays the bills, raises children, fights for justice, falls in love, etc. They do not promote a healing connection between painful ego states and expansive spiritual states . . . and thus do not promote entry into the deepest kinds of associated “flow” states that enable profound growth and transformation to occur.

Aside from the Eastern meditative traditions, there are, of course, many traditional religious traditions throughout the world that help people access “spiritual” states. Yet many of these religious traditions help people achieve these states at the expense of the embodied self. At the extreme, they may even engender a relationship of shame and loathing towards the human self — towards the sexuality, emotion, and neediness that are part of human life. People emerging from these traditions may often experience themselves in the impossible “Sophie’s Choice” dilemma of whether to sacrifice spirituality for humanity, or humanity for spirituality — all the while sensing that sacrificing either one must have dire consequences, but not seeing another option.

What Distinguishes Self-Relations from Traditional Religious Approaches

Like Tantric approaches to spirituality, SR offers another option. I believe that Self-Relations offers a practice for the inter-penetration of “spiritual states” (as in the steady, loving awareness of sponsorship) and ordinary human states (in particular “wounded self” states) in such a way that a kind of alchemy occurs. The gentle vastness of the spiritual state (as in the steady loving gaze of sponsorship, or of the internal “healer function”) can be an extraordinarily potent incubator for the energy trapped in the wounded states to be nurtured and released. And the intense energy trapped in the wounded-self experiences, when released, becomes a powerful and dynamic fuel for spiritual unfolding . . . as well as emotional healing and personal empowerment.

The wounded self, because it is withdrawn from the external world of social interaction, is closer to the core energies of the self. Therefore its engagement can lead powerfully to the opening of this core essential self. Conversely, the neglect and isolation of the wounded

self can become a source of torment. However, the spiritual state, if left disembodied and disconnected from the temporal world, also becomes arid and barren. It is through the interpenetration of these two — the wounded emotional body and the transcendent spiritual body — that healing occurs, and that the connection to the world in all its dimensions, including the spiritual, is revitalized. These are two major outcomes of Tantric practice.

The Essence of Tantra:

Rising by What We Fall By

According to one expert in the field (Mueller-Ortega, 1989), “Tantra is the attempt to employ all the values associated with personal desire — including the agitated states of anger, fear, loneliness, and enjoyment — to the attainment of a state of inner spiritual fullness, peace and freedom. This attempt results from a general aim of reintegrating world and spirit” (p. 50). Or, as a friend of mine once more simply put it, “In Tantric practice, we rise by what we fall by.” The areas of our deepest suffering and confusion, when investigated with awareness and love, become the ground for our spiritual growth. SR is Tantric in this regard. It is not about simply helping people pacify their suffering and return to status quo. SR helps people *use* suffering as a means to a far deeper, fuller, more joyful peace than could ever have been discovered if that suffering were merely side-stepped, pacified or ignored. As Gilligan (personal communication) has said, “The wound is the gateway to the divine.”

I’d like to share a little about the Tantric way of working with the wound as the gateway to the divine, then draw a parallel with SR process. One of the Tantric scriptures is the *Vijnana Bhairava*, the origin of which is prior to the 9th century B.C.E. The scripture is like a cookbook, offering 112 different *dharanas*, or meditation practices. In the translation by scholar Jaideva Singh, Dharana 93 states:

At the commencement and end of a sneeze, in terror, in sorrow, in the condition of a deep sigh or on the occasion of flight from the battlefield, during (keen) curiosity, at the com-

mencement or end of hunger, the state is like that of Brahma. (1991, p. 104)

The commentary explains, “Whenever ordinary consciousness receives a sudden jolt or shock, it is thrown back to its inmost depth and the person comes in contact with spanda, the pulsation of the deepest consciousness, the source of his being” (p. 106).

Another scripture (cited in Dyczkowski) called “The Spanda Karika” or “The Stanzas on Supreme Vibration” offers a similar insight:

When one is in extreme anger or experiences surpassing joy, or is in a state of impasse, not knowing what to do, or has to flee for his life, then in that (supremely intensive) state (of mind) is established the Spanda principle, the creative pulsation of the divine consciousness. (1992b, p. 106)

The commentary to this scripture by Rajanaka Rama carries the point further: “These three emotive states represent the three basic forms namely pain, pleasure, and confusion . . . The words ‘extremely angry’ refer implicitly to the four types of suffering — namely anger, grief, fear and disgust . . . [Similarly], elation, enthusiasm, wonder and humor are the four types of pleasure denoted implicitly by the words ‘intensely excited’” (pp. 100–101).

What are these scriptures saying? Basically, that if we remain awake in extreme states, then a tremendous power will be released inside us which will lead to a spiritual opening. Remaining awake means, with pure awareness, plunging directly into the heart of the energy of the experience when it happens. This is extremely difficult to do because the tendency is to become carried away by the experience in a reactive way. But what is the experience of waking up? Shaivism talks about waking up as a plunging into the underlying energized consciousness, which is variously described as *spanda*, divine vibration, and *chidananda*, blissful consciousness.

In SR, Stephen Gilligan (1997) talks about sponsoring the neglected self, touching it with human presence and “holding” it with loving awareness. There seems to

be a close connection between the yogic concept of *chidananda*, “blissful consciousness,” and sponsorship. Particularly when you consider that ananda, “bliss,” is the unconditional delight in the beingness of all things, and thus serves as the basis for a kind of indestructible, unconditional love. I would say that when blissful consciousness is focused on an object, the experience is one of “loving awareness.” Gilligan (personal communication) talks about creating a “psychic link” between the neglected self and the cognitive self, and awakening the “internal Erickson function” — the “inner healer” — in the client. What is the Erickson function? Is it partly this “awake” quality, of free, creative, non-reactive awareness that the scriptures speak of as *spanda* — the divine creative vibration of consciousness? I think these tantric and SR concepts are related and work with similar fundamental insights. In both tantric practice and in SR, the nesting states of intense psychological arousal into the incubator of the pure, unfettered, dynamic awareness — the incubator of loving awareness — leads to a process in which suffering is transformed. Sufferers are reestablished in their relationship to themselves, and to the spiritual field of which they are a part (as SR emphasizes, this unity is often short lived, lasting until the next challenge arises! Then a whole new cycle of suffering, sponsorship and integration . . . at a deeper level . . . begins. The process of emotional growth and spiritual unfolding is ongoing.)

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the function of the teacher in Tantric scriptures, it should be noted that it is different from how SR views the role of the practitioner in SR. To begin with, SR has a basically non-hierarchical conception of the relationship between practitioner and client. In Tantra, the relationship between teacher — or Guru — and disciple is hierarchical. But there are similarities as well. In Shaivism, the Guru is considered to be the one who awakens the capacity in the adept to access their own internal awareness, just as in SR the role of the practitioner is to help the client activate their own internal “Erickson function,” their own inner healer and guide.

Tantric Understanding:

Nothing Exists Which Is Not Divine

The Tantric world view is pretty straightforward. As an aphorism from another scripture, the *Svacchanda Tantra*, states, “*Na Shivam vidhayate kva chit,*” or, “Nothing exists which is not divine” (cited in Muktananda, 1997). Dyczkowski (1987) states that from the point of view of Shaivite Tantra, “Ignorance is failure to experience directly the intimate connection between the infinite and the finite” (p. 40).

This is a central tenet of Tantric worldview. Tantric doctrines by definition believe in the immanence of the divine. They tolerate and even promote dualistic practices, codes of conduct, and approaches as often being a necessary first step to achieving the insight of the immanence of the divine: but they *never* are content to remain there.

Something that strongly caught my attention when I first saw Stephen Gilligan work was the loving way he related to qualities that did not seem obviously lovable to me — e.g., rage, fear, shame, helplessness. It was as if, the moment a mask fell, Stephen’s gaze became bright with a recognition of the place where the finite and the infinite connect. While I could feel the spiritual dimension to be very powerfully alive at such moments, I also found the personal dimension to be equally open and present. I found it quite discouraging to realize that, in my efforts to follow a Tantric spiritual discipline, I had been struggling to develop a capacity for unconditional love — but that at that point in my life in fact my loving states were quite abstracted. The kind of gaze I had been practicing was, rather, one that in fact resolutely bypassed the details of human life, to look for some abstract light-filled core. (A way of looking that had the unfortunate side effects of also causing me to overlook or underestimate people’s shortcomings and challenges.)

Watching Stephen work, I realized that, for all my efforts in following a Tantric path, how far I actually was at that point from a true Tantric perspective. In other words, if ignorance is failure to experience directly the intimate connection between the infinite and the finite, I vividly saw my ignorance. At the same time, I saw that training in SR offered a way out of that ignor-

ance, a way to experience directly the intimate connection between the spiritual and the personal.

Having first seen this process in Gilligan’s work, I have now consistently seen it when others apply the SR method in their work with clients. As I observed the SR process demonstrated in supervisions, it appeared to me that it was precisely at the moment when the connection and interpenetration between the spiritual and personal dimensions became obvious and palpable, that the energy field would shift and deep transformation would begin to happen. Looking again through the eyes of loving sponsorship that SR offered, I began to see the alive and fundamental beauty in the negative states, experiences and conditions that I had been previously avoiding. This kind of eye and attitude, core to SR, appears to me to be genuinely Tantric.

Many spiritual practices split the inner world into categories such as “higher Self” and “ego” and set them against each other. However, in SR, Gilligan (1977) talks about a “tender soft spot” at the core of the neglected self, which is key to spiritual awakening and re-connecting to the world. He also speaks of a sponsoring presence, a loving awareness, which is at the core of the cognitive self. It has become clear to me in watching the SR process that by entering into and opening to the center of either of these poles, and by holding them in relation to each other, the being opens into a quite luminous, spacious, spiritual space . . . that is fully human at the same time . . . and gives a capacity for compassionate, effective action as well. This recognition that the core of both the neglected and sponsoring self is steeped in pure qualities seems to me to be a way of saying “nothing exists that is not divine.” Self-Relations has a way of demonstrating that this is how we relate when, at least within the ritual space of a relationship dedicated to supporting a profound unfolding in the client, we truly understand the sacredness of everything . . . including the sacredness of the problematic and rejected aspects of self.

One of the ways that Gilligan (1977) relates to psychological disturbance and traumatic states is to speak of “something trying to wake up.” He suggests that these negative states that rupture normal consciousness provide tremendous opportunity. He speaks of that opportunity

explicitly as an occasion for spiritual opening — just as the Tantric scriptures (quoted earlier) do.

Terrible Gifts, Balanced Karma, and Initiation

This brings us to the related idea of “terrible gifts.” The Indian scriptures say that for spiritual awakening to occur, people need to have balanced karma. A Western way to understand balanced karma is that it connotes a coming together of good and bad, painful and pleasurable, fortunate and unfortunate, experiences. Another way of saying it might be to say, as SR does, that for spiritual awakening and growth to occur, “terrible gifts” are necessary. For many people traumatic experiences of various kinds create the pain that requires looking deeper. The relationship of SR practitioner to client, or spiritual practice, provides the good fortune — the alchemy — that helps turn these terrible experiences into gifts. In some cultures, initiatory processes of various kinds can offer both the terror and the gift. Certain Tantric schools follow this method. The adept may have to meditate in a graveyard, or watch a corpse burn. She may be asked to engage in activities that are disturbing, disgusting, and/or that violate her acculturated understanding of what is proper. The secrecy that accompanies certain kinds of traumatic experiences, intensifying them and increasing the psychological pressure they generate, is often very much a part of Tantric initiation as well.

Thankfully, it is not the role of Self-Relations to create profoundly disturbing experiences. (Nor do all tantric schools. There is enough naturally occurring trauma in human life to make the artificial generation of more usually unnecessary!) Rather, SR looks to welcome these experiences that have occurred in order to help individuals recognize and use the spiritual opportunities they provide. To say such experiences are opportunities may seem euphemistic. It should be clearly acknowledged that traumatic experiences *are* dangerous. If the intensity of the suffering is greater than the person and their community can work with skillfully, they can lead to psychological distortions which are damaging to the person and to the community. (For example, the sobering truth is that those with unhealed traumas may in turn victimize others. This includes leaders who often

unintentionally create environments where others cannot fully thrive and contribute, as much as it does parents who often unintentionally pass on their sufferings to offspring.) Depending on their intensity, such experiences may make spiritual practice, therapy or coaching a simple necessity. Even in such cases, the good news remains: the outcome of deep work, like work with an SR practitioner or like spiritual practices that help integrate these experiences, can be a state that is both deeper, wiser, more joyful, and more compassionate than the person would have ever been able to access without the difficulty of the original trauma or initiation process.

Compassion as a Skill

Self-Relations does not offer a solitary internal approach to spiritual practice. It adds the interactive dynamic that brings the inner process into engagement with the world. I would say that it enlivens and consecrates the territory of relationship, so that relationship becomes a kind of emotional “walking meditation” where practitioners can practice the weaving of these inner and outer, these personal, spiritual and practical worlds. The Hindu Tantric scriptures focus on the inherent divinity of all beings, and on cultivating and spreading joy. The Buddhist Tantric teachers and writings speak about how to cultivate the skill of compassion and how to ease suffering.

We have already seen that becoming a practitioner in the SR model means cultivating skills of allowing the finite and the infinite, spiritual and personal — the wounded self and cognitive self/sponsoring presence — to interpenetrate. This is also the process of skillful compassion, taught in the (essentially Tantric) Buddhist Tonglen meditation practice — a practice that Stephen Gilligan has used in his workshops. In this practice, we cultivate the strong sense of love, then associate our minds to something that is painful or rejected. Instead of rejecting or avoiding the painful issue or person, we mentally breath them in, into the furnace of the gentle loving energy that is pulsing inside. Skillful compassion, the interpenetration of the painful issue and the loving awareness, can be done in meditation, in therapy, in coaching, and in life.

In being exposed to Self-Relations, I observed that there is another part to the skill of compassion that I had not been aware of. This is the ability to actually see and sense the disturbance *as it is*. This seems to be similar to the breathing in of suffering that is done in Tonglen, the willingness to enter into close proximity with suffering that is a beautiful aspect of Buddhist (and, of course, also often Christian) practice. It is as if we have to allow the true shape of the disturbance to touch our body and be perceived accurately, so that we experience both the painful impact of it, and also the goodness and value of the deeper levels of soul it stirs. It seems not to be about overwhelming and obliterating the suffering with the blissful loving awareness, but about taking in the suffering and allowing a mutual transformation to occur. Yes, the pain is softened and alleviated in this process. But the loving awareness is transformed, too — it is softened, widened, and deepened. In some strange way this process intensifies and expands the sense of love. When training people in this way of working, Stephen encourages them, “Let your heart be broken open.”

This aspect to the skill of compassion became particularly vivid to me during an early SR supervision I attended, when a woman had invited me into the role of therapist. I had a strange experience: I associated very powerfully into a space of love which was quite intense, and I saw her beauty as she worked. But, strangely, I could not feel her suffering at the same time. I couldn't contact its shape or let it in so that its pain touched and moved me. Other times I could feel the shape of someone's suffering acutely, but would lose contact with the blissful and spacious aspect of the loving awareness with which it might be surrounded and penetrated. As Stephen moved in to work with the woman, I could see how his way of working was different, and much more effective. I observed that he accurately and fully saw the shape of her suffering, and could move with it, while also remaining in a spacious and loving place as he worked . . . not getting “lost” in the pain of her suffering. I saw that the skill he demonstrated is not simply a matter of being “in touch” with the suffering the person is showing. It is even more so a matter of *being in touch with that suffering which may be so deeply embedded in the person that it has become utterly invisible to them*. In some

way the real character of this deep suffering is hidden first from the sufferer themselves, and then from the world. For this reason accurately seeing it, naming it, touching it is such a crucial part of the work. What feels Tantric about this process to me, is the SR practitioner's tremendous attention to the detail of the particular form of suffering, while staying in touch with a vaster field and awareness *at the same time*. In other words, the inclusion of the finite in the infinite, a recognition of the interpenetration of the spiritual and personal dimensions. The practice of SR appears to me to be in essence the practice of cultivation of this skill, and the teaching of it to the client — so that the client becomes able to use the skill in a self-healing and self-empowering way.

Tantra As an Energetic Practice

There is another aspect to Tantra that is very similar to Self-Relations. Dr. Mueller-Ortega (1989) explains that the concept of *shakti* is central to all forms of Hindu Tantra. In Hindu scripture, *shakti* is a force that operates on a cosmic scale, and on an individual scale. It is the force that creates, maintains, and absorbs the universe. On the individual level it creates, maintains, and re-absorbs the individual's own psychological world. In the guise of *maya*, or illusion, it is also the power that conceals the true nature of phenomenon. And, as *kundalini shakti*, it is the grace bestowing power, the energy that reveals the connection of the finite and the infinite, and reveals the immanence of the divine in all of creation. The *Spanda Karikas* (Dyczkowski, 1992b) explicitly state that depression is a result of “poverty of shakti” — of not having a robust spiritual energy field. Many of the ritual, chanting, meditation and other practices central to tantra have, as their express purpose, to build *shakti* and remove the subtle blocks to its unfolding in a practitioner.

SR is similar to tantra in this regard, because building internal energy, reading energy, and building an energetic connection to the field and to others is critical to the practice of Self-Relations psychotherapy. The tradition Stephen Gilligan works from in this process is Aikido, where the concept of *Chi* is the rough equivalent of the tantric concept of *shakti*. In supervisions, Gilligan will do exercises encouraging those he is teaching to

“feel where the client’s energy is blocked, and rest your attention there, while touching it with your own energy.” He will do exercises to help the practitioner learn to build and extend their own energy field. And, when in the practitioner role, he will do exercises to help the client learn to cultivate, unblock and extend their own energy, as well. For example, when his client-partner is giving voice to some neglected self voice he will urge, “as you speak these words, reach me, touch me with your breath.” This is essentially coaching the client to extend their energy and to erase the energetic void created by the negated neglected self territory within.

The Power of Speech

Mueller-Ortega also explains, “A central component in all Tantric formulations is the power and efficacy of speech” (1989, p. 51).

Self-Relations shares with Tantric practice an appreciation of speech, not just as a vehicle for rational representation, but as an energetic power that, when correctly used, can shape reality both on an inner and outer level. Those who are schooled in yogic speech understand that the power of speech is not simply in the words used, but in the vital energetic center from which the speech emanates in the speaker. The energetic center is located physiologically, psychologically and spiritually, as well as energetically. At deeper levels, the differentiation between the word spoken and the experience it signifies breaks down. (Similarly, Gilligan (1997) has said that hypnotic language is language that directly touches the body.)

Yogic texts describe four different levels of speech, which vibrate at successively deeper centers (Muktananda, 1979). (Deeper in this sense means at a more profound and more subtle level of intention, as well as lower down and deeper in the subtle body.) The first level is speech that vibrates primarily at the physical body level — primarily located in the mouth and tongue. Next is speech that vibrates at the subtle energy level of the throat center, then speech that vibrates at the causal energy center of the heart, and finally speech that vibrates at the supra-causal energy center in the belly. Each of these progressively descending centers is considered exponentially more potent than the one above it.

In hypnotic work it becomes clear that the quality of the vibration of the speaker’s voice has a strong impact on the listener, and this is true in Self-Relations, as well — as it is true in tantra. The quality of awareness and intention brought to bear are important in Self-Relations as well as in tantra. And in Self-Relations, the practitioner strives to hear, as well as speak, from and to a deeper level.

Uncovering the Harmony Between Polarities

Like Self-Relations, the spirit of Tantra is very experimental, experiential, and non-dogmatic. Any means is valid if it will accomplish the goal of taking the practitioner to a healed and transformed state. One of the basic goals of Tantric practice is to overcome dualistic modes of experiencing reality, and the internal and projected forms of suffering that this splitting engenders.

An example of this bias in Tantra is expressed in a manner that is very different from Self-Relations, but that nevertheless illustrates the valence towards working to soften polarities. Some “left-handed” Tantric practices involve overcoming learned taboos through deliberate, ritual transgressions of rules — concerning ritual purity, etc. Other Tantric practices including overcoming taboos based on natural (as opposed to culturally learned) inhibitions — such as fear of decaying corpses, disgust in relation to ugliness and putrefaction, etc. There are several motives behind these practices, but one of the principle ones is to overcome the limiting effects of a tendency to polarize experience.

One of the greatest philosophers of Shaivism, Abhinavagupta, argues that “spiritual ignorance is precisely the attachment to polarities of good and evil, purity and impurity, right and wrong, and life and death” (cited by Mueller-Ortega, 1989, p. 33). Thich Nhat Hanh makes a similar comment in his book, *Fragrant Palm Leaves* (1998). He explains that Buddhist morality is a natural form of expression, not based on *ideas* of right and wrong — but at the same time, he cautions against teaching this to children. (Even Tantric traditions usually begin with strict moral precepts, in recognition of the fact that a learned and dualistic morality must often precede a more natural and wholistic morality that depends

less on dualistic constructs.) In his book *Of Water and the Spirit* (1994) the African medicine man Malidoma Some talks about how, in his tribe, things that are particularly ugly are considered extremely sacred. So perhaps in many traditions there is an intuition that there is a spiritual opportunity available in overcoming natural aversions, in overcoming a natural tendency to polarize experience.

Although the methods used are different, the profound valence towards harmonizing opposites, and finding the level on which opposites unite, is characteristic of Self-Relations as well as Tantra. Several of the exercises taught in *The Courage to Love* (1997) are explicit in this regard. For example, one process (p. 100) involves people pairing up, and acknowledging that they see the two opposite qualities in their partner at the same time. This creates a space of inner freedom, and allows them to stop splitting off and repressing neglected selves (internally) and projecting those selves while scapegoating other people (externally).

Embracing and Transcending

To reiterate, a fundamental polarity that the scriptures work with is the polarity between the finite and the infinite. There are different ways of relating to this polarity. One can move towards transcendence — being drawn towards the infinite dimension — or one can enter into, validate, and engage with the finite, limited, human dimension. A third way — one that the Kashmir Shaivite scriptures speak of as enlightenment — is to

simultaneously “embrace and transcend” all intermediate states and combinations of the finite and the infinite. In working with the neglected self and the energy of sponsorship simultaneously, SR is, like Shaivism, a simultaneously embracing and transcending approach. One of the processes Stephen Gilligan teaches is a process called “deep trance identification with yourself.” His instructions for entering into this process direct participants to “feel how your personal story is alive and it belongs to a being.” This instruction leads our attention in the direction of embracing the human, the particular, through our felt sense. He also directs participants to become aware at the same time that they are bigger than the story — that they are a space in which this personal story exists, but that is beyond the story. This directs the attention towards the transcendent dimension. Thus, Gilligan is directing participants to practice embracing and transcending at the same time.

In summary, both SR and Tantra seek to overcome ignorance (and suffering) by supporting the awareness of the connection and the interpenetration of the finite and infinite dimensions to human experience, *at the same time*. This practice, as it deepens, leads to a greater sense of well-being. It leads to skillful means of compassion. It leads to a sense of connection to the mysteries of life. It is a practice that leads to the fulfillment of these essentially spiritual goals, and does so in an essentially tantric manner: a manner that includes the spiritual and the personal, the joyful and the painful, the divine and the human dimensions of experience.

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*The Sleeping Angel:
Brokenness and Blessing in the Healing Path*

Dvorah Simon, Ph.D., is a psychologist and poet. She has worked at the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine in New York City since 1985 doing both clinical and research work in the field of brain injury and stroke rehabilitation. She is interested in modes of therapy that begin with the premise of the inherent resourcefulness of the client, and is the author of a chapter on Solution-Focused Therapy as a spiritual path. For five years, she published "news of the difference," an international newsletter for Solution-Focused, Ericksonian, and related therapies. Self-Relations therapy satisfies her quest for a way of working that embraces a robust and generous definition of the whole self.

THE SLEEPING ANGEL: BROKENNESS AND BLESSING IN THE HEALING PATH

I am a slow learner. This is not for want of an agile mind. I learn concepts very easily; I revel in them, in the dance of intricate relationships and nested contextual configurations. I especially love to see how thoughts parallel from one system to another in ever wider frameworks of inclusion.

But that is not all there is to learning. It took me seven years of workshops with Stephen Gilligan, the years during which he was forming the ideas and practices that would become Self-Relations therapy, to begin to learn in a meaningful way what it was about. What did I learn?

It was not that I came to Self-Relations, and its precursor ideas, unprepared. I had studied many relevant concepts prior: family systems theory; the brief therapy ideas of John Weakland and the Mental Research Institute of Palo Alto; Bateson; Ericksonian hypnosis and psychotherapy; and, most intensively, Solution-Focused therapy as developed and taught by Steve De Shazer, Insoo Berg, and Eve Lipchik (de Shazer, 1985). From these related disciplines I learned many things, but foremost among them was the idea of “both/and” logic (Lipchik, 1993; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974), the idea that the client often comes to therapy in a condition of “either/or”: either one condition is met, or nothing will work. The problem is, the condition that the client has set as prerequisite to “life working” is

blocked in some way. For example, “Either I find a mate, and have a family and children, or I have no worth and will never be happy.” Worth and happiness are contingent on a specific criterion, namely, finding a mate. Similarly, couples (people who have ostensibly found their mates), may have a formulation such as, “In order for this marriage to work, he/she needs to do x differently.”

While traditional therapeutic approaches might take such formulations at their word, and either look to behavioral, programmatic methods to achieve the desired outcome (e.g., learning dating or communication skills), or, alternately, examine current or historically attributed blocks to achieving them (e.g., exploring childhood precedents to inhibitions in relationships), Solution-Focused therapy presents a means to bypass the pre-designated route to “life working” and begin with the presumption that “the miracle has already occurred.” Thus, both the reality of “I want my life to work, and it doesn’t seem to be doing that” and “life can work” can co-exist, without the obstacle of the (seemingly impossible to meet) a priori condition to “life working.” Once the miracle reality can be conceived, the question became less “how to make this happen” (a seemingly impossible task) and more “what are the characteristics, already rooted in present reality, that comprise this outcome?” The goal of therapy in this formulation, then, is to facilitate the manifestation of the true desired

outcome (e.g., “life working”) but without being tied to the limited way in which the client thought that outcome would have to occur (e.g., “husband changing behavior”). The questions typical of a Solution-Focused Therapy practice are exquisitely designed to make this shift from “either/or” to “both/and” thinking, and thus to promote outcomes outside the box of the preconceived, blocked notions of how they need to be achieved.

Self-Relations, and the ideas and methods leading up to it, came along and took that notion of “both/and” thinking and exploded it into dimensions of experience that, quite simply, left me reeling. Gilligan’s work, and the relational presence he embodied in the workshops as he taught it, took me from “both/and” thinking into “both/and” experiencing, by including the thing that all the concepts left out: the alive, unprocessed, non-conceptual experience of my body. My somatic, undigested, crazy, chaotic, poetic, archetypal, multi-generational, irrational, inarticulable, transcendent, wildly animal and terrifyingly creative self: all the rest of me after the “idea” part of me was done. That was one hell of a “both/and.”

Self-Relations built on my practice as a Solution-Focused therapist by its concern with paying deliberate attention to the therapist’s own “both/and”: to one’s own somatic, non-rational experiencing, to one’s “center,” while at the same time continuing to include cognitive, conceptual skills. Further, the practice of opening to a more inclusive attention expanded awareness to the experiential field that is emergent in the relational presence of client, therapist, and their joined venture. What I learned from Self-Relations therapy, and it took me a very long time to do so, was the beginning of being able to work this way, in this wider awareness. By working beyond the box of concepts and behavioral practices alone, access to the client’s process was enriched in a way that refined and sharpened my ability to attune and be effective. I found my work became richer, more fluid, more adaptive to the different sorts of questions and conditions presented by clients, and more able to find themes around which a conglomeration of issues and stories rotated like carousel horses around a center pole. I found myself more flexible in how I centered in and moved my own consciousness in response to the need of the client — whether a humorous, somber,

methodical, playful, empathic, or other sort of tone was called out in me and was likely to be useful. I found increased satisfaction in being able to be fully grounded in *myself* — my own responses and style, at the same time that I held on to the conceptual frame that Self-Relations provides for keeping both the client’s centers or selves in awareness (cognitive, neglected/somatic, archetypal) as well as one’s own. Nor did I at any point feel constrained to relinquish what I had found so helpful in Solution-Focused and other Ericksonian approaches: the presupposition that the client has, within him or herself, the resources he or she needs.

Why did it take me so long to learn this? Now we come, finally, to the topic of this chapter: spiritual trauma and the question of Self-Relations therapy as spiritual work. It took me so long to begin to really “get” Self-Relations therapy because of a very large “either/or” in my own consciousness: the split between my identity as a rational being, and my spirituality. I offer the thoughts that follow because I believe I am not alone among either therapists or clients in holding such a split, and because I believe Self-Relations contributes significantly to the therapy field by offering a way of bringing such splits into compassionate awareness, and by that awareness, into healing.

My Journey

My journey as a psychotherapist and my journey as a spiritual being have been inextricably entwined. On my application for graduate school in clinical psychology, I explained why I had chosen the path of being a religion major as my route toward becoming a psychotherapist: “I was trying to understand why my mother said her experiences in the concentration camp were why she believed in God, while my father used the same reasoning to explain why he didn’t.”

It seemed evident to me that being a psychotherapist was very much about what meaning we make from massive and overwhelming circumstance, and the different paths we take in the process of making that meaning. Some meanings protect us from harm, some meanings give us hope, or open gates of creativity, aliveness, and love; other meanings shut us down or cut us off from crucial, sustaining contexts, helping us die, slowly, over a very long period of time. Psychotherapy seemed

to me to be a way of examining those meanings and meaning-making processes and evaluating if they were serving life or shutting it down. In the process, it also seemed crucial to honor the protective, life-saving role a meaning might once have played, even if its current relationship to its owner was to stifle options, generate confusion and pain, and divert vital, healing energies.

My own struggle to make sense of my parents' stories of their Holocaust experiences, and even more than the stories, the unspoken energies and clouds of feeling that pervaded the emotional atmosphere of my childhood, set me irrevocably on the path of searching for spiritual coherence. The enormity of their experiences virtually necessitated a profound split in somatic and cognitive representations of their stories: no narrative, no words, could speak that tale. And yet I felt myself bombarded, without a story to pin the feelings and sensations on, by a tremendous vibration of longing, grief, rage, pain, guilt, hope, as well as the joy and passion of life only one who has looked death firmly in the eye can claim. And my mother, for her part, spoke daily of and to God; my father, for his, declared a godless universe as the only sense he could make of what had befallen the "chosen people."

Early in my childhood, my religious education instructed me. (My father explained to me once, why, if he didn't believe in God, he sent me to Hebrew School: "So you can make your own choice," he said. Years later, he would add, "because to be a Jew is to have a relationship with God, even if I don't believe in Him.") I learned the usual litany of God's attributes: All-knowing, All-powerful, Benevolent, Wise. I struggled to believe the logic of all this, but I accepted it as best a child can accept such concepts. Earlier still, while playing together in the garden, my mother had asked me about my idea of God. She tells me I pointed to the flowers — I remember them distinctly, they were pansies — and said, God is the one who made these. I told her they "looked like orphans." Who knows what made me say that? Pansies always looked sad to me. Something about their deep, velvety colors and the droopy second row of petals . . . I mention this because there clearly was, before all doctrine, a child's feeling of Divinity. Impressionistic, illogical, but there.

When I was 14, I attended a workshop for Jewish

teens on the Holocaust. For the first time, the feelings and stories that had permeated my whole life were placed in a larger, historical, *objective* context. It wasn't just my family's particular drama, but a social event of monstrous proportions. Rabbis held seminars as they gave us facts, told stories of genocide and ruined lives, and asked us how we felt about it.

I went into shock. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The universe couldn't possibly be that random and horrible and callous and cruel. No sense could ever be made of this event. No God could possibly have watched over such things, and allowed them. There could be no God.

I went into a severe depression that lasted a good six months in its most intense phase, and over two decades in its lingering effects. My faith in religion was destroyed. Interestingly, however, I continued to be fascinated with the topic of spirituality. I studied the history of religions in college, even participated in religious ritual and service, all the while coming up with rationales for doing so that had little or nothing to do with faith. At the same time, I lived with a huge split between my feelings and my intellect. I alternated between "knowing" that there is no God, and engaging in an ongoing dialogue, in ritual, feeling and prayer, with what I could only describe as a Divinity who was desperately wounded, psychotic and cruel. And at the same time, I felt drawn, over and over, into what I called "stories of redemption" — a sort of spiritual romance of blessing and release, and a sense, as well, that therapy at its best is part of such a narrative of healing and awakening. But there was no God.

In graduate school, I learned the practice of my profession. I became interested in family systems theory and the ideas of Bateson and the Palo Alto Group, eventually leading me to discover the Strategic Therapy of Haley, Solution-Focused Therapy, and others teaching and learning in the legacy of Milton Erickson. Between Ericksonian hypnosis and Solution-Focused Therapy, I felt as if I had found my professional "home." Common to all the Ericksonian interpretations and practices was an alertness to the power of language, be it diagnosis, what questions are asked, prepositions used, or assumptions embedded in the simplest expression, to shape and generate the perceptual and "actual" reality of the

client/therapist interaction. This holding of language as fundamentally generative struck me as oddly and pleasingly familiar; it was downright biblical in its mystical sensibility: "Let there be light."

So I found a way, at long last, to reclaim the spiritual foundations of my journey: There was no God, and nothing was "true" or "real," but in a great Mystery of sound-waves, attribution and intention, language could make it so. This worked for many years.

Enter Gilligan, alive and present and speaking of archetypes, energy, telepathic connections between different parts of the self — and acting like all this was real. I humored him. I was willing to play along, as long as it was clearly understood that what was being described was not literal truth.

And then I began to wobble. During a group trance led by Gilligan at a supervision retreat, I experienced a vision of the earth cracking open in Joshua Tree National Forest, a place I had visited the year before. I interpreted the vision in light of my particular psychology and fears. At 6:00 A.M. the next morning, California was rocked by a moderate-sized earthquake. The epicenter was Joshua Tree. At another supervision, I was tagged as the "therapist" for another participant. I began to speak in a dreamlike state. I felt streams of energy, as if I were standing in a river with a strong current flowing into me, supporting me from behind as the words flowed out of me and created images for the "client." The "client" reported that the images hit nerves and were profoundly meaningful for her. When I mentioned, as if it were an oddity, the feeling of energy I had felt, others in the room nodded in confirmation . . . without the indulgent smirk I had half expected. Several said things to the effect of, "of course, we felt it too." "But," I remember telling the group, "I thought that energy stuff was just a metaphor."

It took me a long time to integrate these learnings, because as strong as both my intuitive and rational sides were, they still were barely speaking to one another. I really did not want to re-examine my conclusions about a universe in which, granted, language had the generative power of Creation, but let's not get carried away by

thinking any of this is real! If I admitted my spirituality into the same playing field as my rational awareness, something was going to break. Fortunately for me, it did.

The premises of the relational self and the guided experiences that went with those premises brought me to a point where I could no longer be satisfied with the kind of compartmentalization of philosophy and emotional/spiritual self that I had tolerated and sustained for many years. Bringing together disparate parts of my awareness was painful; all the old feelings that had instigated the break in the first place and had been so blocked off for so many years came rushing back in. But this time, there was a crucial difference: I had the resources both within myself and in ritual and community, to hold the Field and contain all the parts within a coherent and loving whole. I had a conceptualization that satisfied my mind, and I had the community and ritual structure of the workshops to hold my emotions steady, and give me boundaries and acceptance and freedom to borrow until I could feel my own.

Within that containment and acceptance, the brokenness within me could once more be held within my own loving awareness. Healing was not a matter of "fixing" but of embracing. Wholeness contains within itself the brokenness of being, as Moses' Ark was said to contain, alongside the new ones, the old, broken tablets of the Law.¹ What makes the broken whole is not repair, but blessing.



*The Sleeping Angel*²

delicately you rewrite
the stories that bind me
to darkness and pain:

you do not wipe the slate,
but rather, cherish.

the broken thing awakes;
the sleeping angel
rises into light

¹ Strassfeld, 2002, earlier version cited in Gilligan, 1997.

² Poem by Dvorah Simon, for J.C.B., with thanks.



Time passed, and many learnings unfolded and continue to unfold. I walk differently now. It is a process, of course, not an endpoint, but a process which began with the healing of that split, and with the learning, in SR, of a model that gives equal privilege to the conceptual and the somatic. With attention and time, the practice of welcoming and blessing lost, distorted and cursed parts of self becomes stronger and more skillful, and I become more at ease in claiming myself, without prejudice.

I can pray now, without the spasm of cynicism that covered the bitterness of failed hope and disbelief. Prayer is, for me, a way of connecting relationally with All That Is; of entering into a Field whose breadth exceeds my own, but that includes me, at the same time. But learning to pray was exceedingly hard won, for to do so meant traversing, first, through all my old disappointments with God. To feel how lost I was in my desire for an easy faith that would never be in my grasp. And more, to feel how hard it was to feel entitled to come before God with my requests and needs. Who was I, after all, to demand that the universe be other than it was?

Next to the vastness of Everything, I am nothing. Self-Relations gave me a means, a container, a conceptual and experiential frame, in which I could discover and accept and bless my own unique spirit and voice in the scheme of things. Thus I could learn to utter that voice, to say, in prayer, "here I am," with the full certainty of my right to utter my name into the vast beyond. The both/and of prayer is: though I am "nothing," yet I can speak, I can enter into listening, and I can be a part of the Whole.

How Does Any of This Apply to Clinical Work?

SR gave me a way to reconnect parts of self that had been alienated from my being as a result of what I am calling spiritual trauma. Listening to clients speak of the places they felt stuck, it occurred to me that "spiritual trauma" might be at the heart, as well, of much of what they were expressing to me. How did SR provide a way to both apprehend the kind of cut-offs that spiritual trauma fosters, and to bring those parts of self back into an active, dynamic relational field? How could I

take my experiential, somatic, and emotional learnings back into a conceptual frame that might be useful for others? What follows are my efforts to make sense, in a more cognitive frame, of what earlier was experienced as an emotional, poetic, and spiritual process. The tone of what follows is different, more outer-directed, more intellectual. Hopefully, the "field" of reading this piece can contain both cognitive and somatic self without losing either in the process. I invite you, the reader, as you make your way through the following, to periodically stop, breathe, connect, and listen. Where does what follows touch the somatic, the emotional and the spiritual, in you?

What is Spirituality, Anyway?

In thinking about healing, I wondered if psychotherapy could be considered a kind of spiritual work without portfolio, as it were. Psychotherapy is clearly not religion, nor is it, outside the purview of such things as pastoral counseling, a particular spiritual path. Yet I believe that much of what we do in psychotherapy touches on dimensions best described as spiritual, and that the work of psychotherapy, at least as generated in the practice of Self-Relations, is spiritual work.

Obviously, "spirituality" means many things to many people. For now, let's say that "spirituality" is an approach to meaning-making and life which looks beyond physical, objectifiable appearances to a felt sense and/or belief-based frame of "something more." What the "more" is varies from one tradition to another but often includes concepts of energies and forces unseen, a soul that transcends and survives the body, and an intelligence and intentionality to the universe. Spiritual work is the set of practices one uses to increase one's awareness of spiritual reality and its place in one's life. Spiritual reality, in such a frame, is seen as a truer marker of the purpose and intrinsic worth of an individual, trumping the more common and consensual identifications as job, social roles, personal skills, or status. Conscious, deliberate orientation to spiritual reality is fostered by such practices as study of sacred texts, meditation, and prayer, and by the cultivation of such attitudes as reverence, gratitude, right action, compassion, and service (Simon, 1996).

Trauma, on the other hand, is an event that causes a break in belonging; a break in connection to sustaining

contexts, including spiritual reality (one might argue that all sustaining contexts are spiritual reality, in that they comprise the ground of being) (Herman, 1992; Gilligan, 1997). Trauma results from specific action, but that action is infused by meaning both by interpersonal and societal/cultural symbolism and association, and by the idiosyncratic meaning-making of the person experiencing it. Thus, "trauma" denotes both the instigating event and the meaning-making that occurs as a result of that event.

Trauma severs the flowing and flexible integrity of mind, body and spirit and substitutes a sense of self that is cursed into stasis, isolation and exile. Sustaining contexts can be internal (the unconscious mind, physical sensations, a felt sense of centering in one's body), social (relationship with others), and cosmic/natural (a sense of connection and place with and in the universe and the natural world). Trauma dampens the grace of living by reducing options for movement within the energy dynamic of the self: some routes are simply not allowed.

Jessica³

Jessica comes to treatment because "the television is starting to talk to me again." Two years previously, voices had told her to jump out of a fourth-story window — and she had obeyed. She lived to tell the tale, but spent over a year recovering from the many broken bones she had sustained. Things had been going along more or less alright since then, until recently. I asked if anything unusual had happened that might have set her off. She said, "I went to a fortune-teller, who told me the Devil entered my life when I had an abortion seven years ago."

I asked Jessica if she had grown up with any particular faith. She told me she had been raised Catholic, but felt compelled to leave the Church when she had that abortion. She had become disillusioned by the Church's teachings when she felt that she would never be accepted, given what she had done, but believed she had done the right thing. Her alienation from the religion of her childhood had the further effect of cutting off Jessica's access to feeling

any possibility of being forgiven, leaving her vulnerable to the fortune-teller's "curse."

Trauma is Incomplete Initiation

One of the most mind-bending realizations I had in making my way through the trauma of learning about the Holocaust, was that, while drastically painful and in some ways damaging to my spirit, that learning ultimately was a gift: by virtue of that awareness, I was forced to learn to hold the universe as the insane but magnificent contradiction that it is. In one sense, then, trauma can be seen as the opening move of an initiation into a higher awareness. The initiation is traumatic because it is incomplete: like an initiation, trauma shatters illusion — the illusion of safety, the illusion that if you are good, nothing bad will happen to you. What distinguishes a complete from an incomplete, and therefore traumatic, initiation is the presence of a wider, sustaining context of love, comfort and safety *within* which the dark and painful realities of human existence are revealed. The key to trauma is not merely the incursion of a painful, shocking event but the isolation, as well, of that event and of the person experiencing it from people, resources and frameworks of meaning in which the stuck, shocked energies can once again be coached to movement, connection and life. When, on the other hand, the person who has experienced trauma can quickly recover connection to a sustaining field, be it psychic, social, natural, or spiritual — a potentially traumatic event may be processed through one's being so that, while one is affected by it, serious harm is averted. It is the stuckness of meaning-making within a "fundamentalist" text (i.e., there is only one text, and only one interpretation of that text), in which lingering damage occurs.

In a sense, all trauma is spiritual trauma, in that what gets shut down is the free flowing of energies and connections between and among the worlds, both internal and external. Trauma shuts down the sense that the universe (and the self) is a resourceful place, or that the resources that are available are one's birthright and can be accessed freely. But the content of trauma and its residue may reside more particularly in more typically described

³ Story told with the client's permission. "Jessica" is a pseudonym.

psychological or social dimensions of functioning, e.g., a sexual trauma leading to fear and mistrust in sexual relationships; a trauma associated with travel leading to being limited to one's home. Thus, a spiritual trauma is one that severs one's nurturing connection with spiritual reality as one understands it — God or Goddess, Breath, Energy, Nature, Chi, Buddha-nature, Love, Consciousness, the Universe. Spiritual trauma makes one doubt, fear, and even abhor religious or spiritual expressions of life, or it otherwise relegates such expressions to dismissible or dissociated, ghettoized realities.

Hare, in an article entitled "The Simple Believer" (1992), postulates a natural progression in the development of religious or spiritual identity. The "simple believer" is the person in the first stage of belief. The simple believer is one who believes as she or he has been taught: Sunday school religion; the simple faith of a child. Hare next identifies the "simple unbeliever" as one whose belief has been shattered by an encounter with information that convincingly contradicts the tenets of faith, citing evolutionary theory, or evidence of the geological age of the planet as challenges, for example, to the biblical story of the genesis of life on earth. For some, this is the stopping point. Others, says Hare, go on to become "sophisticated believers," recasting religious doctrine in symbolic, metaphoric form, taking religious language into a new dimension of meaning.

I believe, however, that for most people, such things as scientific evidence that the world was not created in seven "days" constitute a relatively trivial challenge to spiritual connection and faith. We are not convinced by *information*, but by feeling. And the feeling that makes for trauma in the field of spiritual connection is *betrayal* — the betrayal of simple faith by the witnessing of hypocrisy in faith's practitioners or by the intrusion of the awareness, into a child's world, of evil, terror, and loss. In the world of the simple believer, bad things don't happen to good people because God is in control, and is benevolent and just. Good is rewarded with good, evil with evil. (Non-deistic religions such as Buddhism no doubt produce their own version of "simple faith" such as a folk-based devotional practice centered on the

figure of the Buddha.) For me, learning to understand the magnitude of what Hitler did to the Jews shocked my system, literally, "beyond belief." On one side was "God": "Master of the Universe." On the other was horror, perpetrated apparently without divine limitation, in that very universe. The gap between the two was unsustainable. For others, in stories I heard from clients, colleagues and friends, similar breaks occurred from sudden, traumatic awareness of such things as an abusive or hateful religious leader, the existence of the suffering of innocent children, and hypocrisy in the inevitable failed human translation of spiritual teachings. Such awareness, without the mentoring to place it in a context that could hold such contradictions, wreaked havoc to "Sunday school" faith. In such an encounter, everything one learned and believed in is suddenly turned on its head — in the face of such infamy there can be no all-knowing, compassionate deity, keeping watch over his or her faithful followers.

Pattie's Story⁴

I was raised in New Orleans, which is predominantly Roman Catholic, and my parents are also natives of the Big Easy. My father was a Roman Catholic, though he was nearly lapsed in the eyes of the church. My mother was raised in the Baptist Church. Spirituality of some sort was always present in my home.

When I was about 12, I walked down the aisle of the Baptist Church and accepted Jesus as my Saviour and was baptized. . . . By my 18th birthday, I didn't even believe in a God. During those six years, my parents' marriage of 20 years had dissolved, and I had had several other traumas in my home life, including the discoveries of other forms of spirituality (astrology, Silva Mind Control, numerology, witchcraft, ESP, etc.), deaths of grandparents, lost virginity, parents' remarriages, etc. Also, when I was 14, a man whom I had known my entire life tried to stuff his penis down my throat, with no warning . . . I can point to that singular event as a turning point in my life — not necessarily a good

⁴ Reprinted with permission from an unpublished manuscript by Pattie Sisson.

turning point, but a paradigm shift nonetheless. I remember being unable to cry during much of my 17th and 18th years, and feeling as if I were going to implode. Where was God? Was there a God? I believe this is when I started experiencing severe depressive illness, from which I suffered for approximately 20 years.

The universe changes cast. What once was presumed secure and safe is now seen as irrevocably dangerous and untrustworthy. If one's conception of the nature of reality is, in a sense, one's percept of ultimate truth, or God, then, as Gilligan has stated, for the traumatized person, "the trauma becomes the face of God" (workshop communication). The universe, writ large, wears a terrible face, and that face is God: cruel, psychotic, or incompetent. In the face of such terrifying Divinity, the denial of the religious/spiritual sphere is vastly to be preferred. Any capacity to perceive and commune with the "larger forces" outside the narrowly defined self and as defined by religious training becomes suspect and to be avoided.

Concurrently, within the self, access to spiritual feeling — feelings of flow, transcendence, prayerful awareness, reverence, gratitude — may be cut off or shut down, separated by pain into a dissociated or suppressed status. Furthermore, to forestall the pain of betrayed longings, such modes of feeling, and their associated descriptors and thoughts, become the target of a sort of agonized contempt. There is no one more cynical, after all, than a failed idealist.

Thomas⁵

When Thomas was a child, he was involved in a very intense relationship with a man who sexually abused him repeatedly from age 10–12 and who told him Jesus was an alien and that's why Jesus could do all the things the Bible said he could do. Thomas now "preaches atheism," wanting others to believe as he does, but is afraid to "start a cult." He "blames" God for what he went through i.e., inattentive parents who "let" abuse occur. Yet

Thomas does a curious thing: despite his declaration that he "doesn't believe in Jesus Christ," Thomas is attending classes to be "confirmed" and receive sacraments as an adult, and continues to be drawn to abstract concepts such as wondering about eternal life, God and infinity. Thomas feels intense anxiety and conflict, but reconciles the conflict, at least intellectually, by believing that, like him, everyone in the class is faking belief, going along just as he is.

Denial or suppression of religious feeling is not the only option in the face of spiritual trauma. Self-Relations is about understanding the self as a relational entity, comprised of multiple units of experience. At any given moment, there are at least "two of you" emergent in consciousness. How these two parts co-exist defines the tenor of the relational self: one can dominate the other; the two can exist without communication between them, in a dissociated dynamic; or they can both be present, balanced in a way that admits the special energy of each. In terms of spiritual identity and the challenge that spiritual trauma brings to it, four pathways are available:

The "old" dominates the "new":

One can cling rigidly to one's original belief system by denying, ignoring, or otherwise shutting down the challenging experience or information. This is the path of the religious fundamentalist, the one who remains "the simple believer." Anything that doesn't fit the belief system is interpreted as mistaken belief arising from darkness, confusion, the material world, or even the work of Satan. Such a person will rarely show up in the therapy room, for the simple reason that psychotherapy is recognized, correctly, as a potential challenge to such beliefs.

The "new" dominates the "old":

One can reject, whole cloth, not only one's learned beliefs but the very concept of religion, faith, or spirituality, essentially embracing the reality of the trauma (life

⁵ This case was described on the SR e-list by therapist Bob Jaskewicz and is included here with both his and the client's permission. "Thomas" is a pseudonym.

is unsafe and untrustworthy) as “the face of God.” This is the path of the “recovering Catholic,” the militant atheist, the anti-religious Jew, and so on.

The two are dissociated from one another:

One can compartmentalize a life of “objective truth” and “faith” — keeping religion or spirituality safely away from any considerations of compelling reality. These are the “Sunday Christians,” or “Yom Kippur Jews.”

The two coexist:

Finally, in a new version of “the sophisticated believer,” one can hold both realities, safety and trauma, betrayal and trust, in the larger field of a sustaining awareness. Self-Relations calls us to do this last.

Initiation

How does Self-Relations offer a context for healing of spiritual trauma? In the radical acceptance of the client generated by the “both/and” consciousness of the therapist or teacher, cut-off energies and neglected selves are welcomed and begin to emerge and be articulated.

Trauma opens up for question the premise, necessary but in fact false, that life is safe. As stated above, trauma can be the opening move in a potential ritual of initiation: illusions are shattered and real wisdom is possible. The difference between trauma as damage and trauma as initiation lies in the ability to process the event (and its assigned meaning *vis a vis* the nature of reality and the worth of the self) within a safely held, ritual context in which the chaotic discontinuity wrought by trauma is transformed into a meaningful journey of discovery. “Both/and” means that both the light of the therapeutic “welcome” and the darkness of the gift of awakening that trauma brings are allowed to be present.

The goal of psychotherapy is, in a sense, increased flexibility. Life works as long as it works within learned patterns of behavior and meaning, until new information throws the old patterns off. The ability to shift with the new, especially the shockingly and painfully new, depends on one’s ability to “get a bigger box” in which a universe of meanings may be sustained and choices made. In Self-Relations therapy, the specific attention to feel-

ing for where one’s awareness has narrowed to incommunicado pathways allows a highly targeted way to move the stuckness of the incomplete initiation into a process that will allow completion.

Jessica did not believe that what the fortune-teller told her was true, but she continued to feel the pull of the negative voices. She began to wonder, out loud, if she was a good person after all, as she had tried to be, with or without the Church. I asked her if she had felt at home in her Catholic faith up until the abortion. She said “yes.” I asked her if she knew a priest she trusted. She said there was an old priest in her neighborhood who seemed like “a kind man.” I asked her how she felt about going to confession. She said she could do it, if he would receive it. A week later she returned. The priest had told her that while the Church did not allow him to grant absolution for what she had done, he felt she had suffered enough over the years for it, and it was time to find peace. He gave her, as penance, the task of making “the rest of the day an act of love.” She reported that the voices were gone. I worked with her for two more years. In that time, the voices never returned. But, wonderfully, another kind of “voice” entered Jessica’s life: a longstanding dream to make her living as a singer and songwriter was fulfilled when she found work as the lead singer with a jazz band.

Healing Isolation

What is lost as a result of spiritual trauma is not just access to one’s natural spirituality but also the blessings of a community of the faithful. Thus, the internal isolation of cut-off parts of the self is echoed in external alienation. By reconnecting with the Church, even symbolically, through her contact with the priest, Jessica began to heal the disconnections within herself at their source. For years, Jessica had been trapped in an either/or of “The Church is where I locate feeling spiritual” but “The Church is inaccessible to me because I had an abortion.” She was fortunate to find a priest who could help her find true healing by accepting her in love. She could both have her spirituality and love herself for the person she was.

But one does not simply recover from experiences of alienation, in the sense of return to an old life. Rather, the potential for healing is in the adoption of a new identity which includes a broader definition of both spiritual identity and one's community. Such transformation needs a community ritual to mark the change, to erase the crazy-making discontinuity between inner and community-validated identity. The community of the faithful may take new and unexpected forms: one's family of choice, fellow sports fans, a writer's group, eco-environmentalism, an online "virtual" community, or more recognizably alternate spiritual communities such as involvement in Paganism, Asian martial arts or meditation traditions, or any other spiritualities besides that with which one was raised.

Pattie went through many more changes. She was in an abusive relationship with a man who broke her arm. She got out, and married another man . . . and both became addicted to drugs. She found Jesus and joined a church, and was saved from drugs. She asked questions, so many that she was told she was an "unsubmissive wife" and a trouble-maker. After initially supporting her, her husband took the side of the church elders for a time. She once again became alienated from religion. Her story continues:

"I spent the next year practically in isolation. I wanted to walk away from God, thinking that my 15 years of 'servitude' only taught me spiritual pain. Much of what I had learned about the good things of God dwindled into the background of my life. I tried to walk away. I was very angry, and couldn't say a positive word about any part of my life. I looked for ways to die. I drove around town, idly wondering how long it would take for me to die, if I just hit the accelerator and drove off that bridge, or into that oncoming car, or how many Xanax I would need to take to go on that big vacation. The only things that stopped me from killing myself were that I knew my husband still loved me dearly and that I had two children, and refused to throw the hostility of suicide onto them to carry for the rest of their lives.

"Then, I tried to go it alone spiritually. I would read my Bible and pray, and then I would get up

and go to work, or wherever I had to be. It was a zombie existence. I spent a year in this limbo. I actually looked at myself in the mirror and said, 'If I saw me coming, I'd run!' Then I got MAD. Mad at God. Mad at church. Mad at myself for the time I 'wasted.' I couldn't have a conversation with a fine, upstanding Christian without collapsing into fits of derisive laughter. And it was educated, 'armed' laughter, because I usually knew the Bible better than they, and could come up with a scripture to tear down their argument at the drop of a hat. I told everybody off, every chance I had — the pastor, his wife, the elders, people on the street. Lots of anger, just spilling out.

After this shameful interlude, we moved to Jackson. I was happy about the move, and looked forward to being around my 'B.C.' friends. They were thrilled to have me here, and we spent many evenings discussing spiritual things. They were very patient with me, as far as my cynicism and grudgefulness regarding the church. It helped me to realize that they found something of worth in me, when, for 15 years previously, I had been told that I was a sinner, just a sinner, no good in me at all (emphasis added.) When I realized that, yes, there was something of worth in me, I was somehow able to step back and look at myself a little more objectively. Yes, there was something there, something that these friends treasured, something that people in church didn't see. I felt a sense of welcome from them that I hadn't felt in so long. One of them asked me to go to church with her, and I refused. She still loved me. She didn't think I'd go to hell if I didn't set foot in a church building!

I mark that event as when I started to spiritually heal and synthesize all of this spiritual pain into something useful. Spiritual healing is not something that "just happens." One also doesn't go it alone.

Pattie's friends gave her a blessing by accepting her whether or not she shared their religious beliefs. Their blessing helped her to see herself as good and thereby break the curse of her prior experiences, in which she was charged with an impossible "either/or" — either she go along with a spiritual identity that did not admit

her divergent opinions and sensibilities, or she was a "sinner." But where curses isolate; blessings make whole. Once accepted by her friends, she could begin to "spiritually heal."

Whatever the nature of the community, the blessing of a newly emergent identity by the community (or by the therapist as its representative in the role of "priest of the rituals of transition": see Kovacs, 1982; personal communication, 1983), is what makes the difference between trauma as damage vs. trauma as ritual of initiation and identity change. The space of therapy is a community in microcosm, in which the conversation evokes and is supported by a relational presence between the two people and among all the voices within and around each of them. The ritual qualities of psychotherapy: special meeting time and place, separation from ordinary reality, special use of language and conversational practices, as well as the intention of both participants as held and guarded by the therapist, allow for the invocation of a kind of ritual space in which healing can occur, a safe container for what will arise. In addition, ritual space provides an intensity of feeling and focus that matches the intensity of traumatic experience, adding emotional credibility and power to the proceedings. Only a powerful healing context can speak to the power of traumatic memories. A purely cognitive focus can never be vivid enough to touch the place within which such somatically organized memories are held. Efforts to address such memories purely from the perspective of the "story" that is told about them miss a crucial message of Self-Relations: the conversation, to be effective, must be held with the "self" that is having the experience.

Dolan (workshop communication, 1993) has spoken of the dramatic symptoms of what is termed "Borderline Personality Disorder" as comprised of "affective flashbacks": something in the person's current environment triggers an association to an emotional state originating in a past circumstance, yet there is no overt memory of that circumstance. To the observer, a disproportionate emotional reaction is the result. In a way, all

symptoms may be an affective flashback of one sort or another: a response that does not match the present moment. In the process of seeking coherence, one is driven by "an affect in search of an attribution" (Egelko, 1985, personal communication), often snagging the nearest available familiar narrative to do so. Here is where "listening through the story" becomes so crucial. Here, also, is where one more aspect of the ritual quality of psychotherapy can be operative, in that it provides a social framework in which the client can bestow power and authority on therapist. With such authority and power, the therapist can replicate, with sufficient credibility, the power of the original insult, calling it out, as it were, for a re-match. Even more, when blessing is offered, it too has sufficient credibility and power. The final blessing, of course, is the re-investment of authority and power back to the client, where it belongs.

Psychotherapy can thus be a transforming ritual space, in which trauma is treated as a "terrible gift of awakening" (Gilligan, 1997), provided, of course, that the therapist is not blocked in her own spirituality. Or, for that matter, trained to not attend to it. (In 1995, I gave a workshop on "Solution-Focused Therapy as a Spiritual Path" at the Third Therapeutic Conversations Conference [Denver, Colorado]. I asked participants what they thought the role of spirituality was in psychotherapy. To my surprise, a number of them reported having been taught to "never discuss religion and politics."⁶)

No spirituality is ever really shut down, however. It "leaks," inevitably, whether in the client or the therapist. Spiritual longing appears in its many guises as the desire for and experience of presence, consciousness, transcendent meaning, altered states, or flow, as well as in the practice of good works and compassion. The imagination speaks poetry and dreams; symptoms appear as guideposts to hidden realities, and a sincere search for truth, wholeness and healing are initiated. Is this not the work of psychotherapy? And yet it bears much resemblance, stripped of the particularities of doxology, to

⁶ Things are, fortunately, changing. Recently, there is an increase in interest in the many intersections between spirituality and psychotherapy (e.g., Cornett, 1998; Miller, 1999; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Shafransky, 1996). JCAH guidelines now require an assessment of religious/spiritual history as part of a psychological evaluation.

things most often described as spiritual. Perhaps doing therapy is a way for therapists to do "spiritual work" without having to identify it as such. Within a secular frame, safe from the taint of disillusionment with one's original religious training (as well as from the pitfall of rigid identification with any one ideological religious frame), psychotherapy allows the therapist to touch the client's reality in the most amazing ways, and to be touched in turn. An awareness on the part of the therapist of the spiritual aspects of such realities can only enhance the freedom of movement within and among such domains.

I am not proposing, by any means, that psychotherapy needs to be conducted in the terminology of spiritual work, nor should a "spiritual" framework ever be imposed on a client's concerns. Rather, that to do psychotherapy, and especially Self-Relations, requires attention to the kinds of concerns (presence, flow, awareness of forces unseen) more typically and comfortably described by traditions far older than the practice of modern psychotherapy. If the language or articulation of such concerns is blocked by a prejudicial attitude towards all things religious or spiritual (as a result of what is here being defined as spiritual trauma), so too will the effectiveness of the therapy be blocked. The conversation may be "about" anything — diet, relationships, baseball cards; it may not look like a conversation about one's soul. But if the therapist can hear deeply into the longing for connection or the joy of an awakening consciousness through the statistics and recipes, then a true context for healing can arise.

The Craft of Healing

Healing in Self-Relations therapy begins with the simultaneous holding of a conceptual framework (engaging the cognitive self) and the experiential ability to feel into multiple energy centers in client and self at the same time (engaging the somatic self). But concepts and even the ability to sense energy experientially are not enough: SR also comprises a craft of healing that draws from Ericksonian, martial arts, and other traditions, allowing both artistry and specificity in addressing the task at hand.

The craft of healing in SR includes:

- Invoking and maintaining safe, bounded ritual space in which an experiential field is generated that can hold, welcome and bless split-off parts of self.
- Sustaining conscious awareness of multiple consciousness within the Field; by doing so, splits in the experiences of the client are provoked into showing themselves, by contrast with the sustained and inclusive awareness that is being presented.
- Listening through the pain or cut-off to where the client's original spirituality is still alive. Exercises such as "I see that you are your suffering/spiritual conflict/etc Now, who else are you?" are useful as a template for this kind of listening, which attends to an experiential exception pattern similar to the pursuit of behavioral exception patterns in Solution-Focused Therapy (de Shazer, 1985).
- Using the authority that is bestowed by the client on the therapist. Doing so allows the therapy to have the power needed to meet the trauma-induced experience of a cursed self with a new experience of blessing.
- Without denying or dismissing the reality of damage done, entertaining the premise that each trauma holds within itself the potential of an initiation into an integration of dark and light experience, resulting in wisdom. Listening for and naming the client's emergent wisdom.
- Ascertaining the domain or domains in which the break in belonging has occurred (e.g., with somatic self, spiritual self, nature, archetypal selves, unconscious mind, the social world, and so on). Using experiential and behavioral interventions to begin the process of rejoining the self to sustaining contexts and healing the breaks in belonging, in both internal and external worlds, leading ultimately to "walking in two worlds."

In practice, these elements of craft are inseparable. Each element flows into the next, supporting the process of rejoining the self with self. The process is irresistible. A major premise of Self-Relations is that the symptom that brings the client to therapy, rather than being simply or even in any sense a sign of "pathology," is rather a "call to awakening." Something inside the self is call-

ing for reconnection, for the re-integration, into full awareness and flow, of cut-off, neglected parts of one's being. In the case of spiritual trauma, this re-awakening may take the form of troublesome intrusions of non-rational awareness and feelings, such as uncanny dreams, intuition, prayerful awareness, or religious longing unexplained by and irreconcilable with a non- or even anti-religious belief-system. By virtue of his or her practice of "holding the field" open to disparate, even contradictory psychic "presences," the Self-Relations therapist invites the cut-off, neglected parts of the self into loving, non-judgmental awareness within the holding frame of the therapy (which includes the relational self of the client, the therapist, and the dynamic between the two). What is so awkward to describe in linear language is in fact stunningly simple in practice: the therapist's ability to tolerate and, in fact, welcome disjointed and contradictory expressions of self (in both him- or herself, and the client) makes it possible for the gift of awakening inherent in the symptom to reveal its true face as the re-emergence into conscious awareness of previously cut-off experience. Cognitively, compassionately and energetically, the practice of "both/and" consciousness, in which "both *this* and *that*" may be true and do not need to be reconciled with one another (in distinction with the "either/or" mode of ordinary awareness), creates the field of awareness in which the forgotten, terrorized and discarded aspects of self may be reclaimed and cherished.

Self-Relations opens the way for the healing of the breach by calling it out, as it were, by the very holding of the space of connection: by living in a space that is breathing and pulsing with access to all the worlds of sustaining contexts — the world of the unconscious, the body, the imagination, and archetypal presences — the cut-off realities (in both therapist and client) are invited to the party. In the presence of a felt sense of wholeness, any breach in the felt realities of self becomes more obvious and so begins to wobble out of balance, sometimes rather messily and dramatically, until it can no longer be sustained. Thus, in an apparent paradox, the "treatment" can seem to make matters worse (the cure is worse than the disease). But, ultimately, in the "break-down" of the old order, new healing can begin.

Self-Relations lives a kind of faith, in the presence

of which, for both therapist or client, splits in the self, and especially, split-off spirituality, cannot be sustained without challenge. Self-Relations posits, and is generated from, faith in forces unseen, in archetypal presences, in "telepathy" between different parts of the self, faith that the symptom is a "call to awakening" and that "something big" is moving through the client, waiting to be welcomed into presence. In common with all the Ericksonian therapies, Self-Relations works from a basic "faith" in the ultimate resourcefulness of the client in finding their own solutions to their problems, whether those solutions are behavioral (as is emphasized in Solution-Focused Therapy by De Shazer, 1985), or experiential (as is emphasized in the hypnotherapy traditions by Gilligan, 1987, Rosen, 1991, Rossi, 1993). And, not necessarily uniquely, but perhaps more self-consciously than some other forms of therapy, Self-Relations works with the "spiritual" attitudes of reverence, gratitude, compassion, and the desire for right action (ethical behavior).

Deep Listening

The holding space of Self-Relations both welcomes and calls out awareness of the breach, allowing healing to happen: witness as well as instigator of the healing process. The turning point is trust, the leap into the faith that Self-Relations posits and embodies. Trust, the very thing shaken by trauma, is what allows the trauma to be healed. Even the minimal trust held by the client by the act of showing up in the therapy office is a fit starting place. The therapist holds the space of trust by beginning, for the client, the process of deep listening: listening with the whole self to the tendrils of spirit crying out for welcome into awareness. Images, words and sensations appear, easily dismissible to ordinary consciousness, radically welcomed in the practice of Self-Relations. Dark imaginings, unpleasant thoughts, ugly emotions, as well as delicately protected fears and shameful vulnerabilities — all find their way, roaringly or haltingly, into the conversation and find welcome there. With each act of welcoming, isolation diminishes and a sense of wholeness begins to emerge. With the therapist as model and coach, the client begins to practice his or her own "deep listening" process.

So what is the therapist listening *for*? Clinically, such listening begins with two questions: how is the client's longing being expressed, in or around or despite or through the symptom, and, in what ways has the miracle (of spiritual groundedness and connection) already occurred?

The client's longing can take many forms, some more obvious than others. The most poignant form of longing is when it coexists with a sort of embarrassment or even cynical disdain; the "I won't be fooled again" syndrome. A challenge to the therapist, an "I dare you to tell me this is all going to be alright." And yet, the longing is still there, through the challenge and the pain, and the double messages: "Heal me/you can't heal me" — a sort of dysfunctional double description. What the therapist can do, in hearing past and through the bristle, is bless the longing in whatever form it occurs, touching and naming it as longing, and holding the stance that, in itself, the client's longing is a fit starting place.

The acceptance and blessing of the client's longing opens the way to a felt sense of the immutable presence of the spiritual. Is the client breathing? Does the earth support him? Does she feel transcendence in the presence of a perfect basketball play? Does music send him? Somewhere in every person's life is a seed of joy; where is it? Is it in the pain? In spite of it? Around it? Is it in a soft smile? A delight in bad puns and silly words? Does the trickster god roam in the landscape of this person's soul, overturning certainties and gleefully yanking pigtailed inkwells? Does the client keep listening, through everything, for stories of redemption? Has she shown up, to be with you, somewhere in this listening?

The therapist's ability to feel into his or her own life connection, and recognize and bless it in the other, allows it to blossom into life. To the degree that the therapist is comfortable with the language and expression of "the spiritual" in both its obvious and not so obvious forms, the more he will be able to listen to such expressions without reactivity and prejudice.

When I first heard Bob's descriptions of Thomas' struggles, I was struck by how committed Thomas is to continuing to search for answers to his spiritual questions, despite an extreme sense of betrayal by a

figure who preached religious ideas. The breaches of trust were so profound, and so deeply associated with spiritual/religious terms and concepts, that Thomas cannot approach the spiritual without triggering all the confusion and feeling of painful splits rendered by the trauma. A painful "either/or" is in play: either I have faith (in God just as these other people do) or it is all a lie. And yet, interestingly, he keeps seeking it. He doesn't simply space out on, compartmentalize, or walk away from the spiritual dimension. "Something unstoppable," to quote Gilligan, keeps rising in him to seek religious meaning.

So the first aspect of "deep listening" to this story of trauma and symptomatology, was to hear the intensity and clarity of Thomas' spiritual longing within the confusion and despair, and to reflect that back to him.

The second aspect of "deep listening" was to begin to wonder, in a solution-focused vein, about exceptions in Thomas' life to this kind of painful split in his experience of the spiritual. Somewhere in his life there had to be an unambiguous sense of transcendence, peace, beauty, or flow — where was it? It might be something he might not reference as spiritual, but which has an aspect or quality that is unsullied by the deliberately confused belief systems to which he was subjected.

I suggested to Bob that he work with Thomas to be able to center himself in whatever that was, whether it be an ability to appreciate the taste of a piece of fruit and feel gratitude, walk in nature, feel the joy of a great sports play, create something with his hands, be a good mentor or parent, dream vividly, or sing. This could then become a new sense for him, a definition of his own, natural, undistorted spirituality, around which his faith questions could flow and be built. As long as the faith questions remained mired in the sort of confusion and faithlessness of what was done to him, he would continue to feel the terror and alienation that were overlaid on his sense of spirituality by what he had experienced.

The suggested task was to, very gently and tenderly and with the utmost compassion for himself, rediscover his original innocence in the way he is able to open to the unnamed spiritual in everyday

life, by virtue of being alive and breathing and continuing to search out these questions. From that base, he could then return to those faith questions that trouble him so and be able to see through the masks that religion and betrayal sometimes make to hide us from God, and God from us. The premise was that the healing of the spiritual trauma would be a template, as well, for the healing of other trauma in Thomas' life, including his sense that any girlfriend who wanted to be with him must have something wrong with her.

Locating the break in belonging points the way to where interventions may best be targeted. Spiritual trauma may be triggered in a variety of domains — in the community, in one's sense of comfort and safety with one's body, in one's faith in forces beyond the ego. Interventions to promote healing can begin with attention to what the longing is, and also, what is already connected and working for the person, in these domains. For example, for the person who felt betrayed by the leadership of a religious group, it might be interesting to explore where in this person's life she does feel safe to trust a person of authority, and how she has learned to discriminate those who are worthy of such trust.

In further reflection on this case, the question of "where is the break in belonging" comes up. In Thomas' case, a break in belonging happened in a social, mentor relationship, and generalized to a break with a belief in God. Thus a further intervention strategy might involve finding examples of people whom Thomas does feel able to trust, and exploring how he is able to discern who is trustworthy, and allow himself to trust when he does.

Finally, it was important that the therapist not be overly caught up in the politics and emotionality of religious rhetoric in this case, but feel through his own sense of the beauty and poignancy of Thomas' continued longing for spiritual meaning, as well as a felt sense of Thomas' innate capacity for spiritual connection.

Following these supervision suggestions, the therapist's feedback was that the suggestion to note Thomas's anger about his spiritual beliefs, and yet

his ongoing desire to seek spiritual answers at the same time, "opened the doors" for the exploration of other complimentary truths in Thomas' experience. Bob is continuing to work with Thomas to identify neglected selves as well as alien voices and negative inductions, and to find liberation and integration in the process.

As the therapist listens for both the client's longing and the immutable presence of the spiritual in his or her life — *along with* the pain and sense of the wound that brought the client to the therapy, a "both/and" space opens up. In this space, an unvoiced narrative can come into being: the story that the client could never tell before, a story that bridges the split in the self wrought by trauma. The untellable story of one's relationship with the universe, with God, if that is one's language, can begin to be told. The chaotic rumblings, the intrusions of vision, the symptoms, the dreams — can begin to find form as they are blessed and cherished as a legitimate part of the tale. The split that divides original connection from the heartache of a betrayed and cynical consciousness begins to blur as both sides are welcomed into a shared communion of longing and an awareness that the miracle not only has already occurred, it never was lost. One's original being is spiritual, insofar as one is alive and connected to all things.

With or without "God-language," the therapist's attention to matters of spirit can infuse, inform and support a non-pathological model of work that, beyond all conceptualization and craft, is essentially a path of blessing.

Summary

The pure faith of a child is beautiful in its transcendent simplicity, but it is not a thing that can withstand, intact, the world as we know it. Life, as Gilligan states (1997), is a wonderful thing, but sometimes it hurts like hell. And sometimes it does more than hurt; it *harms*. The relational context in which experiences of hurt and harm are held make the crucial difference between such experiences as intransigent woundings versus the opening (albeit painful) move in an initiation to wisdom. Wisdom is an emergent property of lived experience and the conscious, deliberate commitment to create

and nourish contexts large enough and complex enough to hold the crazy, chaotic and contradictory forces that comprise a human life. Fortunate is the child who arrives into a life of such contexts; he or she will be mentored with compassion and strength through the shock of that first, inevitable challenge to original faith. For those who are not so graced, the opportunity and the task of therapy is to instigate the creation of such contexts and to bring healing to the rifts in self that the shock of that challenge left behind. The craft of healing — creating and holding safe boundaries; holding the field open to disparate parts of self; listening for original wholeness; using bestowed authority to replace curses with blessings; listening for emergent wisdom; and finding and rectifying breaks in belonging — works to this end.

The potential result is not simply repair of the wound, but the integration of a more complex and flexible self. One arrives at a place where feelings marry thoughts and dance with sensations, dreams, and imaginings. Even the pain, even the woundings, are gifts, for by them, we know we are alive. Human suffering is the price we pay for human feeling, for our ability to yearn, love and desire. Fulfillment and happiness arrive on the scene, and we discover, amazingly, how to welcome them. We learn that we don't have to run away from life, no matter what it brings. It breaks us, over and over, and from that heartstruck wound, something new, some thing of wings and ash and rain, is born. Having lived — with consciousness — through the fire of discovery that not all is as we believed, we find new strength and the courage (despite the certain, irrevocable fragility of our lives) to love.

Full Circle

I was blessed in my path to come across Self-Relations, as both an intellectual framework and an experiential practice. I've told my story, and I've lived and breathed the changes it worked in my spirit. I've spent years integrating what I've learned, finding both intellectual coherence and a slowly but progressively increasing skill in sitting with and attending to a multiplicity of relational experiences in the therapy process. The two processes, personal and professional, have fed and supported each other. The more I am able to accept a cognitive structure that admits the necessity and grace of blessing, the more easily I can welcome feelings and the rest of the chaotic unconscious (and less easily pegged experiences) into my awareness. Darkness finds its place with light, and I am less apt to judge, either in others or myself, the various descents we all seem to need, at one time or another, in our journey to a more integrated place. Doing therapy seems more fluid, less sticky, less likely to get stuck in one or another realm of feeling. There is more laughter, even as there is an increased ability to sit with someone in pain. Nothing needs to be rushed, and yet there is less attachment and more flow, because there is less fear.

Perhaps I simply grew up. But the language and community of SR have been the template in which much of that growing occurred — the language that gave me the articulation of the relational self, the grace to find the root and breath of the experiential “both/and,” and the Field (in community, self, and therapy room) in which the exiled parts of Soul can be gathered up, welcomed and blessed. And for that, I am grateful.

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POETIC INTERLUDE 1

Broken and Perfect

(Cynthia Franklin)

I want to stop nursing the childish hope
that it could have been different, or ever will be.

Don't I know by now that all love
leads to betrayal?
And the biggest loves,
The biggest betrayals?

Don't I know that my own hope
for a more perfect loving
is just another of my own ways
of betraying?

Maybe I am crazy stubborn
But I want to hold, still,
Any flawed moment of love,
That ever was, or will be,
As irrevocable.

Maybe as crazy
As the baby monkey
Holding onto its dead mother
Whether hoping for milk, or hoping to wake her,
And whose fingers have to be broken
Before it will let go?

Or as crazy
As the lucky Chinese
Who feed rice to their dead ancestors
Believing they will eat
And will finally, now, be
Satisfied?

And as crazy
As those who conceive
And give birth to little ones,
And, cradling them, cherish
every extravagant hope
for a different future?

Maybe as crazy,
and as sane.

Listen,
All love is dangerous
All love is dear
All love is costly
All love is precious

All love
Is broken
And perfect
Like God.

If God Was In the Camps

(Dvorah Simon)

If God was in the camps,
if He wore a yellow star,
He wore the silver studs as well;
insignia of power.

If Kossova explodes along
a road of pain and ruin
what hellish rage is fostered
for the thousandth generation?

God: everywhere, yes, but
scattered just as we are,
in bullet-wielding children
and in silent twinkling star.

But where the heart of madness is
there rests in equal measure
a balm of grace and gratitude
in life and in its treasure.

To bear it all in witness
and stay simple though it breaks you,
and consonant with all of this
to still ask love to claim you,

Is to love God into wholeness
from the ragged edge of pain,
and from unflinching vision dark
find innocence again.

SECTION II

APPLICATIONS OF SELF-RELATIONS



*Self-Relations, Hypnosis, and Transpersonal Approaches
in the Treatment of Panic Attacks*

David Aftergood, M.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He is in full time private practice of psychiatry in Westchester County, NY. He also teaches and offers supervision in psychotherapy approaches that include hypnotherapy, EMDR, and mindfulness meditation. He is especially interested in the integration of biological, psychological, emotional, and transpersonal realms while treating people in their quest for wholeness and wellness.

SELF-RELATIONS, HYPNOSIS, AND TRANSPERSONAL APPROACHES IN THE TREATMENT OF PANIC ATTACKS

In this chapter I will describe an integrated method in the treatment of panic attacks that utilizes hypnosis, transpersonal experiences and the application of Self-Relations philosophy. My study of SR work has opened for me practices of deeper, mindful listening and a greater curiosity about the un-lived potentials in the clients who come to me for help. I have also experienced a felt sense of a "shared field of consciousness," a space that opens between my clients and myself that invites the emergence of previously hidden emotions and life experiences. At the same time, people present with serious symptoms that are interfering with their life, that need active amelioration and relief. This is most certainly true of panic attacks. The study of SR work has lent itself to a pragmatic and useful approach in understanding and treating these symptoms, as well as using the symptoms as meaningful communication from within that must be listened to. In this chapter I will present how I have used these understandings and practices to create an integrated approach that combines several modalities of working. The initial work generally focuses on symptom reduction through hypnotic, psychoeducational, cognitive-behavioral and transpersonal methods. The latter part of the work involves more application of SR work and experiences, in order to access and work with the underlying communication that the symptoms are bringing. However, any division of these ways of

working is organizational in nature, as they are intrinsically woven together in the course of any given session. I will describe the presentation of a hypothetical client, based on a composite of people I have treated, who presents with the common psychological aftermaths of a panic attack. I will then describe her treatment. Although this client is fictional and as such, the temptations of oversimplification abound, I have in fact seen all the responses that I will describe in the very real setting of my office. It is my hope that this presentation will serve not only a theoretical function but also a practical and useful one.

The Experience of a Panic Attack

The experience of a panic attack, especially for the first time, can be terrifying. Named after the mythological creature Pan, who was half goat, half man, the name captures the descriptions of people's encounters with Pan. This creature, which can be seen as representing instinctual energy without the complement of a cognitive self, sported a lower body, which included a perpetually aroused erection. Pan apparently enjoyed jumping out suddenly in front of unsuspecting strollers and letting out a blood-curling scream. The response, one of panic, was the sudden release of adrenaline, creating a state of hyperarousal in the body, the desire to scream, fight or flee, an experience of terror and a sense of impending

death or at least doom. This response of panic makes sense if you have been suddenly surprised by Pan, almost run over by a bus, or tapped on the shoulder by a bear. However, if you are sitting on your sofa at home, out of an understandable context, the experience of terror is quite confusing.

In the aftermath of a panic attack, a person's relationship to themselves, others and the world often alters, as it can with many a sudden traumatic event. The thinking mind, and the sense of identity or self that is generated out of it, referred to in SR terminology as the 'cognitive self,' is often left confused and frightened, waiting fearfully for another attack to happen. The physical body and nervous system may be in a state of uncomfortable hyperarousal and vigilance. The connection to the "somatic self," a felt center in the body, through which 'the river of life' moves, bringing with it strongly felt currents in the form of emotions, archetypal energies, creative processes, and intuitive knowing, becomes disrupted as well. When the cognitive and somatic aspects of the self get disconnected, a split between thinking and feeling process occurs. When feelings, intuitions and desires begin arising within the somatic self, they can become disowned as meaningful experiences and viewed as 'not me' experiences, ones to get rid of, and show up as unwanted symptoms. The symptoms are viewed not as reflecting an important communication from the inside but rather as foreign, unwanted attacks from the outside. They are not connected to a deeper felt sense of self. The repair of this split and the return to a life enhancing self-relationship is at the core of the SR approach in the treatment of panic attacks.

The disruption in the self-relationship leads to anxiety, loss of self-confidence and confusion, especially regarding the sense of personal identity. This can show up in ideas, such as "I'm not who I thought I was, who am I?" and existential questions about life in general. There is often an increased dependency on others, and a withdrawal from interacting with the world that may eventually result in agoraphobia.

The goal of an SR approach is to restore the breaks and contractions in these fields of relatedness, and restore participation in the flow of life. It not only seeks to es-

tablish a supportive and nurturing intrapersonal relationship (that is, the way a person relates to themselves), but also to bring into awareness and utilize the clients' unique strengths, competencies, energy and creativity that may have been kept outside of conscious awareness. In fact, it may have been precisely the repression or suppression of these vital parts of the self that led to the panic attack in the first place. In the latter stages of a successful treatment, the awareness of the client expands to include understanding the origins of the panic and the importance of the symptom as a wake up call from the unconscious mind, or we could also say, the somatic self. What was once perceived as an 'attack' coming from outside of the self, becomes seen as an important and vital communication, albeit in an uncomfortable form, from the somatic self.

Composite Example of a Presenting Client

Allison is a 29-year-old, single woman who presents herself for treatment after having had a frightening experience about three weeks previously. Allison had been driving her car home from work, when she began to feel lightheaded and dizzy. She feared that she would pass out, and felt a rising sense of panic. Her heart began to race uncontrollably; she became short of breath, and she feared that she was either having a heart attack or a stroke. She managed to pull the car over to the side of the road and sat there convinced that she was going to die at any moment. Her hands were gripping the steering wheel so tightly that it was hard to release them from the wheel. Her thoughts were racing so fast, that for an instant she thought she was losing her mind. She called 911 on her cellular phone and was taken to an emergency room. There she had a medical workup, and was told that there was nothing medically wrong with her, and that it was probably an anxiety attack.

Allison could not believe that anxiety could make her feel so bad and became convinced that she had an undiagnosed illness. She was too frightened to drive after the incident, fearing that she would have another attack and would lose control of her car and die. She continued to feel shaky, slept poorly and stayed home from work for a week. During the week she visited a neurologist and a cardiologist, continuing to fear that she was

ill. She requested that her sister accompany her, as she had recently broken up with her boyfriend of two years and was frightened of going out alone. Her workups continued to be normal.

Allison had always prided herself on her independence, her ability to organize herself and to be in control of the events her life, and in keeping a rational state of mind. Her self-confidence and belief in herself began to plummet and she felt humiliated about her difficulties being alone during this period. She secretly feared that she was having a 'nervous breakdown' and began to question the assumptions that she had about who she was and what her life was about. Finally at the urging of friends she agreed to a psychiatric consultation.

The stages of Allison's treatment can be seen as follows. They are not in strict sequence and are interconnected in most sessions. As the reader can see, I have titled these stages to capture the flavor of each one.

Get Rid of It, Doc

At my first meeting with Allison, after she told me her story, she had one basic question and one basic request. The question was, "Be honest with me, am I losing my mind?" and the request was, "Will you please get rid of this thing, because I can't live with it." As Stephen Gilligan has pointed out in his supervisions, clients present to us as if we are 'hired guns' whose job it is to get rid of those experiences and parts of a person considered 'not me.' Panic attacks are sensed as 'an attack' on the self coming from outside of the self and, as such, need to be done away with. If one accepts this frame of reference, one is done for, mostly because panic attacks do come back from time to time, and to try to 'get rid of them' is an invitation for frustration and a sense of helplessness. The panic is also coming for a reason, and if ignored or not understood to some degree, the fear and confusion generated will be hard to let go of. I chose instead to reframe the problem for Allison, and stated that I did not consider the panic attack a problem. This certainly got her attention. I suggested that the panic attack was a few minutes of extremely uncomfortable fear, bodily discomfort and confusion but that the real problem has been its aftermath, her confusion regarding what happened, her response to it, and

her fear of it recurring. I told her that I believed that I could help her with these things.

You're Not Who You "Think" You Are, Another Case of Mistaken Identity

I went on to reassure her that the conclusions that her mind had reached after the panic attack, which made her fear she had either a fatal illness and was going to die, or that she was simply going crazy, were merely the conclusions her mind had drawn. These ideas, in fact, were part and parcel of the phenomenon of panic attacks. As Allison had always prided herself on holding things together with her mind, approaching her experiences primarily through a cognitive frame of reference, it was of the utmost importance that she be restored to her cognitive center as soon as possible. This would result in a reduction of her symptoms and in being able to begin to create a better relationship with her somatic self. As I talked to her, I began to match my breathing pattern to hers, speak in a softer voice, keeping gentle eye contact with her, nonverbally inviting her to begin to let go of some of the uncomfortable anticipatory anxiety and hypervigilance that she had been carrying. I asked her if she would like to know more about just what these 'attacks' were.

After nodding in the affirmative, I asked her to sit back and become more comfortable. I then said something to this effect: "A million years ago as our brains were evolving, an alarm switch was installed to help us survive sudden threats to our well being. This was very useful if a tiger was stalking us. When the alarm goes off, a site in our brain stem, the locus ceruleus, sends out the signals for our body to release a torrent of adrenaline to help us either flee or occasionally fight. When the adrenaline hits, we hyperventilate, our hearts beat fast, our muscles tense, we feel like screaming and running and our brains give us the message that unless we do something fast, we are going to die at any moment. This is all well and good if you need to get out of the way of a bus that is about to run you over. This is understandable and, when you are safe, the reaction subsides. But if you are in your own car, with no clear danger apparent, and the alarm goes off, it can get pretty confusing and terrifying. Now, I don't know why your

alarm went off. It could have been the result of accumulation of stressful circumstances in your outer or inner life. It may be that your inner mind and body needed to bring your attention to something important. It could be an accumulation of physical and emotional tension that discharged itself in this disagreeable fashion. Whatever it is, you now will have an opportunity to get to know yourself better, in a deeper fashion. And now that you know that you are not medically or emotionally sick, your nervous system can continue to calm itself down over the course of the next few days and weeks."

In this first intervention, the symptom gets re-framed, not as an enemy to be conquered, but as a messenger from the internal territory, that has her best interest in mind. As Gilligan often points out, the emergence of a symptom can signal that one is "up to something big." An important event is taking place that cannot be ignored or gotten rid of. Curiosity (and hopefully compassion) get evoked and the cognitive self now has a better understanding with which to organize. Suggestions are seeded for a journey of discovery and for the cooperation of mind and body.

Following this first intervention we discussed meeting regularly for a period of time. The issue of medication was discussed as well. Allison was ambivalent about using anything, both out of fear of side effects and a feeling that using any pharmaceutical would be proof that there was something "wrong" with her and a threat to her sense of mastery and autonomy. On the other hand, her symptoms were making it hard for her to function, she slept poorly, and she had a sense of being out of control of her body and mind. I made it clear to her that I was not strongly advising her one way or the other, but merely pointing out all the options with their advantages and disadvantages. We agreed that she would have a prescription of minor tranquilizers that she could use as needed, to either help her sleep during this difficult period or to have a greater sense of control of her escalated anxiety state.

During the next few sessions with my hypothetical client, I continued to help her form a greater awareness of her body: the way muscular tensions were being held, ways of releasing muscular tension, and how these muscular patterns were connected to the fearful thoughts her mind was thinking. I pointed out to her that a large part

of her problem was that she actually believed that the statements her mind was telling her about herself and the world were true, as opposed to thoughts and feelings that were merely passing through her mind and body at this point in time. Just because she thought something about herself did not make it true. She then drew global conclusions about herself based on these thoughts and feelings. Another case of mistaken identity! These negative attacks on her self based on this mistaken sense of identity, can be referred to in Self-Relations talk as being taken over by 'aliens,' the alienating voices and forces that jumped in to negatively define her when she retreated and became disconnected from her core strengths, energy, and experience.

Hypnosis

Hypnosis was quite useful during this phase, as well as a specific mindfulness meditation, known as 'the sky' meditation. Hypnosis served several functions. It reduced her focus on the frightening thoughts that were continually going through her conscious mind. It also began to shift her physically out of the fight or flight response of her autonomic nervous system, which was chronically over-activated and responsible for her physical symptoms, and put her into the deep relaxation response of her autonomic nervous system. This indeed came as a relief.

In the trance state, suggestions were given for her to automatically notice when muscles were tightening or when she was getting anxious. Suggestions were given around centering into her breath, dropping into a physical felt center and coming out of whatever fearful thought was driving her anxiety and into an awareness of the present moment wherever she was. She could then be aware of whether there was anything that she needed to do at that present moment. Ego strengthening work was done as well, including activating memories of mastery, self-sufficiency, competence and feelings that she had had regarding herself during other, more positive, periods of her life. She was taught to do a brief self-induction through focus on her breath, and check in with herself during the course of the day. She began to feel calmer and more capable of self-regulating her state, which brought with it a reduction in her fears, her anticipatory anxiety and her reliance and dependence on others.

Transpersonal Experience

In the sky meditation, Allison was invited to begin imagining that her consciousness was as large and wide as the sky. She was invited to watch whatever passed through it, the same way she could watch birds, clouds, storms and airplanes pass through the sky. They all just pass through, they are not the sky. The sky remains unchanged, unharmed by even the fiercest storm. She was invited to develop a witness that just watched the thoughts and feelings pass through without the need to attach herself to their content, identify with them or react to them. She could observe them in their process. It was in the sky meditation that Allison was introduced to the transpersonal ideas that pointed to a part of her that was untouched by any of her traumas, which were occurring on a psychological and physical level. This other dimension of experience, which can be spoken of as a spiritual dimension, was very comforting to her, as it touched a place inside that had not had a name or sponsorship before. When in this expanded state of awareness, she was able to look at what was happening with a certain amount of detachment and compassion for herself while holding a larger perspective on her life.

The Illusion of Being Alone

When Allison presented for treatment, one of her most distressing experiences was of feeling alone, vulnerable, separate, disconnected and frightened. As a result of those feelings, she needed someone to be with her, in order for her to feel safe, or for her to be in a seemingly safe place such as her home. This is one of the psychological consequences of the trauma of a panic attack. In the light of SR understandings, it can be seen as a person becoming fearful of, and then disconnected from the vital and creative flow of experience and energy in the somatic self. When this happens, the internal and external worlds become frightening and unfriendly. When a disconnection or dissociation happens within the self, one also cuts off access to areas of inner strength, energy, resources, creativity, and feelings of well being. Self-confidence is lost and there is a sense of being unable to rely on oneself to meet the challenges of everyday life without panic. The world feels menacing, overwhelming and unmanageable.

Trance inductions with Allison, given the back-

ground of these circumstances, focused on helping her activate and experience being connected and supported at all times, from both within and without. It is here that one focuses on the transpersonal elements of life. Transpersonal refers to the elements of our beingness that extend beyond the personal, that interconnect us with nature, history, ancestors, archetypal energy and the flow of life that in fact occurs outside of our heads. These are the larger forces that move within us and through us that have not been created by our ego minds, but that in fact go beyond who we think we are. We may be aware of these forces at births and deaths or while gazing into a night sky in the summer and feeling the presence of the great mystery of life moving us along in ways which we cannot intellectually understand but none the less feel. At these moments we may spontaneously make powerful decisions to make changes in our life or feel ourselves supported by a force that goes beyond our individual, separate selves. From the transpersonal perspective, we are all part of a greater flow of life that can never be cognitively understood, only lived. When one feels an interconnection with all of life, and when one holds a transpersonal connection in consciousness then it becomes clear that we are never alone, and in fact can never be alone. We begin to experience that a larger matrix always supports us.

These experiences fall into the realm of the spiritual aspects of life, which by nature are generally hidden from our everyday consciousness. In our daily lives we largely live in the ego mind, which tends to fragment life into seemingly more manageable pieces but loses connection to the inseparable, dynamic, unity of life. Trance induction was geared to help activate a transpersonal experience. Some elements of that induction are as follows, the italics convey words that are specifically spoken in a more accentuated fashion in order to highlight them to the listening mind.

"Allison, I would like you to drop your *attention* into your chest and begin to become aware of your *breath*. The *sensations* of breathing. And every time that you take a breath in, you are breathing in oxygen, and that oxygen is going to every single one of billions of cells in your body, bringing them life. And every time that you breathe out, you are *letting go* of carbon dioxide. *Taking in* what you *need* and *letting go* of what you *no longer*

need. And when you breath out carbon dioxide it goes into the atmosphere and is in turn breathed in by the trees. And the trees breath out oxygen which we in turn breathe in.

“And I would like you to notice the way you are *supported* by the chair. There is nothing that you have to do, except to *accept* the support of the chair. And the chair in turn is supported by the floor. And the floor is supported by the walls of the building. And the walls are supported by the foundation of the building, which is in turn supported by the earth. And in the same way, there are *hidden forces*, that have been out of your awareness, within you, *supporting you*. Forces within your inner self, inner mind and those forces are connected to the larger intelligence that flows through all of life.

“And there are *forces around you and within you* that have always been there, supporting you, and will always be there, whether you are aware of them or not. And when you are able to *experience* experiencing this, a part of your mind can know that you are really *never alone*, unsupported. It is merely an illusion. And every time that you take a *breath*, you can be aware on some level that you are being held in the *larger matrix of life*.”

Don't Kill the Messenger, Listen to Her

Therapy with my hypothetical client had so far been largely focused on a stabilization phase, helping her calm down, reconnect with her body, reduce the mind-body-spirit split, build a sense of self-esteem and self-sufficiency, and reduce the fears of a recurrence of panic attacks. What remained was to deepen the self-exploration of what her body was trying to communicate to her in the form of her panic attacks. In this stage, as in all the others, the multidimensional aspect of symptoms must be kept in mind. That is to say, that we are influenced by our biology, psychology, deep emotional self, family, culture, conditioning and a myriad of unknown factors. Some panic attacks are caused by drinking six cups of coffee a day, creating an over stimulation of the nervous system by caffeine. In others it is the accumulation of tension from lack of sleep, lack of exercise, poor diet, and a genetic predisposition to anxiety. In others it is connected to psychological conflict or the suppression of anger. At this point, some basic sorting

needs to be done to determine who needs deeper psychological work.

Psychotherapy

There are as many useful modalities to use in this phase of treatment as there are types of psychotherapy. With my fictional client I used a mixture of just plain talking about her life and hypnotic methods of exploration. SR philosophy and technique are particularly helpful in this phase in bringing out parts of the self that are denied expression and helps to foster an understanding and sponsorship of these aspects of the client.

In our work, it became clear to both of us that more was going on in Allison's emotional life than she had been consciously aware of. She began to acknowledge the hurt and anger that she had been denying that resulted from her recent breakup. Following the breakup, she had resolved not to “fall apart” but be a “strong and rational” woman by plunging into her work, staying active and “not feeling sorry for herself” and just keep on moving. This is what she had seen her mother do, following her parents' divorce when she was eight years old. It had seemed to work well for her in her life. During a hypnotic exploration Allison became aware of feeling “strange” and uncomfortable sensations in her chest. Moving her attention into that area intensified the feeling. When asked whether this was in fact an old feeling that she had in earlier times she spontaneously had a visceral memory of being eight years old, shortly after her father had left the home. She remembered crying and her mother telling her to be strong. She remembered feeling that she had to protect her mother from any more upset and she forced herself to “be strong.” In that session she was able to open her heart to the sadness and fear of that child and to feel that it was not only alright to feel the hurt and anger that she had been denying, both then and now, but that it was absolutely necessary. This was a very important experience for Allison, as at that moment she pledged to herself that she would be there for her own self, in a supportive, non-critical way. She found that instead of fighting off feelings of self-pity, she felt a sense of self-compassion and self-acceptance.

Allison was also able to openly acknowledge her

fear of turning 30 and not being in a committed relationship leading to the creation of a family. In this phase, her underlying beliefs about herself and the world were explored, and most importantly the nature of her relationship to her own self. Childhood issues and memories that led to her beliefs were worked with. During this phase of her therapy much time was spent in quiet listening and in identifying feelings and sensations that were moving under the surface, representing parts of her experience that had been kept out of awareness. She began to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of herself. When therapy ended approximately a year later she was able to look back on her panic attack as a unwelcome but necessary "gift" from her unconscious self which opened up the door to greater self care and knowledge.

My studies with Stephen Gilligan and the SR community have enriched both my personal life and my work. When working with clients in this way several things began to happen. I began to sit with clients with curiosity and expectancy that they were 'up to something big.' I would, as taught in the supervisions, ask myself contemplative questions such as "What was this person like at the moment of their birth?" Contemplative questions that essentially asked "What is the essence of this person that is being held out of their conscious

awareness?" While holding these questions I observe clients closely, looking for currents moving under the surface, ones that they themselves may not have been consciously aware of, and then help facilitate their emergence through focused attention and body awareness. When this happens successfully, what comes to the surface are somatically held energies of tenderness, fierceness and playfulness that can be used in their lives.

The spiritual dimensions of SR work have been helpful and meaningful. This dimension involves the experience of being held in a larger 'field of consciousness,' that of life itself. This larger field holds within it an underlying intelligence and intuitive knowing that is available to us, when we are not blocking it out. When we are open to listening on that level, we know intuitively more than we are consciously aware of knowing. There is a feeling of aliveness and an appreciation of our uniqueness that goes with being in this flow. The connection to this aspect of life is often illusive. It seems to be more in the domain of the 'somatic' self that gets so easily shut out, feared and misunderstood in our attachment to the 'cognitive' self. SR work has been helpful to me and the people I work with in opening up these vital and precious moments in life. These moments serve as landmarks and sources of illumination in moving toward a healthier and happier life.



Healing Trauma

Daniel Burow, Ed.D., is a licensed psychologist in private practice in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. For three years he was an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of South Dakota, School of Medicine. He left his position in 2002 to pursue research and practice in the areas of Mind-Body Psychology, Human Development and Psychology and Spirituality. Dr. Burow believes that Self-Relations is an excellent structure and method for integrating the mind with the body and working toward healing and growth. In this work, Dr. Burow hopes to suggest how Self-Relations can be used to integrate the mind and body in the wake of psychological trauma.

HEALING TRAUMA

Each day the river of life moves through us. As it does, we encounter a multitude of experiences that vary widely in their content, intensity and significance. Some moments bring beauty and the joy of life while others come bearing the suffering of fear and loss. Gilligan (1997) states:

Every basic experience of being human will visit you, over and over again. There is nothing you can do to avoid it; simply by virtue of being alive, you will be touched repeatedly by sadness, happiness, anger, joy, disappointment and so forth. (p. 8)

One of the most problematic, but all too common experiences of being human, is that of trauma. The *DSM-IV* (1994) defines trauma as an encounter with stressors outside the range of normal experience. Examples that fit this definition would be unlimited. Violent physical attack, natural disaster, long term abuse and even medical procedures could be traumatic in nature. The *DSM-IV* further expands this definition by suggesting that these stressors can be encountered directly, happen to significant others or be learned about and still be traumatic.

The human response to the experience of traumatic stress is a complex system of reactions that impacts what SR calls the relational self. This relational self includes

three aspects: the somatic self, the cognitive self, and the relational field that holds them. On the level of the cognitive self, we have the greatest degree of choice and our responses and reactions to the trauma are least determined. On the level of the somatic self, our emotional and sensorimotor responses to trauma are more determined, often automatic and less amenable to our control. When seen as a whole these responses and reactions in the somatic self arise from a place deep within us. This would seem to suggest an unconscious storehouse of instinctual knowledge that is automatically implemented within the somatic self at the moment of trauma. Because the human response to trauma is largely automatic and can effectively overtake the cognitive self, the most significant impact of traumatic experience lies within the somatic self. With this in mind we will now look at the impact of trauma on the relational self as a whole.

Self-Relations and Traumatic Symptom Formation

In the simplest of terms, trauma overwhelms the self at both the somatic and cognitive centers. The initial impact of trauma on the somatic self severs the relationship between the two centers and throws our entire being out of relation. As a traumatic experience moves through our somatic center, it brings with it felt experience that we are unable to sponsor. These experiences move through us with more energy and/or neurophy-

biological activation than one can tolerate. An attempt to sponsor the experiences would leave us fragmented and damaged. In order to prevent this, our somatic self comes hard wired with patterned responses designed by evolution to keep us whole and alive.

Traumatic symptoms develop in a spiraling process that begins with the primitive biological survival mechanisms of the somatic self and its sensorimotor elements. At the core of this process is what Peter Levine (1997) calls the freezing response. According to Levine, an organism can respond to a threat in one of three ways: fight, flee, or freeze. These responses are biological imperatives that exist systemically as part of a patterned automatic defensive response within the somatic self. These biological imperatives completely bypass our higher order cognitive self and function automatically as sensorimotor patterns and functions. If these imperatives did not bypass the cognitive self, our responses would be too slow and would have little survival value.

When threatened by experience, an organism usually responds with fight or flight. When the fight/flight response is overwhelmed or ineffective, the organism automatically constricts as it moves toward the freezing response. The patterned process of constriction takes the neurophysiological energy that would have been discharged by executing the fight or flight strategies, amplifies it and binds it up in the nervous and physiological systems of the somatic self. Within the somatic self this constricted energy manifests its presence very strongly within the person's sensorimotor processing. The classic example of this bound energy is chronic hyperarousal and overreaction. A traumatized individual will consistently be hyperaroused and overreact to stimuli that are reminiscent of the trauma. This process is driven and maintained by the bound energy and exists primarily within the somatic self.

Gundtrip (1971) defines pathology as "failed metabolism." The self is unable to metabolize and assimilate significant experiences. This is exactly the case with trauma. The experience overwhelms our somatic center with far too much energy resulting in dissociation of the somatic self from the relational self. The resulting physiological activation within the somatic self is frozen, the relational self breaks down and the trauma cannot be metabolized.

Based on the work of van der Kolk, van der Hart and Marmar (1996), Ogden and Minton (1998) have suggested that traumatized individuals are plagued by four primary factors that obstruct the person's current and future ability to sponsor an experience and metabolize it. First, they overinterpret current stimuli as significant to the trauma. An example of this would be the individual who perceives all physical contact from others as a potential threat even if these people are loved ones. Second, at the somatic level their physiology is on constant hyperarousal to address a perceived threat. Traumatized individuals almost always display automatic hyperarousal that they seem to be able to do little to control. Third, the self is forced to dissociate a vast amount of experience in order to maintain any sense of relatedness. Traumatized individuals frequently dissociate particular memories or parts of memories that are too painful to bear. Finally, they experience great difficulty in the physiological and cognitive processing of information. This is significant as the entire human organism functions as an information processing system. Traumatized individuals have great difficulty organizing and processing cognitive information and their physiological systems, such as the immune system, also become disorganized due to this same information processing problem.

Self-Relations suggests that it is our unwillingness and/or inability to sponsor an experience as it passes through us that ultimately causes a break in our relational self, thereby creating symptoms. In the case of trauma, if we cannot sponsor an experience, then we cannot modulate our responses or process the information necessary to metabolize and integrate it. This dysfunctional process begins in the somatic self, overcomes the cognitive self and throws the entire being out of relationship to the field. Below we will examine the integration of traumatic experiences through the Self-Relations process known as the sponsorship of the felt sense.

How Trauma Impacts the Relational Self

Self-Relations suggest that symptoms reflect a sustained break in relatedness between one or more aspects of the self. As we discussed earlier, trauma precipitates a break in the relational self by overwhelming our ability to sponsor key life experiences. This inability to sponsor a traumatic experience leads to over-interpretation of

stimuli, hyperarousal, dissociation and information processing problems. We should now look specifically at the principles of Self-Relations and examine the effects of the process of trauma on each of them.

Break in Beingness

Gilligan (1997) states that the experience of beingness is cultivated through an awareness of a center within the somatic self. Our center is first awakened as children when we are "blessed" and sponsored by significant caretakers. We feel these blessing as a positive energy within our physical bodies. Through life we continue to sponsor (or not) the experience of our somatic center and this becomes the foundation of our physiological/neurological functioning and ultimately a fundamental aspect of our emotional and cognitive functioning as well.

A traumatic event violates our somatic center and curses it. These events imprint life-denying energy and information upon the center that takes such forms as, "You are not worth loving," or "You will never be safe." These "negative suggestions" can then be adopted by the cognitive self as core aspects of our identity.

As trauma freezes the somatic center, the self will act immediately to protect it from further experience. This often means dissociation from the somatic self and identification solely with the cognitive self (Levine, 1997). Although we identify and appear to function with a dominant cognitive presentation, the energy within the somatic self still dictates our functioning. We appear very cognitive but are consistently hyperaroused and almost any felt sense is over interpreted as significant to the trauma, deemed a threat, and the somatic self is further dissociated. This cycle of dissociation spirals and builds more frozen energy each time, further separating the cognitive and somatic selves and making sponsorship of any experience increasingly difficult.

Gilligan (1997) suggests that experience has no human value until a loving and mature human presence touches it. In other words, experience must be sponsored to have value in our self and our world. This is the curse of trauma. The process of hyperarousal and the over interpretation of stimuli place in the somatic center a self-perpetuating negative sponsor that curses all ongoing experience, labels it as dangerous and dissociates

it. What began as a biological imperative to protect the integrity of the somatic center is now the basis of traumatic symptomatology.

Break in Belonging

Traumatic experience dissociates a person from the somatic center and an inner sense of wholeness. It also disconnects any relationship to the relational field that supports us as human beings. Judith Herman (1992) states:

Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Therefore, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion. (p. 52)

Initially, some breaks in relationship to the field are useful and productive, because they allow a reconnection to occur in a manner that is healthy and more integrated. The classic example is the adolescent who has to differentiate from the family in order to find the self and reconnect as a whole person. As trauma develops within the relational self, it significantly compromises our ability to connect with the field. This break in belonging maintains and increases this suffering until a reunion with the center(s) and the field can be realized. The most common presentation of this process is the traumatized individual who withdraws, becomes more isolated over time and ultimately becomes removed from most of the people and systems that once sustained him or her.

Trauma initiates a dynamic that makes any connection to the field difficult to realize. It begins with the break in beingness and the dissociation of the two centers. This dissociation is maintained by the hyperarousal necessary to protect the somatic self from the threat of the unmetabolized energy of the trauma. Without this felt sense of the somatic self in relationship to the cognitive self, connection with the field is almost impossible. This cycle continues as long as experience remains frozen in the client's center.

As we identify more and more with the cognitive self and the hyperarousal that causes us to dissociate from the felt sense of the somatic center, a pattern of constriction begins to solidify within the relational self as a whole. This pattern of constriction is a phenomenon that biologically limits the relational self's encounter with experience and the felt sense of it. Levine (1997) writes, "... hyperarousal is initially accompanied by constriction in our bodies and perceptions. The nervous system acts to ensure that all our efforts can be focused on the threat ..." (p. 135). The further we get from our somatic and cognitive selves, the further we get from the field. As this occurs, the amount of unmetabolized energy increases with each attempt to control our felt sense of it. The more traumatic energy that is within us, the more constriction is needed to control it. This pattern of constriction further removes us from our center(s) as well as from the relational field.

As the cycle of traumatic response continues, most attempts to reconnect with the field are habitual in nature and most often utilize violence toward self or other. This problem is displayed by traumatized people who engage in addictive behavior or problematic relationships in hopes of connecting to something greater than the self. This approach rarely works, however, and the system continues to constrict, the violence grows and the energy contained within the center grows exponentially. As constriction develops, the dysfunctional information processing that was once relevant only to the traumatic material will begin to couple with other biological systems such as the immune, endocrine, hormonal or digestive systems resulting in the negative sponsorship of their functioning as well. Finally, constriction will impact our higher order cognitions and beliefs resulting in ongoing negative self sponsorship.

Break in Relatedness

Gilligan (1997) states that the relational self is known through a felt experience of relationship between the somatic self, the cognitive self and the relational field. As we have seen, trauma causes significant dysfunction both within and between these different aspects of the relational self. As the cycle of trauma grows and symptoms develop, our ability to sit in relationship to any experience of life is compromised.

As human beings we realize our sense of self through relational experiences. Gilligan (1997) suggests that a sustained "break in relatedness" in any of the domains of self will result in a "frozen in time" consciousness that is unable to learn and thus likely to produce symptoms. This "frozen in time" consciousness is a product of the frozen, unmetabolized energy that trauma produces within the nervous and biological systems of the self. This energy, while frozen, will anchor the individual to that time, place and developmental level. He or she will be unable to tolerate any felt sense of the frozen experience and thus unable to integrate and sponsor it. Without this integration the individual will not effectively mature or develop past the stage they currently occupy and in fact are very likely to regress in many aspects of their personality. This pattern is often presented in the adult who is traumatized as a child. These individuals often maintain many developmental aspects of self that existed at the time of the trauma. For these people relationship skills, communication skills as well as behavior often indicate a level of development far below what their chronological age and experience would suggest. Because of this, their presentation and/or behavior will seem to be underdeveloped in many ways.

"Something is Waking Up"

A primary element of Self-Relations is the idea that symptoms and problems are a direct sign that "something is waking up" within the relational self. Symptoms are a "call to return" to the self and begin the challenging task of sponsoring experiences of suffering and pain. When this call is heeded, the experiences will take on human meaning and can then be metabolized, integrated and/or understood.

According to Levine (1997), the responses to trauma are part of our biological intelligence designed to protect our integrity and keep us alive. They originate in our primitive structures, the source of all the wisdom of biological life. Part of this wisdom is that once we are separated from ourselves and have survived, we should then move back into relationship. SR offers the idea that we have within our being a drive to return to our center. Therefore, a traumatic symptom is seen as the call to wake up and return to a state of relatedness. SR approaches to the treatment of trauma seek to sponsor the return to a place of relatedness between the somatic

self, the cognitive self and the relational field. It is here that the wisdom of our being can help us to heal.

Self-Relations Trauma Work

Van der Kolk (1987) states that the key aspect of any traumatization is what he calls the "bi-phasic" response. This response is an alternation between hyperarousal/intrusive responses and constriction/numbing responses. Hyperarousal responses include hyperactivity, explosive and/or aggressive outbursts and hypervigilance. For example, a traumatized person will often appear hypervigilant, be quick to anger and can ultimately manufacture an event that is traumatic in nature. The numbing response consists of emotional constriction, isolation, withdrawal, and estrangement (van der Kolk, 1987). This is seen most frequently in the traumatized individual who gradually cuts all personal ties and exterior involvement until they have little contact with the world.

Van der Kolk (1987) further emphasizes that the overwhelming arousal or energy of the trauma obstructs the processing, relatedness and functioning of the self identity. Unregulated emotional alternation between hyperarousal and constriction impairs the person's ability to process information and sponsor experience. The self is therefore impaired in its ability to function and follow its natural movement back into relatedness.

Sponsorship of the Felt Sense

Trauma is a complex problem and very difficult to treat. A complete discussion of an SR approach to trauma treatment is far beyond the scope of this work. Here I will limit myself to presenting a method for addressing the bi-phasic response to trauma, involving how to help metabolize and integrate the energy frozen within the somatic self.

When a person is traumatized and all attempts to fight or flee have failed, the person will engage in a patterned freezing response. All somatic processing will cease and many somatic impulses will be restrained. When this process is left unresolved, the unmetabolized energy will develop into what Ogden and Minton (1998) call sensorimotor identifications. These identifications are part of what SR calls the "neglected self." An identification is a sequence or pattern of information that exists within the physiology and neurology of the somatic self.

The development of a sensorimotor identification would be very much akin to the process of imprinting. These patterns of information can be stored in and recalled by any of the functional systems of the somatic self. Their development can be initiated at the moment of trauma, learned from ongoing traumatic experience or be acquired through faulty information processing. These identifications can be seen in such forms as hyperarousal, constriction, dissociation, physical tension, movement(s) or pain. These identifications are in fact the reason most people come to therapy.

In order to integrate the sensorimotor identifications brought on by trauma, we need to understand how the somatic self processes the experience and information it encounters. The somatic self will process experience/information sequentially through patterns of physical reactions, impulses, visceral sensations, and movements. Ogden and Minton (1998) state that this process is predetermined by our physiology and very consistent from one person to the next.

These identifications exist within the neglected self as potential somatic experience/information. An individual experiencing a sensorimotor identification will involuntarily undergo a physical experience such as trembling, nausea or sweating while the autonomic nervous system is highly aroused. Processing and integrating these reactions may involve sequential movements associated with motor impulses, postural changes, muscular changes, breathing changes, physical defensive and orienting reflexes, micro-movements, and autonomic nervous system arousal or numbing. To sponsor, metabolize and integrate such experiences, we have to allow them to safely and satisfactorily complete themselves.

Within a traumatized person, the sponsorship and integration of a sensorimotor identification within the neglected self are difficult. People come to therapy complaining of a wide variety of somatic identifications, ranging from anxiety and hyperarousal to numbing and dissociation. These symptoms can continue indefinitely in spite of our best therapeutic efforts. One reason for this is that cognitive interventions do not connect with the somatic language of the traumatic experience. Sponsoring the "felt sense" is one way that SR connects with the somatic language of symptoms, problems and situations. This method of sponsorship helps to integrate the somatic self and the cognitive self, bringing them back

into a relationship that can bring healing and transformation. Let us now turn to how this might be done.

Therapeutic Work with Trauma

Developing Resources

A crucial first step in working with trauma is establishing resources. A resource is any idea, behavior or awareness that sponsors the person's ability to maintain a sense of strength, competence and connection to their center. Resources can come from inside the person, such as the ability to set boundaries, or the ability to experience the felt sense of the somatic self. Resources can also come from outside the person, such as community involvement and a strong support system. Finally, resources can come from a connection to the field, such as a contact with nature and the ability to experience spiritual energy. Resources can be creative and originate in our knowledge, learning and experience. They can also be survival tools such as dissociation, withdrawal or hyperarousal that protect the self from being consumed by traumatic energy and memory. Again, a resource can be anything that the individual perceives as helpful and positive.

Resources are necessary for healing. They bring comfort, confidence, and important perspectives to working with trauma. A resource should be named and blessed in a manner that allows it to be felt within the somatic self as well as understood by the cognitive self. This naming and cognitive understanding is an important treatment issue because it brings the automatic experiences of trauma such as hyperarousal into the light of day where they can take on an identity that can be integrated into the relational self. This process of sponsorship will have to be cultivated and maintained to be relevant to the course of treatment.

Levine (1997) recommends that initially we develop resources connected to the present and then move to a time before the trauma. Resources in the present moment are developed by sponsoring any and all coping skills the individual is currently using. Protective resources such as boundary setting and withdrawal are excellent to begin with, as they ensure safety in the present moment. Once you have sponsored a core group of resources in the present, you then move to the time frame

prior to the trauma. Examples of these resources would be the ability to stay safe, supportive relationships, and connection with a spiritual community. When these time periods have been cultivated for resources, you can then proceed to the time period immediately after the trauma. In many cases, these resources will be part of the present moment resources. However, an effort should be made to find and sponsor new resources that suggest strength and survival, such as any coping skills the individual may have used to feel safe after the traumatic experience. After a traumatic event people quickly develop resources to distract their minds or calm their anxiety, such as dissociation strategies or focused thinking. These should be framed and sponsored as positive and useful. These resources are the tools for sponsoring the more difficult traumatic experiences, such as hyperarousal and extreme dissociation. The resources you develop around the traumatic event(s) are often those that sustain the individual as they get closer to the moment(s) of trauma. A thorough effort to obtain and sponsor any and all resources is a difficult but essential task that will continue throughout the treatment process. Without such anchors, a person will be unwilling or unable to connect with the arousal and somatic identifications of the traumatic experience(s).

The Feeling of Trauma

Without the ability to regulate arousal, any contact with a person's center or the memory of the trauma can re-traumatize that individual. The ability to directly encounter traumatic memory comes from a relational self that has access to both somatic and cognitive centers. The relational self promotes access to an ongoing "felt sense" of self that allows one to hold a difficult experience without being overwhelmed by it, much like a loving parent can hold and soothe a distressed child. The felt sense of the somatic center is the foundation that allows the cognitive self to encounter and regulate the habitual bi-phasic responses to a trauma. An example of the importance of the felt sense is its place in coping with anxiety. When traumatized persons become anxious and/or afraid, they cannot sponsor experience effectively and are in danger of re-traumatization. Access to an ongoing felt sense allows them to remain connected

to their own somatic center while they experience their anxiety. This connection will enable the individual to hold and process this experience of anxiety rather than being overwhelmed and/or harmed by it.

In trauma work the bi-phasic response is present on a continuum from hyperarousal to freezing/numbing. SR helps clients to become aware of somatic experience such as physical feelings, temperature, shape, size, and any number of other descriptors of experience. As people develop their "felt sense," they easily develop awareness of large scale somatic experience such as muscle tension, visceral sensation, and body temperature. They also become increasingly aware of their felt sense of more subtle somatic experience such as fine motor impulses, small postural changes, facial expression and degrees of autonomic nervous system arousal. By giving our first attention to sponsoring such somatic processes, the river of life is slowly unfrozen and healing can begin.

Traumatized individuals typically have great difficulty regulating their level of arousal and/or dissociation, particularly when encountering the energy or memory of the trauma. They will begin to experience a bi-phasic response and often will feel afraid, out of control or helpless. Ogden and Minton suggest:

Cultivating awareness of sensation turns out to be the stabilizing influence needed to travel this fine line between frozen and out of control. Since these energies are bottom-up (biological) processes, they are impervious to resolution by approaches accentuating rational or emotional skill, but are revealed and resolved through attending to sensation. Through attending to sensation, the client who is experiencing physical arousal or numbness can bring the repressed arousal to consciousness where it can then be processed. (1998, p. 16)

The experience of arousal or dissociation in trauma work is most often accompanied by fear or outright terror. It is therefore important for clients to learn the difference between felt sense (e.g., arousal/numbness) and emotional/psychological overlays (e.g., fear/panic). As we sponsor this ability, the client will become better able to sit with the felt sense of their present moment

and not allow the emotional content to throw them out of relationship.

This issue is of primary importance in trauma work. A great deal of time is spent sponsoring an exploration of the person's felt sense of experience. This is done through a gentle focus on what the person is experiencing in their bodies in the present moment. In this moment, the individual's first attention to the felt sense of the body is sponsored and validated. This process will be different for each person and whatever is presented is used as the starting point. Experiences such as a pit in the stomach are sponsored and given a place to exist. When this is done, the experience becomes real and the intensity of it can be regulated simply by focusing and reporting on the felt sense within the body as it is encountered. A request is made for the person to describe (not explain) in whatever detail seems relevant, the "felt sense" in their body at that moment. Any description(s) offered is validated in a slow, gentle fashion. This process decreases the intensity of difficult experience and ultimately becomes a source of strength and safety. The felt sense of center that results from this process is used as a place to explore from and return to when other emotional/psychological overlays are difficult to experience.

This process must be taken very slowly as too much traumatic material can lead to an extreme bi-phasic response. As the client attunes to the felt sense and lets go of the intellectual narrative and emotional content connected to the traumatic memory, he or she will have the ability to regulate arousal or dissociation more effectively. When arousal or dissociation is accessed, the client and therapist bring their awareness to the felt sense of the center and remain there. This allows the energy of the traumatic material to metabolize and "process through," thereby moving the material from a present identity state to a past experience. As this process develops, the individual will experience less bi-phasic alternation and more safety and competence.

As the therapist and client continue to access traumatic material, automatic parts or sequences of sensorimotor identifications such as fight or flight type responses are frequently brought to conscious awareness. The somatic self will often initiate defensive actions, postures, protective behavior sequences, impulses to fine

or gross movement, and discharging movements such as shaking and sweating. There will be significant changes in position, rate of breathing, speed of movement and muscle tone. All of this is part of the sensorimotor sequence and the felt sense of its presence within the center should be sponsored and followed in a tenderly controlled manner. Any time we work with the felt sense of traumatic material, the sensorimotor element will be part of this process. When the individual sits with his or her felt sense, the sequence will begin to unfold. The content and manifestation of the sequence is limitless and we have listed many forms in the section above. This is the biological unconscious wisdom of the self. It is the call to return to the center, and sponsoring it will lead to healing and greater relatedness.

This process of sponsorship also includes the cognitive self. For example, after some time working with the unmetabolized energy in the somatic self, the cognitive self can be engaged as an observer that is detached but compassionate. This detached observer can be sponsored in a way that gives it a place within the relational self where it can assist the somatic self as it metabolizes and integrates the energy and sensorimotor identifications. The detached compassionate cognitive self can begin to develop a state of relatedness with the somatic self, previously prevented by the bi-phasic response to traumatic energy and memory. The cognitive self is not in a position of control or dominance, but remains aware and related to the somatic center and the energy within. This allows the client to remain present within their somatic center and at the same time they may witness and sponsor the process of integration and regulation.

As all aspects of the self begin to come into relationship, something new emerges. Levine (1997) listed the three automatic responses to trauma as fight, flee, or freeze. It is here that SR introduces the fourth response called *flow*. Through sponsorship of the felt sense, the relational self is engaged and the individual can encounter experience from a state of relatedness. This developing relational self allows present moment experience as well as problematic memories to flow through the self, find a place and come into existence as part of the identity of the person. Here they can be a source of beauty and strength rather than a potential source of symptoms.

Case Example

Kathy was referred to psychotherapy after five days of inpatient mental health treatment. She was a pleasant woman in her middle forties with a good job, but few friends. She admitted herself to the hospital because she became actively suicidal and had been engaged in numerous self-harm behaviors, such as cutting her arms and torso. During my first interview with Kathy she talked at length about her childhood and the extensive sexual and emotional abuse she sustained. She had gone from home to an abusive marriage, was divorced and relocated to the area. She stated that her marriage had been physically, sexually, and emotionally abusive, but that she had been feeling much better since her divorce. In recent months, however, she became increasingly anxious, depressed, and suicidal. She was having dreams and flashbacks that began to interfere with her work and home life. This had caused her to feel terrible most of the time and ultimately to become depressed. As a result she began to withdraw from others and her only relief from the escalating anxiety was to cut on herself. This brought her a release but it was short lived and soon the cycle of arousal started again. She stated that she could no longer live this way and if she was unable to escape her situation, she was determined to take her own life.

We spent several sessions focused on sponsoring her resources and the development of a felt sense within her body. We worked together to sponsor her coping skills, strengths, intelligence, will power, and virtually anything that was perceived as useful. We began to do simple breathing exercises to help her develop and understand her own felt sense of her somatic center. This was a difficult task due to the profound dissociation from her body. Through a focus on her breathing we managed to sponsor the felt sense of her center in a way that she could maintain for brief periods. We then worked to sponsor this felt sense in a way that could drop narrative and emotion. Kathy embraced her ability to stay present within her center without allowing her emotions or cognitive self to dominate her experience.

When we first worked with the memories of her childhood, Kathy experienced immediate hyperarousal and cycled in and out of a dissociative state. She would ultimately dissociate from her body and become ultra-cognitive about her memories and any feelings she may have had. We immediately began to utilize her ability to

stay present in her somatic self and focus her awareness on her felt sense. Slowly, as she described her present moment experience, Kathy began to tremble, her heart raced and her legs began to vibrate. As she focused on her felt sense, she became aware that she wanted to lash out with her arms and legs. As we gently stayed present with her sensation and impulses, Kathy began to move her body and actually push her arms and legs outward. She made audible noises that ultimately became “no” and “don’t.”

After several minutes of this she became very tense throughout her body. It was difficult for Kathy to stay present and focus on her center. At this point I helped her to continue her breathing and sponsored her focus on the felt sense. I used the resources we had developed together to keep her aware of her somatic center as well as serving as an external psycho-biological regulator of arousal. As we did this she was able to stay present and began to self-regulate her level of arousal. Soon she was focused on the development of her sensorimotor experience and had completely dropped any affect or narrative. After a short time, Kathy’s body slowly released and she sat back in her chair, breathing heavily but calmly. She reported a felt sense of comfort and pride at her ability to fight against the impulse to surrender, even though she was unsure of what had just happened to her. I sponsored her success, encouraging her to really enjoy what she felt at that moment.

This single event was the turning point in Kathy’s therapy. After this session she began to sponsor her own ability to remain centered and present within herself and

regulate her own emotional responses to her memories and sensations. We worked together to encourage the development of this new relational self. As it grew, so did her ability to progress in therapy as well as her life and work. She was soon able to experience not only her somatic center but also her cognitive self as well. A confidence in her knowledge and coping skills began to emerge. As the relatedness grew, she began to reinvest in her spiritual and social interests. She soon reported that she again had a felt sense of the relational field around her. She focused on the activities and behaviors that allowed her to come into contact with the field and has worked very hard to sponsor herself and her ability to live with a sense of relatedness.

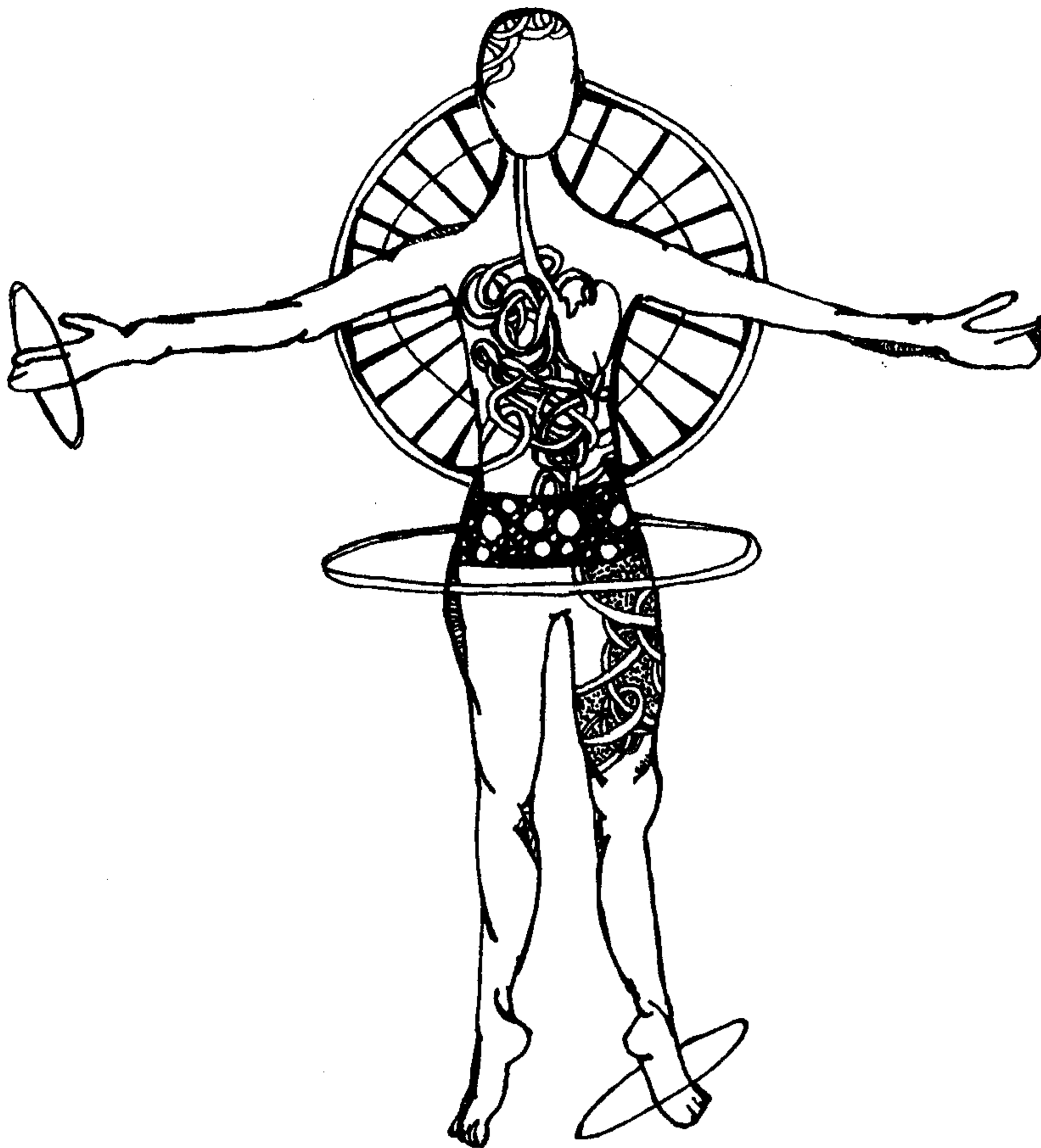
Kathy still reports troubling memories and occasional hyperarousal and dissociation. However, she no longer reports fear and attempts to control or destroy the symptoms. She now sees them as awakenings to be listened to for their inherent wisdom and direction. This is the gift of sponsorship.

Conclusion

Sponsorship of traumatic memory and experience requires that we focus on the felt sense. This allows a person to regulate arousal, make sensorimotor identifications conscious, and complete sensorimotor processing. For each client this process will be different and you will have to learn to trust your own wisdom regarding when and how to participate in it. I will offer this advice: loving human sponsorship that comes from your center is rarely wrong.

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The Use of Self-Relations Therapy in Pain Management

Jeanne Hernandez, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist who lives and works in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She is Director of Behavioral Medicine in the Anesthesia Pain Clinic at UNC Chapel Hill. She also has a personal coaching practice, Harmony Coaching, found at www.jeannehernandez.com. Dr. Hernandez has studied Ericksonian Hypnotherapy and Self-Relations Psychotherapy with Steve Gilligan for more than 10 years.

THE USE OF SELF-RELATIONS THERAPY IN PAIN MANAGEMENT

Pain is a basic survival mechanism, an alert signal that some damage might be occurring to the body. It is a perception of a nerve's signal that cannot reliably be assessed by physiological measures alone; in other words, pain is a psychological as well as a physiological phenomenon. The brain responds to pain as a physiological event, noting its strength and cycling pattern, and then distributes endorphins and other pain relievers to protect and soothe the body. However, the brain also searches any previous experiences that, along with other reference points such as mood, belief systems, and intentions, might suggest a meaning for the pain. Hence, pain is a highly individual and personal event, often experienced as emotional suffering (Chapman, 1999, 2001). In fact, the word 'pain' is derived from the Greek "poine," which literally means punishment. Thus, both medical/physiological and psychological approaches may be required to address pain as a human experience.

As Director of Behavioral Medicine in the Anesthesia Pain Clinic at the University of North Carolina, I have the opportunity to work with a large population of patients referred from a variety of medical disciplines. Their chronic pain disorders include the following: (1) degenerative disc disease with pain that can radiate to other parts of the body, shoot unpredictably, or be persistent; (2) interstitial cystitis, a chronic inflammatory bladder condition; (3) diabetic neuropathy, with progressive nerve degeneration and circulatory problems; (4)

reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD), an autonomic dysregulation with vasomotor changes that cause excruciating pain and permanent disfiguration; (5) migraine headaches; (6) fibromyalgia, characterized by constant pain and tenderness in multiple soft tissues, along with neuroendocrine changes; (7) abdominal, pelvic, or genital pain where the source of the pain may be unclear; (8) post-herpetic neuralgia, where the nerves become inflamed; and (9) phantom limb pain. In addition to pain, many pain patients have other chronic diseases, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic or difficult social backgrounds, and mood disorders. Other patients come to treatment before, during and after procedures and surgeries, to allay acute pain.

The work, therefore, attends to all aspects of a person's life that may be impacted by chronic pain, such as weight and nutrition, substance use and abuse, exercise, intimate relationships, body image, mood, family dynamics, and career. I have found Self-Relations principles and techniques to be tremendously helpful in this work. With SR, good rapport and deep connections are established quickly, so that even the first visit can be therapeutic. In addition, my work draws from training in a variety of disciplines including Life Coaching and Human Resource Development (HRD), public health, and trauma and maltreatment. Other influences include Ericksonian hypnosis as well as techniques of behavioral modification, psychoeducation, NLP, and EMDR. Any

technique works best in an environment and clinical context that fosters healing; my office is a small sanctuary, with a recliner, soft lights and Indian music or nature sounds, in the center of a busy and hospital clinic.

SR Principles for Working with Pain

Some core SR principles (Gilligan, 1997) that guide my work with pain patients are the following:

- (1) *There is an indestructible soft spot (the self) at the core of each of us.* No matter how disconnected, overwhelmed, or symptom-identified a person is, the therapist can sense and align with the healthy core ("the unconscious") of her being. It is crucial to remember that this place is distinct from a person's pain or present condition; it allows us to sense who the person is beyond the problem or suffering. Connecting with this center is a main goal of SR work.
- (2) *Life moves through us, except when it is blocked.* When the self interprets the outside world and finds things intolerable, the flow gets "stopped," and ability to grow and adapt gets stifled. While this is understandable, it is disastrous as a long-term strategy. Another goal of SR work is to help patients safely re-experience the "flow" of life moving through them.
- (3) *There is intractable emotional pain where energy is blocked.* Endless grieving over lost opportunities or lost ability to love are examples of that; there will still be pain until one realizes it is a symbol of how much one still cares.
- (4) *There are two "selves" within each person — a somatic self that experiences feelings, primary process, and pain; and a cognitive self that organizes experience, makes meaning, and sets and pursues intentions.* A relational, field-based Self emerges at every point of cooperative connection between the two selves; it disappears when the cognitive self cannot positively sponsor the somatic self.
- (5) *Pain and suffering can easily dissociate the cognitive self from the somatic self.* The negative experiences of the somatic self can then be contained within semi-autonomous "neglected selves" that are split off from conscious awareness and control. Left unintegrated (or "unsponsored," as SR would say), these ne-

glected selves will continue to activate and play out old negative experiences in unhelpful ways.

- (6) *A person may be attacked by "alienating" voices that get locked into somatic experience.* For example, a child may receive curses that he is worthless and stupid; a rape victim may be told that her body deserves to be treated badly; a man might be shamed about his sexuality. Such "alienating" ideas, whether expressed implicitly or explicitly, may become "imprinted" (i.e., locked into the somatic self as identity statements) and internalized (i.e., they become confused as one's own voice). These "aliens" can come to dominate a person's experience, disallowing any new, positive experiences to develop. In SR, there is significant attention to identifying and differentiating from such voices and ideas, so that growth and change may occur.
- (7) *The relational field includes a collective, fluid intelligence greater than any individual.* This "higher power" may be experienced in many different ways — for example, as nature, music, trance, community, God, etc. The important idea is that each person has ways to tap into a field bigger than their pain, and that doing so allows a person access to many resources and new possibilities. Thus, SR focuses on helping a person tap into a field bigger than the problem, in order to both dis-identify with the problem and find new ways to relate to the problem. This is especially important with pain, which can overwhelm, isolate, and contract a person's identity so easily.
- (8) *Your task in life is to follow your own path, as defined by listening to your self.* SR focuses on many ways to help individuals discern their own "voice" and then find the means to follow it, regardless of whatever adversarial forces may show up.

Taken together, these SR principles emphasize the importance of attending to three different aspects of self: the somatic self, the cognitive self, and the field-based (relational) self. Each of these aspects of self has negative forms and positive forms, and a major part of SR describes how a negative form may be transformed into a positive one. To do this, the three principles of *centering* (in the somatic self), *opening and extending* (into the

field), and *sponsorship* (by the cognitive self) are applied in many different ways. The remainder of the paper gives some ideas about how this can be done when pain is the primary problem.

Applications of SR to Pain Control

Types of Pain: Acute vs. Chronic

Acute pain is a biologically useful symptom of pathology, with predictable cure and relief. Some examples of acute pain are burns, appendicitis, broken bones, and labor pains. *Chronic pain* serves no biological purpose, as the wound has already reached its endpoint in cure and healing. The pain becomes the disease, a complex intertwining of physiological and psychological components. Patients are often told that the pain is "in their heads." Over time, they accommodate to pain for survival purposes, sometimes with unhealthy behaviors, depression, or stress-related medical problems. Chronic pain patients can be difficult for physicians to treat because they may not get better, they can become dependent upon their medications and they often express emotional and economic distress. While there is no pre-morbid personality associated with chronic pain patients (Sternbach, 1974), anger, depression, neediness and anxiety (LeShan, 1964), as well as learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) are often manifested after months and years of pain.

Sometimes a treatment regimen comes to define a person's identity and lifestyle. Patients with leg amputations, kidney disease, lupus, organ transplants or terminal cancer typically must reorganize their life (and hence their identity) around the disease; others with chronic pain may have less obvious but equally monumental changes to deal with. In such cases, SR and related approaches can help allay pain, address underlying problems, promote happy and healthy new lifestyles, and deepen one's sense of self integrity in response to the life changes involved.

Hilgard and Hilgard (1975), T. X. Barber (1959), and numerous others such as Lankton & Lankton (1983) have described the effective uses of hypnosis in pain management. Milton Erickson (see Rossi, 1980) demonstrated the use of hypnosis in reduction of both acute and chronic pain. He used self-hypnosis to cope with his own polio-related pain as a teenager, and throughout his

adult life with arthritis and other painful conditions. He felt that everyone had valuable internal resources — psychological, physiological, and social — that could be directed to modify, control, and eliminate pain. As a neo-Ericksonian tradition, SR builds on these contributions in the unique ways described below.

How to Watch and How to Listen

In working with pain patients, the first skill is one of deep multi-level listening; listening to the words, listening between the words, listening to the body, listening to the unspoken. The field-based listening approach of SR (Gilligan, 1997) is so helpful in this regard. I typically start by sitting with a relaxed but focused attention, leaning forward slightly, and matching the patient's posture. I try to sense the breathing patterns and any underlying feelings in the patient as I look into his eyes, staying attentive to the peripheral "field" around the client (so as not to get too caught in their speech or behavior). I feel for the ideal social distance, one that will allow both connection and safety. If either I or the patient seem to need more space or more protection, I move from a "face to face" orientation to a more "shoulder to shoulder" connection; that is, I sit alongside of them rather than directly across from them.

Settling into this SR process of centered, field-based attention allows me to track both myself and the patient, while also sensing a relational field that is holding the two of us together. This allows me to notice and move between many levels of meaning. I listen to what the patient is saying, but also watch for any incongruent body language that signals a "neglected self," that is, a psychological "part" of the person other than (and in conflict with) the presenting self. I can feel the intensity of the situation he is describing, without getting lost in it. I can more easily sense and communicate with any "neglected selves" underlying chronic pain. I check the accuracy of my perceptions through questions such as, "What are you feeling in your body as I say that," or "Where in your body do you feel the center of the emotional pain?" or "What are you aware of now?" All this allows a therapeutic process to unfold quite naturally.

Using this approach, I asked a 20-year-old female

patient with interstitial cystitis (bladder/pelvic) pain, to go “inside herself,” to describe her pain in detail. I gently invited her to “let her body remember” the first incident of that feeling. I focused on staying relaxed, centered, and open, feeling for a way to sense her somatic self in a way that felt safe to her. I was aware that she struggled with an eating disorder and had no history of dating — potential indicators of early sexual trauma — and I was thus ready to receive and respond to any traumatic memories. After a few minutes of silence, what unfolded for her was a buried memory of incestual sodomy that occurred eight years before. She described it in a strangely calm, dissociated way, with seemingly no emotion. This began a process of therapeutic work of integrating the traumatic experiences. With my assistance, she was able to deal with the events not only within herself, but within her family as well. Much of her excruciating pain subsided in the process, even though permanent bladder damage left some ongoing pain to deal with. The discovery of such traumatic memories is not uncommon when the pathway is through the somatic memory or marker. The pain cannot always be taken away, nor the damage undone, but with good psychotherapy, the client’s relationship to the pain, and therefore, their experience of suffering, can often be substantially transformed.

How Patients Feel with SR

SR methods can promote a strong therapeutic relationship that allows for the safe accessing and processing of traumatic memories, the connection of previously inexplicable pain to causal events, and a capacity to “sponsor” and integrate difficult experiences. One of the most interesting aspects of working in this way is how surprisingly pleasant patients find it. They describe the experience in terms such as “having somebody on my wavelength,” “weird in a neat sort of way,” “strangely comfortable,” and “finally being heard.”

One patient with terminal cancer and 20 years of cocaine abuse came to the first session shaking with fear. Her drug habit had shielded her from her lifelong relationship problems, which she thought started with infant maltreatment before she was adopted. She was defensive, hardened, facing death and frightened, but also very in-

telligent. Near the end of our first interview, she came to the edge of her chair and said that she had the most intense urge to run from the room, to flee from being “seen through.” The focus switched to how she could keep control of the pace and depth of the work and see me as a supportive guide. The dance we played, two intelligent women talking with a shared purpose in a small room, was beautiful and playful. Over the next few weeks we became a hard-working team. By her third visit, she brought her adoptive mother with her, to work with her on painful childhood and end of life issues. At the beginning of one visit she told me, “When you told me to flow through life as it flowed through me, and I ‘got’ it, you changed my life.” All this work was supported and guided by SR principles such as *sensing a balanced relational field* (where both she and I were present and connecting); *sponsoring* whatever was presented (including addictions, abuse history, pain) as “gifts” that could really help her grow and develop; and *centering* (e.g., connecting with the body, calming, listening to inner feelings, learning self hypnosis) into a healing, generative self. These methods have been extremely helpful in promoting hope, feelings of self-mastery, and creative (sometimes even playful) relationships to chronic pain.

What is the Meaning of the Somatic Symptom?

A core idea in SR is that a somatic or embodied “self” may be distinguished from a cognitive self. To paraphrase William James, the somatic self is the horse, the cognitive self the rider. Each has its own properties, capacities, resources, and understandings. In working with pain patients, it is important to realize that the somatic self can store memories of previous pain experiences. For example, research has shown that memory systems exist in the visceral organs, or gut (Costa and Brookes, 1994), as well as in the immune system (Dilts, 1990). If unintegrated with the cognitive self, painful somatic memories may express themselves as chronic defensive postures that include muscular stiffening, swelling, vascular constriction, as well as emotional anxiety, depression, and fear. All these have deleterious biochemical consequences, both to the sympathetic nervous system and to the perception of pain. Thus, chronic pain

should always be understood as likely involving a complex of somatic memories that need to be recognized and integrated.

A woman with ulcers on her gums and mouth, in addition to dizziness and other pain symptoms, reported in her first interview that she had a wonderful relationship with her older brother; furthermore, she denied any history of child abuse. Yet after several sessions, she noted that her brother had cruelly teased her as a child, including holding her down and drooling into her mouth; finally she was able to disclose that he also sexually abusing her. Another woman presented with dizziness and headaches featuring a ring of pain around the crown of her head. Her physician couldn't explain the symptoms, and sent her to me in consultation. After reviewing many facets of her life with her, I asked about her husband, who treated her "like a queen," and asked if this was her first and only marriage. She told that he had come into her life a few days after her first husband died, and she nonchalantly noted that the first husband was decapitated during a freak accident on an airfield. She had much unresolved grief around this issue, along with some questions about her own independence and life path; as we worked through these things, her headaches improved.

Answering the question of whether psychosomatic processes significantly contribute to a patient's symptoms entails gaining rapport, being in the patient's corner, careful observation, and a willingness to make room for anything that comes up. Such sponsorship allows the epiphanies and the new learning to happen. I let my patients know that I (we) can handle anything that comes into our field — that anything and everything can flow through us.

Is There a "Neglected Self" Connected to the Injury or Pain?

The prolonged misery associated with physical pain may signal the presence of what SR refers to as a "neglected self," i.e., an unintegrated psycho-emotional ego state associated with previous trauma. For example, one patient suffered from intense pain from a joint tissue disorder. When we used self-soothing trances for the pain, he was able to access unresolved anger towards his wife

or others resulting from arguments. One day he called me, suicidal, heading to the ocean in the middle of the night, unable to handle his pain. I suggested he imagine "going inside" the back pain and describe it to me, looking for what might have triggered it. He described three incidents from that weekend that led to his feeling abandoned, and resulted in his usual pain intensifying into back spasms. We talked about how important it was to care for that "abandoned self," and engaged him in a soothing self-hypnotic exercise over the phone which led to him feeling much better. Further therapy concentrated on noticing how neglecting that part of himself could easily result in physical pain, and how he could take care of that "neglected self" to reduce his pain problems.

Another patient presented with a severe depression and excruciating pelvic pain. The pelvic pain seemed to have no physical basis, and had begun shortly after he, in the line of duty, chased a young thief through the woods. He also had had a palsy shake in his right hand for several years, from which he seemed particularly emotionally detached. I induced a mild hypnotic trance and suggested that he "go inside" the hand and watch the shaking from the inside, so that he might "sense what it had to say." When he did this, the hand became calm, though shaking resumed when attention was directed elsewhere. We then explored any memories of events related to the shaking hand or to his pelvic pain. He reported images and thoughts about his brothers, his family homestead in the woods in another state, and his current employer's lack of support following his disability. We talked further about his early family life, and I suggested he might consider visiting his family home to talk to his brother about his current crisis. He followed my suggestion and returned to my office recounting how his brother burst into tears and admitted to sexually abusing him numerous times as a child. In further hypnotic work, I suggested he look at his shaking hand as a "neglected self" (a dissociated part of him) that might have a story to tell. He recounted how his brother had placed his hand on a chopping block after sexually abusing him in the woods, and threatened to cut it off if he told anybody. Integrating this and a few other related experiences led to a disappearance of shaking in his hand, as well as a marked diminution of pain and depression.

Regarding the pelvic pain, I believe that it was initially caused by scars from an abdominal surgery. But the unintegrated traumatic experiences did, I believe, exacerbate the pain, while also causing the hand tremors and the depression. That the young man he was chasing through the woods was the same age as his brother during the abuse, and that the abuse happened in the woods, likely stirred somatic memories and pain. The important point is that a new pain or injury — in this case, the pelvic pain related to the abdominal surgery — might be amplified and complicated by previous experiences. Hypnosis and SR methods can be helpful in de-coupling one from the other, so that any physical cause for pain can be effectively treated. Stated another way, when a physical pain is unresponsive to straightforward treatments, the practitioner might consider that such failures could reflect the presence of undiagnosed “neglected selves.” Hypnosis and SR provide ways to discern and effectively treat such dissociated complexes.

Are There “Alien” Voices Making the Pain Worse?

Patients with PTSD are vulnerable to stress-related diseases such as irritable bowel, ulcerative colitis and inflammatory bowel diseases, hormonal imbalances, and autoimmune disorders (Drossman, Leserman, Nachman et al, 1990; Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg et al, 1998; Rossi, 1986). Under physical or emotional stress, body temperature can vacillate, blood vessels constrict, muscles tighten, hormone production changes, and the immune system may be compromised. Derogotis (1974) calls these the somatic equivalents of anxiety. Often patients with an abuse history take their current pain as further proof that they should suffer because they are bad or unworthy. The earlier the abuse sets in, the harder it is for the patient to truly differentiate between physical and emotional pain. A patient’s somatic presentation may suggest unresolved earlier history of trauma, abuse, or neglect; they may cower, look oppressed, limp or shuffle more than necessary. Such somatic patterns may leave them open to further abuse, as it can identify them as former (hence potential) victims or scapegoats.

Differentiating Self-Identity from Pain and Related Symptoms

Patients may lose their basic sense of self as they struggle with the many aspects of chronic pain. Different exercises can be used to help them differentiate from the pain so they can remember their greater sense of self. One patient was in spiritual and physical agony after a failed back surgery left her unable to walk, crying “They have taken my entire life away from me.” Her surgeon asked me for a consult visit with her. With a therapy session to help her re-center and reframe her situation, she was able to recognize what she *does* have, and what interests she has yet to explore so that she could continue to show up in the world and have relationships with people whom she was afraid of losing.

Contemplation of suicide is not uncommon for chronic pain patients whose lives are changed by disability. When patients cry and express guilt, anger, despair in claiming that they want to end their lives (“If this pain doesn’t stop, I’ll kill my self”), I point out the differences between the cognitive self from the somatic self, suggesting how they can differentiate their sense of agency and identity (“I”) from their sense of hurt (“my body, my self”). Then we can talk about the different relationships the cognitive self can have with the somatic self, how crucial this relationship is, and how they can develop a positive, healing relationship with their body. SR facilitates this connection. It is usually a bit startling for the patient to realize that a good deal of the suffering felt somatically comes from negative sponsorship from the cognitive self (e.g., self-mutilation, self-punishment, and self-denial). It is amazing to see the changes that occur when patients begin to realize a more positive, attentive, and compassionate relationship with their somatic self.

Holding Pain Within the Relational Self

Pain can be interpreted as a well-meaning communication (acute pain) or as a misguided body signal (chronic pain). As a result of our work, patients learn what pain sensations they might expect to feel as a result of their condition, so that they know which signals are normal and healthy. I remind patients that the nervous

system has its own intelligence, but can use some help from the conscious mind for interpretation and handling. They learn how the dynamics of anxiety, fear and depression can conspire to make their condition worse, and also how they can counter-act such “negative trances” with creative, positive responses.

A businessman with stable relationships at home and work suffered from intense neck pain. When his pain flared up, he would become so frightened that he could not sleep, hold down food, or attend anything else. We worked on differentiating the physical experience of pain from his anxiety, and coupled this with deep trances that helped alleviate the anxiety. He found hypnosis to be his most successful response to pain, reducing his neck pain to manageable proportions. His favorite trance, which he also used in self hypnosis, was about going out into the greater, wider space of the universe (out in space, free of time) and across time (past, present, and future). In this trance he would let go of his body and his concerns, in order to explore “inner space.”

For patients who are undergoing surgery, I want the sensations they feel in the operating room and afterwards to seem like a normal part of the healing process. This involves reframing and anchoring the positive interpretation of pain signals, for use during the upcoming surgery. With proper preparation, patients can accept and work with painful sensations resulting from nerve bruising, tissue tears, bone damage, etc. They can also learn to identify physiological stress responses and modify them objectively, instead of getting panicky.

Developing a Positive Relationship with an Injured Body Part

Patients in excruciating pain often wish they could “tear out” or amputate the injured area. Sometimes they convince surgeons to do just that, but they often find that the pain is no better. That would be like getting rid of our children when they throw up, rather than sympathizing with them because they got sick. Melzak’s (1982) concept of the body matrix in the brain is actually a concept similar to the relational field. I remind patients that, for instance, the leg sending them the pain signal is the part that is really feeling the pain. I support them in finding ways to bring a positive sponsorship to

the injured body part, so they can compassionately bring relief of suffering to both “it” and themselves.

With chronic pain, protective reactions often develop and persist, which result in stiffening and swelling, radiated pain, or compensatory pain. Patients can learn to self hypnotically drain fluids around an injury and release muscles. Aikido principles of opening up a space to “let energy flow through” can be incorporated into trance work, metaphors, and visualizations to help them become less rigid. A consistent office environment — décor, art, plants, and so on — can metaphorically suggest principles and processes of flow and flexibility, supporting the therapeutic work.

Not Too Tight, Not Too Loose

The quality of attentional connection to one’s self makes a big difference. Holding “too loose” can lead to dissociation, poor self-care, or “acting out” behaviors. Patients with PTSD or histories of child abuse can be so dissociated from their somatic feelings that the bulk of the work is the reconnection. The pain they struggle with may in part signal an attempt by the somatic self to integrate dissociated experiences. Symptoms likely to carry such messages include pelvic pain, temporomandibular joint syndrome (TMJ), genital pain, fibromyalgia, numerous gastrointestinal problems, and pain not otherwise medically explained.

I watched one new patient, a man with a number of unusual pain symptoms, sitting in the waiting room reading. He seemed both totally still and absorbed, while at the same time vigilant and primed for action. I sensed either a well-honed split awareness and experience in hiding it, or a long history of dissociation. From our first moment together, I made sure to create a safe space where he could relax. When we began discussing his neck pain, what unfolded were disjointed experiences of multiple concussions, and an extraordinarily self-effacing, almost detached, attitude towards the great achievements he made throughout his life. As I asked him questions, he began to realize, much to his surprise, that he actually grew up in a different country and spoke another language he had forgotten about; then, over the next several visits as we explored his pain and his somatic feelings, and put the pieces together, he recounted an extensive

history of sadistic physical and psychological abuse as a child. Such abreactions are common in my practice with trauma survivors, and the awakenings are quite likely to come out of connecting the client with his somatic memories or markers. The positive sponsorship is comforting and enhances the unfolding as well as the healing.

During therapy, numerous forgotten traumas were re-experienced as pain in his body. I discovered, for example, that his stillness came from learning early to dissociate when his father would beat him, a talent that served him well during his military career. We wondered why he did not become violent and we looked for instances of positive sponsorship in his life, both by him and others. These examples of positive sponsorship were used to develop a therapeutic self that could integrate the many unresolved traumatic memories from his life. This healing also led to resolution of the physical pains that were plaguing him.

Adding Hypnotic Techniques

Once the relational field is open — that is, there is a positive relationship between the cognitive self and somatic self — other hypnotic techniques may be more effective. There are many such techniques (see Barber & Adrian, 1982; Brown & Fromm, 1987; Lankton & Lankton, 1989; Yapko, 1990; Rossi, 1996; Andreas & Andreas, 1987; and Hammond, 1990, as examples). A useful outline of techniques can be found in Brown and Fromm (1987), including techniques of distraction; altering pain parameters; modifying (alleviating) pain levels; changing pain awareness; and being aware of pain awareness. I find focusing on pain awareness, and awareness of awareness, to be the most hypnotic and the most consistent with SR. When patients learn that how they attend to their pain significantly influences it, they become motivated and empowered to become active agents in exploring pain relief and healing.

Which techniques work best, and for how long, varies tremendously across patients. It depends on their hypnotic susceptibility and style, their internal and external resources, psychological issues related to the pain, and skill level in mind-body connection. When working hypnotically with pain patients, light or “conversational” trances (Erickson, 1959, 1966) are helpful so

that patients can continue to talk and provide ongoing feedback and contributions. Also, they can consciously notice how they make changes, so they can repeat them when by themselves. But regardless of the type of hypnotic work, sponsorship, trust, and the therapist’s belief in the power of the work all enhance the efficacy.

Learning and Practicing Self-Care

Histories of poor emotional and physical self-care, common for patients in a Chronic Pain Clinic, often relate to upbringing, cultural modes, financial constraints, or poor judgment. Many clinic patients smoke cigarettes, and many are overweight or malnourished due to poor diet and lack of exercise. Some may be run down by working long hours or in hazardous conditions. Chronic pain itself can lead to sedentary lifestyles, boredom, depression and accompanying habit changes. Good pain management often involves changing unhealthy behaviors and lifestyles.

Self-care also involves staying in touch with one’s basic needs and honoring them. A person will often only change such habits after healing parts of their wounded selves. They are then more open to psycho-educational approaches that emphasize proper rest, diet, exercise, and other self-care issues.

With one patient who struggled to stop a significant smoking habit, we explored the emotional/behavioral sequences in his life that would trigger his reaching for a cigarette. We found that when under stress, he would often flash back to his days as a soldier in Vietnam. He described how his group would often receive airdrops of cigarettes to celebrate survival after a battle, such that they became symbols of letting go of stress. He learned to replace this symbol with other, more appropriate symbols (e.g., an image of his son smiling at him), such that he was willing and able to stop smoking.

Adjusting to Chronic Disability

The SR concept of “life’s terrible gifts” is an important one. Suffering from a chronic pain or disability might allow, or sometimes force, patients to develop parts of themselves that they never would have done otherwise. There are tremendous life lessons and re-

sources that can arise from the struggle with pain. So while I remain sympathetic to the burdens and suffering that come from pain, I remain equally curious about what interesting learning and gifts the pain might bring to a patient.

I remind patients, with proper timing, that as life takes something away from them, it also offers something new. I help them find new meanings and possibilities that enrich their lives and their contributions to others. Working on gratitude and forgiveness helps pave the way for hopefulness and a positive outlook. SR combined with personal coaching helps patients develop new found unique skills, behaviors and attitudes that maximize their desired self-representation in the outside world.

Healing Ideas and Themes

I have touched upon some core SR methods and approaches for pain relief. Regardless of the method used, I commonly intersperse healing ideas and themes into my communications with pain patients. They include:

- Let's watch the pain (or go inside the pain). . . . Feel (or see) what happens next . . .
- Pay close attention to how each moment of sensation can induce a pain-relieving "trance."
- Continue to sense who you are beyond the pain. Connect with the deeper source.
- (For religious patients): When praying for pain relief, pray into the area where you want the relief.
- Allow life to flow through you. Feel sensations, ideas, memories, insights and connections, come and go. Life is a river that flows through each of us, bringing us so much new awareness each moment.
- Practice gratitude for what you have right now (e.g., this breath, this moment, your family, your body, the part that doesn't hurt, etc.).
- Forgive your self and others. Let go of resentments. Free yourself from anger and blame.
- Choose life.

A poster on my wall declares a related set of messages that pave the way for positive progress, change, and internal locus of control:

- You are very important because of your unique

combination of personality, sensitivities, talents, skills and experiences.

- You are loved very much, regardless of anything that ever happens, because you are you.
- You are the only one who gets the opportunity, the right and the responsibility to be you.
- Your dreams and your goals are very big and it will be important to you and to the rest of us for you to keep after them.
- You have a warrior inside you and you have very creative and powerful ways of using your aggression.
- You have the ability to learn a lot and in very many ways, and your best learnings can actually feel like play.
- You actually can afford to take a lot of risks in your life in order to get things the way you want them, and the way they need to be for you.
- You have very creative ways of talking to us and to your self, and we would all do well to listen very carefully to you.

All these ideas and themes support a person's capacity to heal and reduce pain.

Summary

Pain becomes a problem when it disrupts our lives, causes suffering, and cannot be resolved by medical treatment. Hence, effective treatment is interdisciplinary, socially supportive, and addresses and utilizes psychological factors.

Pain can create new physical problems due to compromises that patients must make in order to carry on their lives; these can include lack of exercise, weight gain, less social and community involvement, and added stress on other body systems. In addition, pain is commonly accompanied by depression, anxiety, or memory and concentration problems. Chronic pain patients often face major lifestyle adjustments, role and status changes, and other diseases or health problems.

Chronic pain can trigger memories of past states of suffering, so that the two can become linked and intertwined, and subsequently exacerbate each other. Sometimes the pain is actually a somatic marker for an earlier trauma or unresolved conflict; indeed, many chronic

pain patients have unhealed histories of child abuse and neglect.

SR's gentle techniques help to resolve both physical and emotional suffering in a variety of ways. SR's somatically based approach is particularly useful in finding the psychological sources of pain (and the psychological and somatic associations to it) that, when addressed, allow pain relief. SR helps patients reconnect with their core selves and their resources; this reactivation of their strengths and positive values is a tremendous help in transforming their lives.

In this paper I have described a number of cases that featured SR principles and methods of sponsorship,

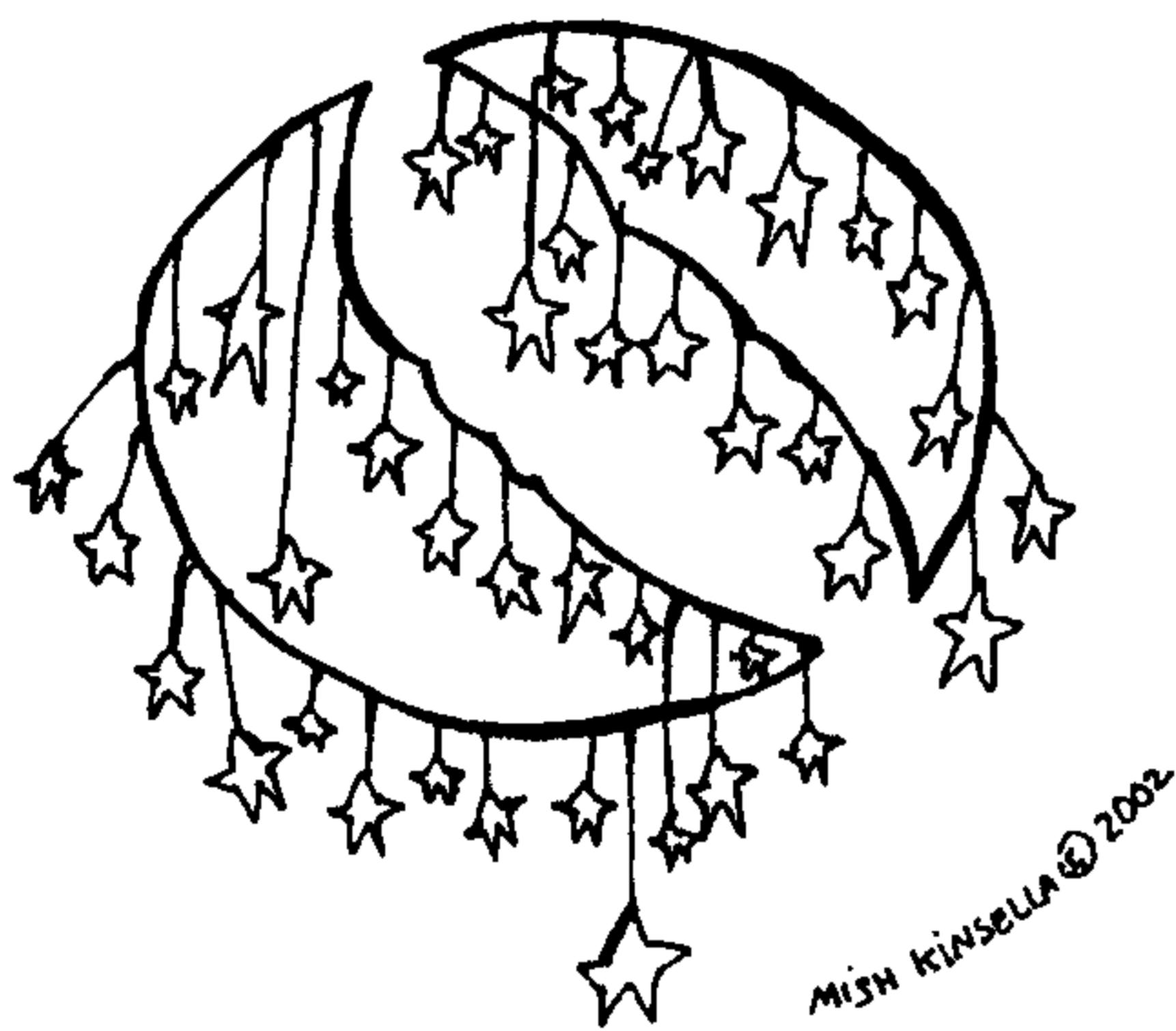
healing neglected selves, reorganizing attention, shifting relational connections, and reintegrating experiences, and have offered a general sense of how the therapy might be done. As a pain specialist working in a challenging hospital context, my practice is a flexible blending of techniques from many disciplines that work best for my patients, my multidisciplinary colleagues, and my own values. On a daily basis I find SR to be invaluable to helping and healing my patients. The principles of love, flow, rapport, connection, and awareness of the field serve as guiding lights.

I offer my experiences in dedication to the holistic healing of all who suffer with pain of any sort.

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Self-Relations Psychotherapy with Couples

Saralee Kane, M.S.W., has a private practice in Seattle and is married with two adult sons. She has recently co-edited *The Art of Therapeutic Communication*, a collected works of her former hypnotherapy teacher, Kay Thompson. Her clinical interests include integrating universal aspects of spiritual traditions, especially Buddhist psychology and her meditative practice, into her psychotherapy practice, with special attention to awakening the resources of the unconscious process.

SELF-RELATIONS PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH COUPLES¹

For one human being to love another, that is perhaps the most difficult task of all . . . the work for which all other work is but preparation.

— Rainier Marie Rilke

Life is basically about fear and longing.

— Albert Einstein

The most fundamental longing is to love another human being, and the intimate couple is the “ground” wherein one can fulfill this most difficult and yet hoped for possibility. My enthusiasm for using Self-Relations (SR) psychotherapy with couples comes from a deep personal and experiential resonance with the work, its relevance to couple issues, and its efficacy with a variety of difficult couple problems. When I introduce SR ideas and processes in my work, I am continually surprised that most couples “know” what I am talking about on an experiential level. In this chapter I would like to describe how I use SR with couples. In the first half I will overview some core ideas and values; in the second half, I will illustrate some practical ways SR therapy is applied with couples.

SR with Couples: Ideas, Values, and Practices The Healing of Woundedness

The human encounter depends on an inner connection. To be in touch with you, I need to be in touch within. (Hillman, 1967, p. 37)

Self-Relations psychotherapy can help clients develop and deepen self awareness and acknowledge fears and wounds from neglected aspects of experience and trans-generational patterns. These fears and wounds are a major source of intense couple conflicts and affect many crucial areas of couple functioning, most apparent in their responses to normative crises (e.g., birth, illness, job loss, children leaving home and death). Fears and wounds are an integral part of both conscious and unconscious process and are reflected in somatic process, emotions, thoughts, behavior and communication. They influence beliefs and values about self, other and the world. Until they are differentiated and integrated both internally and interpersonally, they will constrict the capacity of a couple to live and love fully.

We build innumerable defenses to protect ourselves from touching our wounds. The intense emotions we experience in intimate relationships threaten these de-

¹ To Steve Gilligan, with my deepest respect. Special thanks for his inspired teaching, dedicated commitment to his students, ongoing sponsorship, and his significant contributions to this chapter.

fenses, making it nearly impossible to continue to ignore them. In a sense, couple difficulties can be perceived as opportunities for finally facing these fears and releasing them into the intimacy of a loving relationship where they can be held and healed.

SR's Buddhist orientation is very helpful in healing these wounds. Mindfulness of somatic process, emotions and thoughts contributes to a "present" awareness and authenticity which most clients find inspiring. But awareness is only the beginning; the art of living is utilizing this awareness. SR has infused my work with a deeper compassion for clients, which in turn helps them to become more tolerant and accepting of themselves and of each other. Wounds are analogous to the Buddhist concept of "root causes" that determine our habitual conditioning or reactions. Wounds must be dealt with, or they will continually cause suffering.

My Buddhist understanding has made me suspicious of my patients' fears. It is my experience that emotions, no matter how powerful, are not overwhelming if given room to breathe. Contained within the vastness of awareness, our emotions have the power to connect us with each other rather than driving us apart. Mindfulness can serve as a vehicle for desensitizing ourselves to our fears of our own feelings, breaking down the self-imposed barriers that keep us at a distance, not just from each other, but from ourselves. (Epstein, 1999, p. 111)

Sponsorship of the Neglected Self

SR has provided me with a structure for working more profoundly with couples, especially in the areas of (1) cultivating experiential presence and awareness and (2) "sponsorship" of multiple levels and forms of experience, especially intense and negative ones. The idea of sponsorship involves a skillful and loving relationship to an experience that results in its deep human value being realized. This is a core challenge in all therapeutic work, but especially in work with couples, where so many difficult experiences predominate. SR's process of connecting with both the "manifest self" — a person's con-

scious or presenting thoughts, emotions, and behaviors — and the "hidden self" — with its "neglected," unconscious, and archetypal processes — is a profound and crucial approach to couples, where much relating occurs on these latter levels. Equally helpful is SR's emphasis on the therapist's participation and presence on all these levels during an interview. Its intrinsic valuing of the goodness of each individual and her awakening soul promotes compassion and forgiveness, and thus helps therapists to facilitate both self-sponsorship and interpersonal sponsorship.

One of the most difficult challenges for couples is being present with each other, rather than reacting to past wounds or trans-generational patterns. To facilitate this, we need to be present and honest with ourselves and not attached to expectations and beliefs, pain from past experiences, or anxieties about the future. Therapists often grapple with how to encourage awareness and ownership of these experiences without eliciting a defensive posture. As we will see, SR provides specific methods for achieving this.

Just as important, therapists need to help clients learn how to "be with" intense emotions without reacting, acting out or projecting them in the couple relationship. SR methods for sponsoring intense emotions and energies enable therapists and clients alike to recognize, understand, and integrate them. Through this work, my clients and I have been able to develop a "felt sense" of these processes, an experiential "knowing," and a capacity to "be with" and "hold" them in ways that allow deep transformational change.

Valuing the inherent goodness in each person and encouraging his growth and awakening are aspects of the sponsorship we hope each partner will develop for Self and Other. Maintaining this positive regard for each person's deep value allows all aspects of each person in the couple to present. How we relate to "otherness" — any idea, emotion, behavior, or value that is different from our own — is a constant challenge in couple relating. Is this "other" accepted as simply different, valued for being interesting or enriching, or perceived as threatening to our very own identity? When there is something we don't want to accept about ourselves, we often try to dislodge it in order to protect our sense of identity. Intense energy is created in order to remove some-

thing which is inherently inseparable and this energy is often projected on our partner, making intimacy and connection impossible. In SR therapy, we try to identify these core projections and help partners reclaim and integrate them.



For example, a couple in a recent session replayed a recurrent argument. In doing so, the wife realized that her intense anger about her husband's disorganization when leaving a restaurant had actually very little to do with his behavior. For many years in her marriage, she had denied her own difficulties with organization and her reaction to her husband had more to do with her fears about how others perceived her. She sighed deeply, and sadly admitted: "It's shocking, after all my individual work to find that much of our difficulties come back to these same issues that I have struggled with myself." When people are able to acknowledge and accept their own internal "otherness" — the parts of them that they have dissociated or neglected — they begin to diminish their fear of differences. It is not surprising that some people find it easier to maintain their own internal denial and even divorce than have their fragile identity questioned.

The "Illusion" and Truth of Love

When we first enter into an intimate relationship, we see our beloved's beauty and uniqueness. We feel that she fits our image of what we want in relationship and believe that we belong together. We may even create stories about how we are meant to be together, sometimes invoking destiny or a higher power; myth, fantasy, passion, and imagination are part of the "glue" that holds couples together. These entrancing images and narratives often create a sort of sheathing that protects and bonds a couple during its formative stage. As a newlywed man poignantly shared, "I finally found a relationship in which I could be faithful." His wife added, "I married you because you were the first person I didn't have to lie to."

People choose partners who have similar neglected selves and who seem to promise to

sponsor them, eliciting a hope that this particular person will be able to heal them or make them whole." (Gilligan, personal communication)

This "eternal love" does not last forever, sad to say. The idealized experiences are gradually or abruptly exposed to the reality of normative challenges and intense life experiences, thereby forcing the recognition that our beloved is human after all, and that he or she cannot protect us from life or take away our own weaknesses and wounds. This initiates the second stage of intimacy development, that of *separating and differentiating* from each other.

When individuals begin to realize that their partner hasn't healed them and, in fact, cannot do so, they may experience severe disappointment, disillusion or anger. They may expend enormous energy trying to force their partners to "revert" to the person they thought they had married. Problems such as violence, depression, or attempts to exit the relationship (e.g., through affairs) often occur at this stage. Because couples often share similar neglected selves — indeed, SR affirms Harville Hendrix's (1992) principle that this is one of the main bonding principles for a couple — each person is especially vulnerable to their partner's acting out. Couple therapists often hear this common and moving complaint, "I am devastated. How could he have done this? This is the one thing he knew I couldn't handle." This reactivation of the core wound is what often brings a couple into therapy.



SR helps people to self-sponsor and heal these core wounds, thereby allowing individuals to achieve a deeper honesty about themselves and their couple relationship. They begin to recognize that much of their disappointment directly results from their personal expectations and projections, which make it difficult to accept one's partner as separate from their needs and/or illusions. SR therapy can help individuals both acknowledge unmet needs and understand how unfair and unworkable it was to assume that their partners could fulfill them. One woman, referring to the difficult ending of a relationship, described her understanding in the following way:

When I did find a way to let go, it snapped the last remnants of illusion I had about him. I felt at first, exhilarated, liberated, and lightened. I saw him for who he is, and I inwardly apologized to him for having held him to a different account than one he recognizes or ever accepted.

One of my fundamental goals with SR is to facilitate each person's self sponsorship, thus releasing the enormous burden on the other to fix, take care of, or complete the self.

Intimacy and Identity: The Three Stages

A basic challenge for couples is to negotiate intimacy, while also preserving individual autonomy. In the initial romantic stage of intimacy, partners usually put aside aspects of their individual identity, independence and sense of control in order to merge or "become one." They may deny or suppress their interests, emotions and even deepest selves to sustain this couple identity. Eventually, there is a natural need to separate ("become two") in order to reclaim each person's autonomy, and to help the relationship grow. Couples often unconsciously create conflict to establish this necessary separation. In this sense, I often see the "presenting problem" of the couple as an attempted solution to this challenge. The symptom is in part a beautiful way for a couple to both differentiate and achieve deeper bonding at the same time ("become three"). Couples move through these stages throughout their relationship, if not on a daily basis.

It may take years for partners to "wake up" and begin to see each other as unique persons with their own separate needs, and not as the person they had "created" in their minds. This normative transition can become a crisis if feelings of disappointment and disillusion are not balanced by the opportunity for a deeper and more mature love to develop. The therapy context is a sanctuary where these crises can be realized as opportunities for profound growth.

What Do Couples Bring to Treatment?

Couples present a wide range of symptoms/problems in both complexity and severity. Common areas of distress include: lack of genuine affection and caring; intense anger, conflict or tension; feeling in danger or threatened; difficulties trusting; disappointment and/or humiliation; lack of acceptance of themselves and their feelings in the couple; imbalance of energies or power in the relationship; unsatisfying sexual relationship; deadness or apathy; difficulty communicating and not having their deepest longings supported or recognized. Some couples bring years of chronic pain and frustration to therapy, while others identify specific events or experiences that are causing distress in the relationship.

With their symptoms, clients also bring beliefs, expectations, fears, and their shared emotional and social identities and financial concerns, all of which affect their commitment to each other and their motivation in therapy. They bring in trans-generational patterns of intimacy, religious beliefs and practices; personal likes and dislikes; children; family relationships; and networks of friends. Many of these identity-based variables will be influencing their struggle for intimacy, so a therapist needs to be attentive to them while working with a couple.

An intimate relationship is a dynamic system that contains multiple selves; there are three distinct identities interacting in the relational field: self, other (self), and relational self. How each person balances and integrates these different identities is a core question in the therapeutic work. A symptom may indicate that there is an imbalance in the relational choreography. One partner may embody the couple's difficulties in symptoms such as depression or somatic complaints while the other partner may function well in society. Extra-marital affairs can be symptomatic of one partner's individual difficulties and/or "collusions" of both partners' needs. Attention to both the individual and couple/system consciousness is part of the "both/and" orientation in SR.

Relatedly, each symptom is both a personal (individual) and a collective (archetypal) pattern. That is, at one level it is unique to the individuals involved; but at another (equally important) level, it is an archetypal pattern, common to all human patterns of intimacy. For example, the challenge of developing a mutually satis-

ifying sexual relationship is both unique to a couple, and (at another level) basic to all couples. Psychology, in general, and psychotherapy, in particular, has often unduly emphasized the individual or personal aspect of a pattern, ignoring its archetypal nature. This encourages a pathologizing of the person, leading a person to think that their problem separates them from and makes them inferior to others. By equally emphasizing the archetypal level, couples can sense that their struggle is normal and it is what connects them to the larger field of humanity. I emphasize that intense problems are crucial and unavoidable parts of the path of intimacy *for everybody*, and that they are challenges, whose opportunities for growth and understanding help someone become a human being.

While an intimate relationship is a complex field, transformation requires individual responsibility and personal agency. Throughout therapy, I encourage each person to take responsibility for his own relational field or how he turns towards the other. Each person is invited to reflect on what he or she "stands for" in the relationship, and encouraged to take action for creating such a relationship, regardless of his partner's behavior. One person may benefit from learning to step back and relinquish responsibility, while another may need to practice listening to what her partner wants, the most basic aspect of giving. Developing the capacity for both knowing and acting becomes synonymous with one's own personal integrity, who one wants to be as a partner, and how one wants to connect with others.

A client was eager to share his recent understanding. He said: "It's so different than I had ever thought. This is all about personal responsibility. At first I resented this emphasis, but surprisingly I find myself more accepting and even more calm. I can begin to see her beyond my own hurt reactions."

Symptoms as "Awakenings of the Soul"

Intimate relationships are wombs that give birth to new life for their members. Somehow, the interior soul needs an exterior relationship to invite her into human experience. Intimacy with another invites awakening of this interior soul; love and acceptance mid-wife it into human reality. In listening to the couple talk about their

problems, their pain and their longings, we can hear the awakening soul demanding a place to be seen, touched, engaged, and accepted. As a client tearfully shared:

For 12 years I have kept quiet to make the marriage work. Did I believe my needs for physical intimacy were abnormal? Yes and No. I ended up compromising and I had to shut off and try not to be so needy. (*crying*) I finally want a place where I can be myself and be safe.

Tragically, we risk abandoning ourselves out of our desperate fear of being abandoned by others. The unequivocal voice of her soul had a different "tone" and her husband could HEAR the difference. It was present, alive, and connected. It called both of them into greater presence. In therapy they began to experientially realize that each of them had seriously compromised themselves. He had negated her desires for intimacy because they triggered his own neglected experiences around intimacy; she had resigned herself to believing she didn't really matter, and wanted him to make decisions because she didn't trust her own.

In couples therapy, both were able to acknowledge and accept their own neglected experiences around intimacy and self worth. As their internal acceptance deepened, they began to honestly identify and communicate their needs without trying to dominate or blame the other. The change in their relational field was palpable as they began to listen to each other without fear or defensiveness. Because they were developing a different relationship with their neglected selves, they were no longer constantly trying to protect themselves from external forces or behavior. Their internal connection was their new "protection" and therefore, they were willing to risk being vulnerable with each other.

What Are Couples Reaching For?

Everyone has a deep yearning to be held. As a mother holds a child and the earth holds us, we hope for soothing holding within the couple. We long to be loved and accepted by another with whom we can experience safety and passion. An intimate relationship

is a relational field where we hope to take off those heavy and burdensome veils and be ourselves.

The deepest core of fear . . . is the fear of love itself. Love's imperfections so long suffered from childhood onward have led to this fear in which love lies hidden, a complex of excruciating sensitivity. Why the terrible troubles of love? (Therapy) tells us something about why loving is so difficult and why distance and secrecy and coolness all may be necessary. They give protection against love and love wounds . . . The human encounter is difficult because it leads to that wounding experience. (Hillman, 1967, pp. 34–35)

Intimacy demands being in the presence of an "other." Intimacy requires the observation and experience of all the different selves within each person. It asks us to slip off the veils that hide our true natures. Our consequent nakedness is both literal and metaphorical in its vulnerability. This closeness leaves little room to hide or run away. A client openly shared this challenge in intimate relationship:

Everything that happens hits at once and I can feel crazy. The slip is based on disappointment. The whole world disappointed me. Nobody takes care of me. It's an internal experience. (There is) all this room for me to go through this. It's embarrassing to suddenly have people hold a mirror up to that.

We are all looking for acceptance and love. We expect to find that positive sense of self "outside" of ourselves. We learn to think that our success, accomplishments or external representations (roles, success, consumption, status, social connections) will bring us acceptance and worthiness. Perhaps this is one of the important causes of alienation/emptiness in our modern times; as external sources can never bring ultimate happiness. SR has helped me redirect clients towards going inside to generate love, acceptance and worthiness, lifting the burden off the partner for fulfilling these fundamental and deep longings.

Practical Aspects of SR with Couples

Helping each partner to sponsor self, other, and the relationship itself is fundamental to SR work with couples. Each person has the capacity to create a sanctuary in which all parts of the relationship are accepted and protected. Neglected experiences from past generations, such as inadequacy and shame, are especially welcome and important. Regardless of their apparent value or form, SR seeks to value each emotional experience as a core energy essential to human development. To accomplish this challenging task with couples, many aspects of SR are useful. Here I will touch upon a handful.

Being Present

A major emphasis of SR is remaining centered and present in a relationship. I find this value incredibly important in working with couples. The tendency for each person to slip off into disconnected states is strong, and it usually results in repetition of old, undesirable patterns. A couple was describing an intense emotional argument, when the wife said, "When I came back . . ." She hadn't physically gone anywhere during the argument and didn't seem to be especially aware of her use of words, so I responded by saying, "When you said, 'I came back', what did you really mean? Did you leave the connection with your husband? Did you go somewhere else, perhaps in the past, with someone else, or perhaps in a future fantasy?"

She looked at me with amazement, realizing what she had said. This began a very interesting exploration of how often each of them "checked out" from their connection, the negative consequences connected to this exit, and how they could stay more present with each other.

Different questions can be intermittently asked of clients to keep attuning them to the present:

- As you hear him say that, what are you aware of in your body?
- As you feel that feeling, can you also sense your breath and your body?
- What are you aware of now?
- Take a few moments to just breathe and connect

with yourself before responding. . . . As you slow down, what do you notice?

Another simple technique is to interrupt the eye "accessing cues" which a person uses to look away (e.g., up and to the left, down and to the right) while processing an experience. SR sees such eye movements as often indicating that a person is moving away from the present moment and relational connection and into a memory or fantasy. Clients often are unaware they're doing this, so it can be helpful for therapists to notice them and then simply ask clients to "come back" to the present moment. I often explain straightforwardly to clients how their looking away can lock them into old states, and suggest that they just try an experiment to see what happens when they stay present by letting their eyes relax and connect with their partners.

Most couples find the simple language and emphasis of being present understandable and are interested in learning to utilize this goal in their lives. Once we have detailed their flight away from the present moment and into old patterns/memories, it makes it easier to address the challenges and fulfill the longings in the relationship.

Cultivating a Felt Sense of the Somatic Self

Staying present in the ongoing processes of one's somatic self can be cultivated by learning to track what Gendlin (1982) referred to as the "felt sense" of knowing. Felt sense is not so much an emotion as a subtle sense of "energy" in the body that may be experienced when a person is processing a meaningful event. The idea is that relational knowing is processed at both cognitive and somatic levels. In many ways, the somatic self is more sensitive to relational nuances than the cognitive self, so such information is crucial in navigating intimacy. A basic SR method is to continue to ask clients to sense what their centers are experiencing as they talk/think about a problem.

For example, two gay partners were talking about a situation that often ended in a fight. As we began to explore it, I continued to ask each one, "As you hear what (your partner) says, what do you notice happening in your heart and belly?" After awhile, each person was able to tune into the ongoing felt sense in their centers,

and found it very helpful information. For example, one of the men noticed that when his partner talked about socializing with others, he felt a sense of panic in his stomach.

This panicky feeling, when undetected, seemed to trigger a sense of disconnection and feeling of abandonment, which typically led to a fight. By slowing down the conversation and making sure that every cognitive awareness and verbal exchange was coupled with a somatic awareness of felt sense, some "neglected selves" involving earlier experiences were identified. Using the SR method of integrating neglected selves made a powerful difference in how the couple was able to stay present with each other. Earlier experiences of abandonment that had been unconsciously disrupting their connection were integrated, and a new depth of intimacy resulted.

SR believes it is equally helpful for the therapist to be tracking his or her own felt sense in every therapeutic conversation. The body can often sense more intimate details than can the cognitive self. One SR method (see Gilligan, 1997) encourages a person to notice in an ongoing way, "Does this bring me closer to, or further from, my center?" That is, for each moment of thought, behavior, perception, feeling, etc., does it increase or decrease somatic resonance? For example, a client may be talking in very emotional terms about feeling scared, but the therapist notices that her felt sense of centering and compassion actually lessens. Assuming it is not simply an attentional wavering on the therapist's part, it may indicate that the presentation, while intense, isn't really connecting to the client's center either. In any case, it encourages the therapist to slow down and pay very close attention to what is happening.

A basic rule of SR is that if the communication is not connected to the center, it will typically be impotent, i.e., not make much of a difference. Psychotherapy is in part a study of impotence — that is, how and when what a person thinks or does has no power — so it is crucial to notice when connection to center is lost, so it may be restored. The therapist's tracking of his/her own ongoing felt sense is crucial information in this regard.

Opening to the Relational Field

Another core SR idea is that of the *relational field*, which emphasizes that intelligence and consciousness are not only within individuals, but inherent in the larger systems or fields that hold them. For example, a dyad is a field that holds two individuals. A family is a field that includes its individual members. Nature is an intelligent field that includes human organisms. A person's trans-generational ancestors or cultural traditions are fields that contain many relational patterns. We live within, and are guided by, multiple fields of intelligence. Our capacity to navigate intimacy and operate creatively rests in no small part in our capacity to attune and harmonize with these fields.

Because intimacy and love occur within multiple implicit fields, it is not primarily a verbal relationship. Pre-verbal sensing, relating and understanding is the substance of intimacy. SR's recognition, utilization and trust in dynamic relational fields expand this consciousness within the therapeutic encounter. It suggests practices and approaches that enable clients and therapists to intentionally communicate and relate this way.

For example, a typical aspect of a difficult intimacy field is the presence of trans-generational "negative sponsors." In other words, as a couple negotiates and navigates intimacy, they are not alone in their intimacy field. Ancestral presences — mothers, fathers, grandparents, etc. — are often psychologically present and powerful in the field. If these presences are unrecognized, they can often block intimacy. Thus, SR suggests that it is helpful to raise some form of the question, "As you struggle with this issue, who else is in the room with you? For example, what would your mother/father say to you about this? How did they handle this challenge?" Such questions acknowledge the other "presences" in the room, and allow a person to begin to externalize and differentiate from them.

Just as "negative sponsors" can be sensed in the field, so can "positive sponsors." For example, a couple struggling with an issue might be asked to relax and imagine what sponsoring presence in their life — a family member, mentor, spiritual being — might help them with the present situation. One woman who was afraid to make a deep commitment was asked this ques-

tion, and she attuned to the memory of her grandmother, who had often helped her in troubled times. An imaginary conversation with her grandmother provided her with resources and support for risking an intimate connection with her new husband.

Therapists can also be "open to the field" as they work with clients. When I work with couples, I concentrate on opening to multiple levels of the field, including dreams, to fully understand and "join" the couple's experiences. I may share such awarenesses in different ways. For example, I might say something like, "As I listen to you and wonder about your situation, I noticed this image coming to me. . . ." Or, "As you talk about this, I felt something kind of shut down in you and I was wondering if you were hearing any messages from past people in your life. . . ." However a client responds may be utilized.

When clients share information which is out of their conscious awareness, it is your ethical responsibility to use it! (Thompson, personal communication)

Subtle connections, internal negative "trances," shifting (ego) "states," archetypal presences, somatic responses and unconscious processes in the relational field are among the many important experiences to which I am attending. To be unaware of these patterns is to be unaware of much of the couple's relationship and process. Awareness of these processes allows me to move more quickly to interrupt slippage into neglected states and habitual projections in the couple relationship. Most importantly, I can help clients learn ways for developing their own attention and awareness and learn to interrupt reactive and destructive patterns.

The Sponsorship of "Neglected Selves"

Being in intimate relationship with another is our best opportunity for past wounds and neglected selves to be seen, witnessed and finally to be dealt with and healed. (Gilligan, personal communication)

We have thus far talked about how helpful it is for

therapists to help clients develop a sense of presence in the moment, connection to the felt sense of the somatic self, and openness to the relational field of intelligence. These skills allow one to begin the crucial healing process of integrating what SR refers to as “neglected selves.”

SR distinguishes between the cognitive self that uses intellectual/social intelligence to navigate in the world, and the somatic self that uses archetypal/emotional intelligence to relate. The somatic self receives and must integrate many different patterns of human experience through its system. When any of those patterns is cursed, turned away from, or otherwise not integrated, it becomes arrested and locked into the somatic self as a “neglected self,” a quasi-independent emotional complex that activates under certain conditions. An intimate relationship is a prime condition for activating one’s neglected selves. A quick review of one’s own intimate relationships will reveal how easy it is to get caught in “old stuff,” such as emotional fears, anger, regressions, and so on. Getting caught up in this manner is a major basis for a client losing relational connection and developing symptomatic behavior.

Thus, attention to how each partner falls or slips into neglected aspects of their experience is essential in SR couple therapy. Naming and sensing this process is fundamental to changing intimate relational patterns. This must be done experientially, not theoretically, with reference to a “live” interaction the couple has experienced. It is usually not difficult to elicit, and is generally identified in a conflict the couple may talk about in session, in descriptions of repetitive difficulties, or in an emotional outburst in the session.

When working with a neglected self or strong emotional experience, the client is asked to connect to a felt sense in his body, name it, localize it and perhaps touch it. The therapist is also opening his somatic sensing to the client’s experience. Similarly, when working with couples, I ask clients to sense and share how they are feeling their partner’s experience in their own bodies. Sometimes I ask clients if they would like their partners to literally “touch” the tender soft spot in their body. All of these shared sensing experiences have the capacity to deepen their intimacy. As the therapist, I am profoundly “touched” by witnessing and sharing these experiences.

For example, a couple married more than twenty years came to therapy for the first time. Their arguing and fighting over their two sons had steadily increased in the past two years and the wife was finally resigned to separating, “I can’t live any more with this tension.” According to both of them, therapy was their last chance. In the third session, we examined a recent and intense marital argument in minute detail. During this review, the wife became very angry and was able to “hear” her mother’s voice in the tone of her husband’s criticisms of their sons’ behavior. She was unaware of the content of their interaction, just his “tone.” At this moment, she could “see” and “hear” her mother berating her as a child and taking all the emotional space in their home. She felt a child’s impotence and intense resentment. While I helped her explore this “negative” trance, her husband also became agitated. Not surprising, he found himself also “running away” from their interaction. He could see his father’s face filled with anger and criticism and felt as if he was a failure in his father’s eyes. Both trances were intertwined, which is not uncommon in intense couple difficulties.

I helped each partner sponsor their “neglected selves,” shifting that core part of them from being determined by earlier parenting to being connected to present self-sponsorship. As each partner began to free themselves from their earlier “negative trance,” they began to experience a widening compassion towards each other. The husband said this was the first time his wife had talked about the strained relationship with her mother, although he was well aware of it. His wife genuinely opened to his fear of her anger and the pain of disappointing his father. Within two months, their arguing had significantly diminished and they felt competent to handle their different parenting styles. They came back for a check up a few months later and were pleased and comfortable with how well they and the family were doing.

In working with a couple’s “neglected selves,” I often suggest that such difficulties represent their karmic challenge — an opportunity to face their deepest fears and work them out. With genuine curiosity and playfulness, I wonder how they “knew” that they could help each other grow and complement their inherent intelligence in choosing each other. Therapy becomes an

opportunity for each person and the couple to grow through the difficulties they are experiencing.

During such work, I may work intensely with one person while the other observes. The observer is helped to establish centering and calming so he can listen and observe his partner without reacting or running away. When centered, he has the opportunity to understand, perhaps for the first time, that what he is witnessing and hearing is often not about him. He is learning that he is neither responsible for causing his partner's problems, nor for fixing them. Instead of feeling attacked or confused by the emotional intensity of his partner's expressions, he has the opportunity to eventually become compassionate towards the suffering and pain with which his partner has been living.

The partner who is differentiating with her neglected selves can also experience, perhaps for the first time, that her pain, rage, despair, grief, or loss is a wound of her SELF and not her partner's. She has the opportunity to sponsor her own wounds and healing, rather than holding her partner responsible. The couple can take turns, with one session focusing on one partner's "neglected selves" and the next focusing on the other person, so this deep sharing of wounds, vulnerabilities and intimacy is potentially a bonding of great depth and presence.

There is no judgment, just compassion. I suggest making the connection between inner relatedness and perception of others and might say: "And as you look at yourself with softer eyes, you can soften your eyes towards your partner; the eyes that look inside are the same eyes that look outside."

It is important to acknowledge each client's ability to stay present with their partner during these intense interactions. We discuss how their experiences were different and what they noticed and felt about each other's presence. Attention is also directed towards somatic sensing of their partner's pain and how that felt. Through acknowledging, naming and valuing their different presence, we are fostering interpersonal sponsorship. The capacity to listen to some very difficult if not threatening material from their intimate partner without fighting or "running away" deepens an individual's self respect and confidence. The capacity to express one's feelings without trying to control the other, freeze or run away with

their own fears can be a transforming experience. I evaluate the support of the couple's relational field because I have found that on some occasions partners will benefit from doing this work in individual sessions.

Regardless of whether the work is done separately or together, the positive sponsorship and integration of "neglected selves" clears the way for the real work of relational intimacy. As each partner learns and practices self-sponsorship, the unconscious dependence on the other lessens; differentiation is occurring both internally and interpersonally.

Both clients and therapists are profoundly touched when this shift occurs in therapy. Attention and awareness is needed to maintain this revolutionary change. Each partner is encouraged to work with his own neglected aspects of self and to see himself as causing and creating his own experiences. Clients can witness, empathize, understand, and deeply care for each other in this process but are not encouraged to take responsibility for their partners. The fundamental transformation is from expecting one's partner to take responsibility for the self to assuming that responsibility for one self. Similarly, in Buddhist psychology, we are encouraged to hold the person's pain, know our limits, care deeply for them and at the same time relinquish our control and see the limits of our influence.

Of course, each partner will experience and understand this process differently. One partner may more easily respond to this approach while the other may continue to project their neglected selves or unmet needs on the other. This can be a very difficult period in the therapy process as the emotional demands of each partner pulls on the other. The partner who is "unhooking" will feel the tug of the other's emotional confusion, and naturally question his new position, while the other partner who is still "enmeshed" with their neglected selves or unmet needs may perceive their partner's unhooking as distancing and not caring. At such times, it may be helpful to raise questions in terms of how each person can support the relationship itself. That is, even as differences are highlighted, both members of the couple can be challenged to contribute to the "relationship self" even as they seek to support their individual development.

While difficulties are inevitable, they are framed as

hurdles to overcome. A major value of the SR method is that clients become better at identifying and understanding their partner's "stuck" places, and not taking it personally. As a result they are often more accepting and less punitive and critical of their partners. In order to deepen compassion in the couple, I encourage each partner to reflect on their own experiences of the energy, if not the form with which their partner is struggling. How had they been jealous, hurtful, critical or selfish in the past? Have they learned to forgive themselves and thus each other?

SR's emphasis on developing a different relationship with neglected selves is fundamental for interrupting these patterns. When both partners are more aware of their feelings and are willing to own them, they can begin to communicate about the most painful and difficult issues in the couple in more open and thoughtful ways. There is a diminishing need to assume some of the common postures of placating, defending, attacking or detouring. As they develop more inner awareness, they can listen to each other as they are maintaining a connection between their resources, competencies and their somatic self. If they feel uncomfortable they can use tools of centering, breathing and self calming. As the therapist I am continually tracking their "field" or "connection" and may aid them in re-centering.

Mindfulness, Centering, and Related Processes

There are a variety of SR-related practices to facilitate each individual's inner connection, awareness and ability to be with intense emotions and energies. One is *centering*, which involves bringing one's mental and physical attention to a single unifying place in one's being — e.g., one's heart, belly, solar plexus. Centering is basic to navigating difficult experiences. Such experiences will tend to push and pull a person's attention all over the place, resulting in a disorganized, impotent state of reactivity. Centering allows one to shift primary or "first" attention away from other people, away from one's racing thoughts, away from past images, and let it settle in the present moment on the breathing, focused/relaxed somatic self. It is a simple process that requires ongoing practice to use, so I spend considerable time teaching clients how to center. Then, at difficult points in an ex-

change, I return to centering again and again, making sure that a person is centered before proceeding.

Mindfulness is a related practice of just observing and being aware of what is happening in each moment, without any need to try to change it. It is a process of deep awareness and acceptance, being attentive to each shift in consciousness, both internal and external. As one gives up resisting or attacking a part of consciousness, it can then change. This is a challenging but deeply rewarding process for couples to learn.

I have found that mindfulness and centering processes, integrated with other aspects of SR, have been especially effective with couples who suffer from a history of violence. In the following case, both members of the couple struggled with physical violence prior to our work together.

C: This was a test, my first test. You [his wife] had touched a soft spot about something in the past and it had nothing to do with the present, so I did my breathing (*centering*) and could reflect on our teachings. When you talked to me I should have known (right away), but I'm happy I could do it. I was able, like (in) an exam. You bring in the theory and you adapt it. (I'm) very pleased. I thought (about) some understanding with the soft spot and reflected, because I've told you not to tell me how I think. It's nice that I'm not always quiet (anymore). I'm able to speak.

Th: You were able to be there in the present with each other, and you were safe.

C: I'm confident to set boundaries without being scared of each other. Yes, I understand and I'm happy I did it. Yes, we have it (through) being able to define it. I'm much more comfortable with confrontation now.

This client continued to use centering as a very significant tool in self-calming. His developing awareness and responsibility for his neglected aspects of experience helped him interrupt his tendency to react with aggression and at times become violent. He was proud of his emerging control, ability to be in the present with his wife and express and articulate his feelings. Both members of the couple were pleased with their developing

abilities and the healthy effect their learning was having on their children.

Similarly, the therapist uses centering to stay present when working with couples. It's essential to repeat the question cited above, "Does this (communication, thought, experience) bring you closer or further from center?" The therapist, alert to the fact that centering is essential to effective action, continues to monitor his or her own state. Whenever centering is lost, everything else becomes secondary.

Seeing From Your Partner's Eyes with Love and Understanding

Learning to see things from your partner's perspective, and to have a positive sensing of it, is crucial to the cultivation of intimacy. One aspect of this is sensing your partner's positive intentions, even when behaviors are ambiguous or confusing. For example, many clients can learn to separate the desire to communicate emotional pain from the intention to actually hurt each other. Most clients will readily admit that their partners are not intentionally trying to hurt them, and are willing to make a commitment not to intentionally hurt each other. When couples are willing to accept this, the cycle of escalation naturally abates as reactive and protective behavior diminishes. It is often helpful to make distinctions between intention, capacity and behavior in order to interrupt the cycle of blame and encourage motivation for developing new capacities for relating. This understanding is equally important whether the couple stays together, separates or divorces.

Exploring different perspectives expands flexibility and is a fundamental aspect of couples work. Role playing each other in a conflict or important discussion is an effective experiential exercise for expanding perspectives to a "both/and" orientation. I might ask a couple to reverse position, each arguing from the other's typical position. This can result in laughter, new understandings, and more flexible responses.

Hypnosis, Mutual Hypnosis, and Stories

Because much of the shared field of connection and communication for a couple is in the deep, non-rational,

and experiential/symbolic, I often find it helpful to use similar altered states of consciousness for developing new connections and understandings. I use Ericksonian hypnotic processes such as *mutual hypnosis*, a process wherein two people both go into trance together. I may ask the couple to face each other, get comfortable, attune inwardly for a bit, then gently open their eyes and connect with their partner. As the couple sits in this relational trance, I might ask each person to notice the beauty and positive characteristics in the other, to sense an openness and connection with that person's deep self. Or I may tell a story, guiding the basic structure of their experience with a metaphor about a universal couple experience, such as "reaching" each other.

Couples are usually interested in sharing a positive hypnotic experience with each other, and mutual hypnosis is a relevant metaphor for the "both/and" aspects of intimate experience, where one needs to sense connectedness with self, other, and the relationship itself. Some couples even discover that they have shared intrapsychic experiences during the trance. All in all, it is a really interesting and helpful process.

Hypnotic storytelling encourages a child-like sense of curiosity and non-defensive listening. Stories about other couples or mythological or archetypal figures are common. Or I may use a story to facilitate their retrieval of a past experiential learning or suggest new associations or patterns. Subjects may include tenderness, joy, clarity, giving and receiving, trust, or sexual pleasure. It is not uncommon for clients to enter an altered state with fixed inner attention during a dramatic and interesting story.

Blessings and Curses

The ideas of blessings and curses are integral to the SR principle of sponsorship. Blessing is a core process in sponsorship for awakening the human spirit and its goodness and unique place in this world. It is about one's core being touched with love and understanding. It can happen in many different ways — for example, a gentle look, a few intimate words at the right time, a deep acceptance of a person's soul during turbulent times, etc. Blessings are integral to any loving relationship, so I typically explore their presence (or absence) in a rela-

tionship. I might start by asking a couple when they first met, and the special experiences of being loved and accepted by their partner. Or I might ask them to recall people in their respective lives who have “blessed” them, i.e., who really saw and encouraged their true self. Revivifying such events can be very touching experiences, and a sense of reverence or gentle quiet may fill the room. Observing one’s beloved in a “blessed state” can rekindle the flame of love that is the basis for the relationship.

Some couples integrate the depth of this experience and begin to experiment with how they can bless each other and their children; if they don’t develop this understanding themselves, I will suggest it to them. After sharing a moving experience of feeling blessed with her husband, one client said, “My God, I think that is our son’s problem. He has never felt blessed. We have never blessed him.” She was very pleased to share in the next session how she and her husband had “blessed” their son in very personal, private and appropriate ways. We then explored their own histories of being blessed, and how they could exchange blessings in their present relationship.

Curses are the opposite of blessings. They involve the negative touching of the center or soul with life-denying messages such as:

- “You don’t deserve to live.”
- “Your sexuality is bad.”
- “You are selfish.”

Such curses imprint deeply into the somatic self of a person, and create a “neglected self” as discussed above. Identifying curses and changing them to blessings is a crucial part of therapeutic work with couples.

Working with One Member of the Couple

Relationship work can also be done when only one partner is present. Any of the above SR processes — e.g., centering, sponsorship, mindfulness, integrating “neglected selves” — can help an individual deepen respect, compassion, and flexibility towards partners not present. For example, a married woman in her 50s came alone to therapy. She and her husband had become more and more estranged in the past two years because

of arguments over his drinking and their son’s difficult marriage. Her husband was staying out late most nights and they rarely shared meals anymore. She was certain he would move out in the next few months. He refused to come to therapy, something he found unacceptable from the perspective of his rural background. She clearly loved him and wanted to save the marriage but was resigned to the inevitable outcome of their difficulties.

While discussing their arguments over his drinking, I noticed that she seemed to slip into another state of consciousness, looking very young and sad. It was difficult for her to cognitively make sense of it, so I suggested we do some trance work to explore the situation, and she agreed. Interestingly, she seemed to develop two interrelated experiences while in trance, one with her husband and one with her parents. As we moved back and forth between the experiences, she changed “ego states” between a woman in her 50s (arguing with her husband) and an 8-year-old girl painfully watching her parents fighting. We continued to work with this hypnotic process until she was able to consciously hold both states in a detached, comfortable way. Calmly observing the parallel states, she noticed the uncanny similarities between some of her husband’s drinking behaviors and those of her father, such that the former would regress her into painful experiences with the latter.

This is an important SR observation. What makes a difficult experience virtually impossible is that a present state triggers a “neglected self” from the past, resulting in two different ego states operating simultaneously within a person. I supported her in doing some important “sponsoring” of her younger self, especially around the unintegrated grief and anger toward her father that appeared to be adding to her challenges with her husband.

Afterwards, she felt clearer and more grounded regarding her relationship with her husband. She declared an interest in exploring her perceptions and possibilities around his drinking and, more generally, their relationship. She found herself less critical of him and more open to his presence. She noticed that much of the tension and turbulence was between them, more than within him. She noticed more of his positive behaviors, and that he was significantly different from her father in many positive ways. As she became more relaxed and open in his presence, he started to come home earlier

and they began to connect more, both at home and in social outings. This gradual mutual reconciliation, which occurred without him ever coming into session, was deeply satisfying and poignant for my client.

Summary

When couples are able to "show up" with each other, their conversation naturally deepens and my role as therapist changes. I do not want to limit possibilities for the couple's own unique relating and creativity. In a sense, I need to "let go" to allow the mystery and spontaneity of the couple's unique connection to come alive. Through therapeutic sponsoring, we display trust in our clients' vast resources, intelligence and unique ways of relating. We continue to be responsible for creating a safe space/container, sponsoring the couple and fostering their sponsorship of each other, facilitating a relational field of trust and caring, providing tools to structure their interactions, redirecting the focus in therapy and deepening their communications.

SR helps this therapeutic process in many ways.

Clients learn about centering, noticing and following felt sense, healing neglected selves, opening to relational intelligence, giving blessings, and learning to be present at many levels. They learn to let go of blaming their partners or themselves for problems, and find ways to transform those problems into solutions. As they are able to give to themselves, their expectations or requirements from their partners diminish and usually become more realistic and helpful. A deeper, more profound calm often begins to develop both within and between partners. It is a calm of deep self acceptance. It is neither permanent nor illusory but an ongoing process of learning, loving, fighting, reconciling, starting again, growing. In other words, it is the process of love being realized in a relationship.

Growth for couples begins with the painful realization that the other will not heal us. Paradoxically, however, as individuals learn to accept the limits of what can be healed by the other, they begin to accept each other and themselves in ways that finally allow true healing to take place.

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*Sponsorship in Supervision:
Resonance in the Relational Field*

Leonard Bohanon, Ph.D., is a psychologist in private practice north of Houston, Texas (www.wfipc.com). He also serves on the faculties of Houston Galveston Institute and Our Lady of the Lake University–Houston. Leonard has been a student and practitioner of Self-Relations since its beginning.

SPONSORSHIP IN SUPERVISION: RESONANCE IN THE RELATIONAL FIELD

The word “sponsorship” comes from the Latin *spons*, meaning, “to pledge solemnly.” In general, sponsorship is a vow to help a person use each and every event and experience to awaken to the goodness and gifts of the self, the world, and the connections between the two (Gilligan, 1999). The concept of sponsorship can be applied to supervision in several ways. Initially and primarily, this means that in a supervision relationship, the supervisor seeks to sponsor his/her supervisee. Translated to supervision, this means that the simple definition of sponsorship in supervision is to “pledge solemnly” to help a supervisee use each and every event, personal quality, and experience to: (a) foster their development as a therapist and human being, and (b) to develop and utilize the abilities to sponsor clients, peers, etc. in the supervisee’s professional relationships. In approaching supervision as sponsorship, I start, even before walking in the room for the first time with a supervisee, with the assumption that the supervisee has within him or her the beginnings of an excellent therapist. I see as my job the act of sponsoring the development of this immanent excellent therapist. This may seem like a daunting task. However, it describes a set of possibilities that allow supervision to move beyond the usual metaphors of teaching and skills training. Anderson (1997) describes her model of psychotherapy (Collaborative Language Systems) as “a way of being versus a system for doing”

(p. 98). Engaging in the practices of sponsorship also takes psychotherapy beyond a “system of doing,” and constitutes a “way of being” in therapy. Similarly, applying sponsorship to supervision means that supervision also becomes “a way of being” in supervision, rather than a “system of doing” in supervision. So, as a supervisor, I strive not only to talk Self-Relations, but to live and enact Self-Relations as well. Primary in this is the orientation that in any experience, “something is waking up” which calls out for sponsorship to help bring it from its potential into being as a part of the supervisee’s development as a therapist.

Basic Concepts in Self-Relations Applied to Supervision

Premises

Premise 1: A Tender Soft Spot exists within each person.

This premise exists to remind us that each person has inherent worth and value. In addition, this premise reminds us that there is always something to reach in another. Something unique, something of value. Supervision is a relationship that can easily be affected by adversarial forces. Driven by the demands of evaluation if nothing else, supervisors and supervisees can develop adversarial relationships with each other. Supervisory relationships can also develop in which the supervisor and

supervisee together become adversarial toward the client. This premise positions us to avoid adversarial relationships in supervision. Indeed, this premise suggests moving beyond simply not being adversarial. To borrow a phrase from aikido, "Everyone in this world is trying to get somewhere, your job is to help them get there." It means looking for movement and possibilities in the actions of our trainee therapists, and helping transform them into well-integrated and skilled ways of being therapeutic. In Self-Relations supervision, we begin by orienting to various "tender soft spots" in the room. This begins with the supervisor's sense of his/her own "tender soft spot" (I have a place inside me that can be used to connect in this supervisory conversation). The supervisor must also sense and connect to the "tender soft spot" in their supervisee (the supervisee has a place inside of them that can connect as well). Finally, it is important to develop the same type of experiential connection with the people not even in the room (in this connection, we can also make room for the unique presences of all the others we are in relationship with). Most notably, this will include various clients. However, this might also include others in various roles, such as the supervisor's supervisor, colleagues, collaterals of the clients, and so on.

Premise 2: Life moves through you, except when it doesn't.

Premise 3: Life is great, but sometimes it hurts like hell.

These premises are those that instruct us to be open to the various gifts life has to bring us. Supervision is no exception. Like other relationships, supervisory relationships can become dominated by fixed forms and analytical understandings. Such static relational entities render supervision cold and static itself. In Self-Relations, supervision is a living process and the supervisory relationship a living presence.

Premise 4: There are two of you: relationship is the basic unit.

In Self-Relations, we speak of relationship as the basic unit. Self-Relations emphasizes relationships and relational knowing. In Self-Relations, it ends up being a relationship of relationships. Even within the "self," we are each made up of relationships (e.g., the relationships between cognitive self, experiential self, and neglected self). In supervision, each participant brings to

the process these various inner relationships. In addition, supervision is itself a relationship. Like all relationships, the whole is more than the sum of the parts. A living relational presence is created by the relational selves of the participants, both inside and outside of the room.

Premise 5: An intelligence greater than you exists in the world.

In Self-Relations, relational knowing and relational intelligence are not limited to the relational selves of the active participants in the process. By opening ourselves up to experiential knowing, we have some access to knowledge and ways of knowing that go beyond what each individual brings to the process. We become open to being informed by the process. We give up trying to use cognitive understandings to dominate or control therapy and supervision. We allow ourselves to be informed by feelings, impressions, images, and other relational phenomena. By doing this, we tap into the collective knowledge of a larger, universal whole. In supervision, this means that when we are experientially sensitive, we can sense the knowledge base of generations of psychotherapists, supervisors, therapists, philosophers, artists, story tellers, historians, clients, and so on, beyond the supervisory relationship and its immediate surroundings.

Premise 6: Your path is yours alone: You are an incurable deviant.

We are each unique. Each supervisee, each supervisor, each supervisory relationship. In Self-Relations, we seek to honor and respect that each supervisor has his or her own unique way of doing supervision. We also seek to honor that each therapist-in-training has his or her own unique way of doing therapy. In addition, each supervisory relationship creates its own unique process of supervision. This means, among other things, that supervisors do not insist that supervisees do things the way the supervisor does. The supervisee does not try to be like the supervisor. This is not to say that modeling as a form of learning does not occur. It does. Rather, it means that ultimately, it is up to the supervisee to move beyond those initial steps to allow his or her own form of therapy and supervision to occur. Finally, in Self-Relations, we avoid trying to replicate one supervisory relationship (even a very positive one) in another.

Aesthetics

How one knows what to do is a crucial question facing any model of psychotherapy or supervision. Most models of psychotherapy and supervision argue that our clinical and supervisory decisions should be guided by the use of particular theories, models, conceptualizations, and so on. In these models, one's actions are evaluated in this framework. Was the right conceptualization or theory selected? Was the appropriate intervention applied? In Self-Relations, we see those common ways of decision making in the mental health field to be limited. Instead, in Self-Relations, we rely in addition, and perhaps primarily, on another way of knowing and deciding what to do. I choose to describe this as an *aesthetic* way of working. This is the way of knowing we use when we create or perceive art. When perceiving art, we do not typically use theories or models to evaluate it. It doesn't even make sense to use theory or data to decide if it is beautiful. It is simply how we respond. Similarly, when creating something artistically, we do not decide what to do next based on data, theory, and conceptualization. Instead, it is a felt process. We experience ourselves as being guided by something both inside and outside of us that leads us to do what we do. In Self-Relations therapy, we emphasize this aesthetic way of deciding what to do next in therapy. Similarly, in Self-Relations supervision, we are also guided by a felt sense of our work, whether it is used to consider a supervisee's work as a therapist, or to use the supervision process to help foster someone's professional growth.

The Relational Field

Self-Relations utilizes the concept of the *relational field* (Gilligan, 1997). Understanding this concept is crucial to understanding Self-Relations applications, including application to supervision.

The relational field can be described in many ways. It can be thought of as an energized space that exists between two living presences. In Self-Relations, a key concept is that *Self is a relationship* (Gilligan, 1997). That is, Self is a relationship between selves. In Self-Relations, we think of Self as containing multiple presences. Some of these are named and will be discussed later (e.g.,

Cognitive Self, Experiential Self). A relational field exists in the space that contains and connects these multiple selves. In addition, relational fields exist between any two (or more) people in relationship. These include therapist and client, or supervisor and supervisee. The concept of the relational field is important, because in Self-Relations, we think of the relational field as providing intersubjectivity. In Self-Relations, it is believed that both parties to a relational field contribute to, and connect through, the relational field. Therefore, the relational field is a field of consciousness, which is at least to some degree, shared. Working within the Self-Relations model, these concepts mean that subjective experiences of the therapist, or supervisor, are believed to be influenced by the relational field, which in turn is influenced by the other. In essence, subjective (i.e., intersubjective) experiences are seen as being part of communication. In essence, we utilize the relational field as another way of "speaking" or connecting (albeit non-verbally).

In supervision, the concept of the relational field is primarily important in two areas. It is: (a) one way in which communication passes between supervisor and supervisee, and (b) it is a source of information regarding clients being seen by the supervisee. In the latter situation, we might think of the clients being seen by the supervisee as being "virtually present" in the supervision relationship by virtue of their relationship with the supervisee as their therapist (this will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter).

I don't think the implications of this model can be overstated. Operating from, and utilizing a relational-field-based intelligence, we understand our subjective (i.e., intersubjective) experience as a form of communication. It may be a communication between us and a client (even if it's a supervisee's client). It might be a communication from some of the other "selves" within us (or within another). I frequently am asked by trainees how to "handle" or how to eliminate certain experiences that are giving them problems in supervision. Examples might be boredom, anger, frustration, and so on. Instead of trying to analyze, explain away, or eliminate these sensations as some type of interference, we honor and accept these sensations as important messages that need to be attended to somehow in the overall field of things in psychotherapy and supervision. I frequently

encourage trainees to imagine that the client is having essentially the same experience, probably even more powerfully. With that simple shift, these experiences that are frequently viewed as problematic by psychotherapy trainees can be readily introduced into the therapy (or supervision) conversation. These experiences, once viewed as “problems,” may then be seen as powerful channels of connectivity. One trainee I worked with talked about her experience of supervision in this model. In part, she said: “When my own clients would frustrate me, you wouldn’t get negative with me. Sometimes you started to take on the clients’ perspective. The fuzzy lines between you as a supervisor and you as my client made it experiential. Your taking multiple perspectives allowed me to do the same.” Reflecting on this from a position as a supervisor, I remember times when a young trainee would bring up a client, or a session, or a situation in supervision they found frustrating. Taking multiple perspectives as a supervisor, I could sense experientially their frustration, and connect with them and their frustration. Simultaneously, I could sense in the relational field the client’s experience of things. Perhaps they were frustrated too. Perhaps a key part of their story or situation was not obviously being understood. Understanding and utilizing a field-based intelligence allowed me as a supervisor to speak to all of these multiple “truths” more or less simultaneously. Doing so, it more completely matches the trainee’s experience of things in a way that facilitates more open connections between some of the “selves” in their experience. It opens up and broadens their own relational connections. It helps them feel more relaxed and in tune both with themselves and their client. As this young student said, it “made it experiential.”

The “Selves” of Self-Relations

The Cognitive Self

The cognitive self is the self most people would probably initially name as representing their view of themselves. It is an acquired sense of self based in linguistic descriptions. It would include descriptions like “I am a therapist,” “I am a supervisor,” “I am a husband,” and so on. The cognitive self “knows” and relates to the world primarily through such things as logic, cognition,

and generally through linguistic mediation (i.e., thinking in words & language). Most people would experience it as localized “in the head,” and we commonly think of it in those terms. In supervision, this is the self and the way of knowing that most conventional models of therapy and supervision would endorse and suggest that you utilize. The cognitive self is the one that figures out the diagnosis. Makes the case conceptualization. It is the self that searches back through one’s inner library of facts, research findings, theoretical perspectives on treating this diagnosis, etc. It makes and evaluates treatment plans. It assesses basic counseling skills in supervisees, etc.

The Experiential Self

The experiential (or somatic) self is the self that is just experienced. It is the sense of self that allows you to just know that you exist. It is the sense of self that goes beyond all linguistic descriptions. If asked to describe yourself, you could begin to make an exhaustive list of all those various social identities you have (e.g., “I am a therapist, citizen, scientist,” etc.). Eventually, you could generate a list of thousands of things before you just ran out of things to say. One could then ask you if that whole list was who you are? You would probably reply, “no.” There’s some other, ineffable but unmistakable sense of your own personal presence and uniqueness as a human being. *This* is the experiential self. If experienced as localized, it is usually localized somewhere in the body. Most typically in the “gut” or “belly.”

With regard to therapy and supervision, you might hear people talk about utilizing this self by referring to “intuition,” or using metaphors like “in my gut I feel . . .” However, in general, this “self” is less valued in therapy and supervision than the cognitive self.

In Self-Relations, the contributions of the experiential self are seen as crucial. Not more crucial than the cognitive self, rather as equally important. However, since most models of psychotherapy and supervision privilege cognitive knowing, the degree to which experiential knowing is emphasized in Self-Relations may be very heavy in comparison. There are several ways in which this is important in supervision. Initially, it is important for a supervisor to utilize his or her own experiential self as a way of connecting to the supervisee, the

relational field of supervision, and indirectly (via the relational field of supervision), to clients being seen by the supervisee (as illustrated at the end of the "Relational Field" section of this chapter). Perhaps most important, however, is the use of supervision to foster in the supervisee a living connection to their own experiential self, both within and outside of the conversations of supervision. One trainee described how Self-Relations supervision helped her to "be aware of and using as fully as possible myself as a therapeutic tool. It heightened my awareness of how I am and can be with a client." This demands that the supervision process be predominantly a process of genuine, human interactions between the participants, rather than a role-defined, role-bound, purely professional interchange.

Relationships Between Differences

Doing therapy or supervision from a Self-Relations perspective requires that therapists and supervisors take a particular orientation to handling relationships between differences (Gilligan, 1998). For those familiar with the work of Milton Erickson, this approach is akin to Erickson's utilization principle. Erickson was famous for creatively utilizing a client's symptoms for therapeutic benefit. Or, as Gilligan (1987) used to say, "do their symptoms better" (p. 141). Many models of psychotherapy have imbedded in them the idea that symptoms are to be controlled, reduced, or eliminated. In contrast, in Self-Relations, symptoms are seen as places that mark emerging growth and change. We orient to symptoms with an awareness that something is trying to "wake up" in the person with whom we are working.

Similarly, in supervision, we hear discussion of "resistance" in the supervisee. Supervisees are commonly evaluated on the basis of whether they are "open to supervision." Supervisees are also evaluated on the basis of determining the nature and extent of any "problems" they have as trainee therapists. As in many traditional models of psychotherapy, the conventional view is that these "problems" are to be reduced, eliminated, or at least changed. In a shift in orientation similar to that in psychotherapy, in Self-Relations supervision, we orient to the supervisee with a question of: "What skills are trying to take shape?" in this supervisee. This is the assumption that each and every supervisee is trying, to the

best of their ability in the moment, to learn and display their skills as developing psychotherapists. This means that "resistance to supervision," or "problems" as a therapist that the trainee is demonstrating are both attempts at growth and signs of growth. The greatest challenge of supervision in Self-Relations is to *sponsor* these differences so that supervisees are transformed into more of themselves, rather than someone else. In Self-Relations supervision, we assume that each element of "resistance," each "problem" is both an aspect of their self-as-a-therapist trying to take shape, and at least a seedling of some therapeutic skill or ability.

The Skills and Principles of Sponsorship

Connecting with Self

In Self-Relations, it is important that the therapist and the supervisor develop practices that foster connections with self. These practices foster a strong connection with experiential fields, both within and outside of the supervisor and supervisee. Any practice which enhances this connection to self may be utilized. Gilligan (1997) devotes an entire chapter (chapter 4) to discussion of these practices. In Self-Relations supervision, these practices can be addressed in several ways. Certainly, use of practices of mind-body coordination should be discussed as an important aspect of both therapy and supervision. As a supervisor, I commonly discuss the importance of these practices for self renewal as well as ways to help make sure I am fully present in the moment in therapy or supervision. In addition, supervisors can also directly teach any practices they know well enough to their supervisees. Perhaps most importantly, however, supervisors can facilitate the awareness and development of these methods in their supervisees. A supervisor can discuss his or her own practices of connecting with himself or herself. I am commonly asked by supervisees how I accomplish this. I talk about using simple techniques of centering and the importance of being centered when speaking in therapy. I point to some of the poetry that is taped to the wall in front of my desk. I talk about not being rushed even if running late. Usually they start nodding in recognition. Then I think it's important to ask about and discuss ways they have found that resonate with them to be in tune with

themselves. The importance of these practices can be demonstrated and taught in-process in supervision as the supervisor uses his/her awareness of the self in the process of supervision. One example of this came early in the course of supervision with one supervisee. She had come to supervision frustrated with a particular client with whom she was trying everything she could think of from her cognitive-behavioral toolbox. As I coached her in trying to be open to the process and using it more, she became even more frustrated. She doubted she could do it. This happened right near the end of a supervision session and she left frustrated. Because I felt uncomfortable with the session ending the way it did, I went to her office later to talk about it. This simple act ended up doing a great deal for this supervisory relationship and the professional development of this young trainee therapist. It demonstrated talking about your own experience (one of the things I had been coaching her on). It communicated to her that she and her perspective were valuable. And it conveyed hope that as her supervisor, I didn't either give up on her or pathologize her "failure."

Connecting with the Other

No less important than the ability to connect with oneself is the ability to connect with the other. This skill includes deep listening, responsive silence, and receptivity. In supervision, the central focus is fostering a connection between supervisor and supervisee. This makes supervision something other than a hierarchical teaching relationship. As discussed by Anderson and Swim (1995), supervision becomes a collaborative and mutual learning experience. A "being-with," rather than a "system of doing." As one supervisee put it, the connection becomes "human being to human being." This is so important in Self-Relations supervision because of the central place the relationship has in Self-Relations therapy. The supervisory relationship is the place where modeling and experiential learning about the therapeutic relationship takes place for the supervisee. So, using a Self-Relations model of supervision, we work to forge a relationship to our supervisees that is essentially the same as a therapy relationship. The relationship is a primary source of learning. The supervisory relationship

differs from a therapy relationship primarily in intention. In supervision, our intention is to sponsor the developing therapist. This overlaps a great deal with sponsoring the emerging self of a client in therapy. However, supervision concentrates on those aspects of self relevant to the performance of psychotherapy.

Curiosity

Curiosity is a key skill in Self-Relations supervision. Being curious in supervision is what allows states of openness and interest to develop. Sometimes, in Self-Relations, this open, curious spirit is directed to certain "orienting questions" such as: "Who is this person?"; "What transformation is taking place, what is trying to 'wake up' or emerge?" In any model, the particular questions of interest and orientation brought by therapist or supervisor to the system shape what emerges in the conversation (Rosenblatt, 1994). In Self-Relations supervision, curiosity serves in part to shape the conversation toward sponsorship of openness, possibilities, and uniqueness. As previously discussed, curiosity as a skill is important both because it helps sponsor the emerging therapist in a supervisee; and because it helps imbue the developing therapist in supervision with the same sense of curiosity they can then carry with them into their own work as a developing therapist. One trainee described this by saying: "There was something very innocent about it — not being driven by a judgment already formed — that was a fun part of it." Curiosity is part of being open psychologically to the process and allowing oneself to be guided by it. As one trainee described it: "It was about both of us being open to whatever was going to happen in there that day" (talking about our supervision sessions).

Receptivity

The skill of receptivity in therapy and supervision can present a significant challenge to a therapist or supervisor. In conventional and purposefully hierarchical models of supervision or therapy, one's receptivity as a therapist or supervisor has to be limited. It becomes important to maintain one's position of expertise and superiority. In Self-Relations, the principle of receptivity

requires that the therapist or supervisor remain open to the process. In therapy, this means being open to be affected in a human way by the client. In supervision, this means being open and receptive to the process of supervision and humanly open to the supervisee. Openness to process in supervision means that the supervisor must be open and receptive to their own experience in the supervision process. This includes sensitivity to feelings, ideas, images, etc. that appear in the supervisor's consciousness during supervision. In *Self-Relations*, these are considered vital sources of information. Whenever possible, they are brought into the conversation. These are then utilized as a way to effectively shape both the general experience of supervision, as well as the client-related consciousness that in turn extends itself back into the supervisee's work as a therapist. This brings a greater level of professional intimacy into the supervisory relationship than might be present with many other models of therapy and supervision. Because of that, it is incumbent on the supervisor (in accordance with the first principle of Sponsorship — Connecting with Self) to know himself or herself well. Nothing can really eliminate the possibility that a supervisor's own "neglected selves" (Gilligan, 1997) will become a factor in supervision. However, with self awareness, loving attention, and willingness to be vulnerable, the presence of the supervisor's own neglected selves in supervision can be a positive learning experience for all concerned. As with all the skills of sponsorship, the practice of receptivity allows and encourages the same in our supervisees.

Touching and Holding an Experiential Truth

Touching and holding an experiential truth is the direct antidote to the alienation of experience. In both psychotherapy and supervision, we see people alienate themselves from part of their experience because it fails to fit into some model or narrative that describes their understanding of themselves, others, psychotherapy, etc. In supervision this is most evident when a supervisee dismisses part of their experience because they have been taught to orient to psychotherapy in a particular way. Generally, these are theoretically and/or scientifically bound ideas that are understood and utilized in and by the cognitive self. While these are clearly valid and

important aspects of understanding in psychotherapy, like all ways of understanding, they have limits. As Suzuki (1970) states: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few." Inexperienced psychotherapists are generally full and practically buzzing, sometimes to the point of being overwhelmed, by experiential knowledge. They bring these presences to supervision. Frequently, they are hidden or withdrawn because the supervisee imagines that they are evidence of their inexperience and lack of knowledge.

While such experiences truly are related to inexperience and lack of knowledge, they are not problematic as often imagined by supervisees. They usually contain important insights and information. An example of this was provided in a recent supervision session. A supervisee was talking about her struggles with a particular client, and complained that she (the supervisee) "felt incompetent," and "(didn't) know how to help her (the client)." I asked this supervisee to consider that this was an important idea representing an important truth about her client and the situation she was in. This conversation allowed us to explore ways in which the supervisee was holding ideas that she "should" have been able to help the client, but realistically, could not do. We were able to talk about ways to help the client assume more responsibility for their own direction and hopefully develop a better sense of purpose and flow in the therapy.

In this example, this supervisee, like most supervisees, had learned not to trust these messages inherently. An important role for a supervisor is to sense and hold these experiential truths. The supervisor learns to be sensitive to the presence of these truths. We "touch" and "hold" them by bringing them into awareness, bringing them into conversation, and supporting the art of utilizing experiential knowledge. In my own practice as a supervisor, one of my favorite questions in dialogue with a supervisee is: "What would you say if you weren't a therapist?" Most of the time, the responses of trainee therapists need little or no alteration to make it a positive therapeutic response to their client. Frequently, it proves even more powerful and effective than the therapy-talk they felt they could engage in with the client. Frequently, they're able to relax and nod when they realize the power of their own ideas and sensibilities.

Learning to trust these is a major part of developing as a therapist.

Resonant Naming

Resonant naming is a companion skill to touching and holding experiential truths. Resonant naming is the art of putting words to things experienced. To learn the art of resonant naming, one learns to be open to experiential truths; and learns the art of opening the mind and allowing a name to form, rather than engaging in a conscious search for the "proper" name.

In the process of supervision, trainees can learn this experientially when their supervisor resonantly names some of the supervisee's experience. They then learn experientially how this feels. This releases tension and again allows the flow of energy, open dialogue, and fluid conversation to progress. This can have the effect of blurring some of the boundaries between the practices of supervision and psychotherapy. In my own practice as a supervisor, I am generally quite careful to routinely limit the practice of resonant naming to those aspects of the experience that are related to the supervisee's clinical work and their development as a therapist. Obviously, with this practice, there can and often will be overlap between the domains of psychotherapy and supervision. I see this as an important experiential lesson for the supervisee throughout their professional development. They realize that this type of overlap occurs. It can help increase their awareness of where it is likely to occur, and provides some excellent professional development opportunities (i.e., opportunities to work through some of the aspects of their lives that interfere with their professional development).

While brief and occasional forays into "doing therapy" can be both an ethical and helpful part of good supervision, the supervisor needs to be very aware, clear, and explicit with both themselves and the supervisee that at some point where the primary concern shifts from the supervisee's professional development to their mental health, one enters territory properly reserved for work with a therapist other than the supervisor.

Supervisees also can be led stepwise through the process of learning to resonantly name experiences of their clients in psychotherapy. They can be taught to

feel for the presence of experiential "eddies." That is, places where the flow of conversation and energy is locked up and/or "circling." This happens when the mind cannot perceive it well enough to let it go and move beyond being stuck. Resonant naming allows the receiver to recognize it, find a place for it in their mind, and then move on to the next thing. Thus, resonant naming is a key skill of sponsorship as it facilitates the continued unfolding and generation of experience.

For example, one supervisee came in feeling somewhat overwhelmed after a session with a family. In describing the situation, she said she felt like the family wanted her to become "a sister, mother, grandfather, brother, teacher, friend, and counselor." As a young woman, she found the call to take on these multiple roles, some of which were vastly outside her base of experience, to be, in her words, "overwhelming." During this supervisory conversation, I suggested that the family was simply asking her to function as a "reflecting team" (Andersen, 1996) for them. As this was a way of understanding readily known by the supervisee, it allowed her to relax and understand the family's request in a way she could address it. She reported that she kept this concept in her mind when returning to her clients, and now their conversations frequently include questioning about what their grandfather, sister, brother, etc. might say.

In this case, the use of the term "reflecting team" proved to be a *resonant naming* for this supervisee. It allowed her to shift experience from being locked-up and paralyzed, to fluid and open. By learning this experientially in supervision, trainees learn experientially, in process, how to find this skill in themselves, and utilize it with their clients.

Letting Go

Self-Relations psychotherapy depends on multiple descriptions. In Self-Relations, the system, including the client and his or her environment and life experience are in constant motion and constant relationship. For there to be the experience of life moving through the person, and the person moving through life — there must be letting go. In the supervision process, this principle applies to the flow of the dialogue between supervisor and supervisee. It becomes part of the continual

rhythm of interaction, which includes opening, sensing, receiving, holding, and releasing (then repeating the sequence). When this breathing-like sequence is utilized in supervision, supervisees learn this sequence experientially. This facilitates their ability to see the clinical implications of this process in psychotherapy interactions, along with entraining the supervisee in this very dialogical process.

Noticing Exceptions, Differences, and Other Complementary Truths

This skill and principle describes a major cognitive and experiential shift associated with postmodern psychotherapies. This skill is perhaps epitomized by the basic techniques and orientation of Solution Focused therapy (de Shazer et al., 1986) of identifying and facilitating the situation in which life is not a problem, and the person feels competent and confident to successfully handle their situation. Similarly, it is represented in Narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990) with the search for "unique outcomes" not dominated by problems.

This skill is utilized in the same way in Self-Relations as in these other approaches. In supervision this skill and principle is utilized in two ways. First, it becomes an orientation the trainee is trained in. This principle can be explicitly discussed and contrasted to models of psychotherapy that focus on diagnosis and reduction/removal of symptoms. Usually, it is readily apparent to trainees that this approach *feels* better to both therapist and client. Application of this principle is also illustrated as the supervisor invites and guides the supervision conversation in this way. Emphasis is placed on identifying and discussing supervisee strengths and resources. Secondly, this principle is used directly in the sponsorship of the therapeutic skills of the trainee. Throughout the professional development process of the trainee, there will emerge certain issues, concerns, etc. that will illustrate and represent "problems" in the trainee's abilities as a therapist. Psychotherapy trainees will commonly become focused and burdened by these problems similar to the way in which psychotherapy clients become burdened by theirs. In supervision, this principle of sponsorship holds that exceptions, differences, and other complementary truths exist for the

trainee's "problems" as a therapist in the same way they exist for psychotherapy clients. The supervisor cultivates and utilizes these skills to identify exceptional moments, demonstration of skills, and other "gems" in their supervisee and helps the supervisee to see, claim, and utilize the skills and knowledge represented in these moments of exception and difference. Hopefully, the trainee comes to identify himself or herself as a growing professional, and not simply a beginning therapist who doesn't "have it" yet.

This also helps the whole supervision process become a living context of growth, one which becomes a positive relational field that imbues its participants with appreciation of their competencies and differences and vice versa. In one example of this, I once worked with a trainee who had previously been a practicing attorney. As one might imagine, she was highly skilled verbally. She was also acutely aware of how very different her role was as a therapist compared to being an attorney eliciting and evaluating testimony. She was also sensitive to the difference, as the experience of using her verbal skills in legal circumstances was part of what motivated her change of careers. In this process, she went from someone who could be verbally highly aggressive, to someone who experienced a lot of discomfort with *therapeutic* confrontation. She came to view her sensitivity and irritation to inconsistency in her clients as a problem to be overcome and representative of a larger issue for her as a therapist (why couldn't she just see it *their way*?).

We discussed this in supervision and began to identify and discuss this "problem" (her irritation at some inconsistencies in her clients) as representative of a clinical strength (what could be described as a "well-developed bullshit detector"). Similarly, we developed and discussed a broader understanding of how to utilize confrontation and even aggressiveness in a therapeutic way. In sum, she recognized that she did not have to give up all of her background, skill, and understanding as an attorney to make the transition into being a good therapist.

Identifying and Challenging Self-Negating Processes

This skill and principle is utilized in supervision in a way similar to that just described for exceptions, dif-

ferences, and complementarities. First, it is a skill and principle that can be explicitly taught through discussion, example, etc. Secondly, it is taught experientially in-process as the supervisor and supervisee discuss the client and the therapy. Finally, the supervisor is called upon to identify and challenge self-negating processes (e.g., "aliens") in the developing therapist. One trainee I was working with was concerned about being "ineffective." We were able to talk about this, understanding it in part as a dialogue between her and her "aliens." While not being formally trained in Self-Relations, this particular trainee knew from her own experience how these alienating and self-negating processes knocked her off center. She commented that our conversations were "coming back to what's important," and said it "centered me — we took it and learned from it and went on." Held in proper perspective and context, even these self-negating processes can facilitate learning. The same trainee described how these supervisory conversations helped her become "comfortable not being a finished product, kept me and got me excited about growing." Held in a growthful relational field, even discussion of the problems one is having as a therapist sponsors growth.

Seeing the Relational Field that Holds the Different Identities

Holding Multiple Truths Simultaneously

Speaking to Multiple Truths Simultaneously

These three skills and principles are discussed together, as they can be said to describe different aspects of the same fundamental skill/principle. These skills and principles describe and represent the abilities to experience and utilize multiple truths about the client or supervisee simultaneously. While discussing supervision, one trainee said: "Truth didn't matter, there was room enough for everyone's reality. We didn't have to sit there and decide who was right. We were honoring of how we all were experiencing it." As was discussed above, in Self-Relations we seek to identify and sponsor exceptions, differences, and complementary truths. These exist as differences in comparison to problem-dominated "truths" held by clients, trainees, and others.

However, in Self-Relations, these additional truths are not seen in a hierarchy as better truths than the "problem" truths, only as a complement or "balance" to them. Therefore, the therapist, supervisor, and ultimately the client are called upon to try to hold these truths simultaneously. That is, to realize that their life space includes the problems, and the exceptions, and the differences, and the complements, and so on. The skill of speaking to these multiple truths is used to help make these multiple truths all live in the minds and conversation of those in dialogue (whether this represents the therapy dialogue between client and therapist, or the supervision dialogue between supervisor and supervisee). Finally, sensing the field that holds the different identities asks the therapist and supervisor to sense (and convey verbally and non-verbally) that all these truths are connected in a single relational field as part of a larger whole. As discussed for the last two skills and principles, these are: (a) explicitly discussed or taught in supervision, (b) utilized in discussion to teach by example, and (c) used in the supervision process to assist with the professional development of the trainee in a way similar to that described for helping clients in psychotherapy.

Knowing When and How to Push the Reset Button

Finally, this is the skill and principle that teaches us to abandon what we are doing and start over if it's not working. This is particularly important in relatively inexperienced trainees, because they will frequently have a tendency to persist trying an approach or technique that is not working, often believing it's not working because of their inexperience or lack of skill. As discussed with the last several skills and principles, this one is: (a) explicitly discussed and taught in supervision, (b) utilized in discussion to teach by example, and (c) used in the supervision process and roadblocks and impasses are encountered.

The Process of Supervision: Life in Fields of Fields

The Supervisory Relationship

In Self-Relations supervision, the supervisory relationship is critical and forms a vital space in which the

supervision is generated. While there is no question that psychotherapy trainees have things to learn to allow them to become competent professional therapists, supervision from a Self-Relations perspective is much more than teaching or training and demands a relationship that is up to the task.

Gilligan (1997) advises therapists that if they do not feel comfortable being fully present and human with their clients, then Self-Relations is not a model they should use. Doing supervision from a Self-Relations model is equally, and perhaps more, demanding. To use a Self-Relations model, supervisors must be psychologically open to the process of supervision. As described by Anderson and Swim (1995), it becomes a collaborative, mutual-learning relationship, in which both supervisee and supervisor are open to learning from and being affected by the other. One trainee described it this way: "It was about that thing we created together. . . . it was much more about it being equal and that's important to the process." At the same time, competent supervision from a Self-Relations perspective recognizes that the relationship is inherently hierarchical. At the same time, the relationship is one of mutual learning and collaboration, and of teaching and learning. Fundamentally, however, supervision is a shared relational field inviting professional growth and development for all the participants. It is interesting to note that the Japanese word *sensei*, which is usually translated as "teacher," actually means "one who was born (on this path) before." This concept represents an interesting blend of hierarchy and equality. This concept recognizes that "one who was born before" has knowledge that someone following on the same path may benefit from. At the same time, it recognizes that the supervisor (the *sensei*) and supervisee are not all that different. It is only that one was "born (on this path) before." In Japanese culture, there is great reverence for the *sensei's* of life. At the same time, *senseis* properly understand their role as fellow learners or travelers. They are on the same path, only a little further ahead. A *sensei* also has respect for the student, knowing from their own experience the rigors of the pathway. Both recognize with humility that they are all part of something much larger, the path itself.

Who Is this Supervisee Anyway?

In Self-Relations psychotherapy, one question the therapist senses and holds while engaging in therapy is the questions of "Who is this client anyway?" This question is designed to orient the therapist to believing in, looking for, and sponsoring the development of a whole person that is somehow indicated and present in the struggles our clients bring to the therapy process. A similar question is posed in supervision. Therapists each develop unique styles of working. At some point we cease doing Cognitive-Behavioral therapy, or Solution-Focused therapy, or even Self-Relations therapy, and start to do Steve therapy, or Leonard therapy, etc. In Self-Relations supervision, it is assumed that these highly unique elements of style are present from the very beginning. The very idea of sponsorship in supervision is that through the principles and skills of sponsorship, these unique but raw ("*fressen*"; Gilligan, 1999) elements of therapeutic style mature (they become "*essen*"; Gilligan, 1999).

In therapy, one of the great challenges this position presents us with is the idea that a client does not have to fundamentally change. Rather, their therapeutic task is to become *more of who they are*. This position is also at the core of doing supervision from a Self-Relations perspective. That is, the purpose of the joint action (Shotter, 1995) of supervision is to identify who our trainee is as a therapist, and sponsor or "midwife" this presence, providing them with the necessary ingredients for it to mature and develop. One challenge faced by us as supervisors using this model is that even though some teaching by example and emulation of the supervisor by the supervisee is inevitable, our goal is not to create another therapist in our own image, but rather to help them formulate theirs.

Awakening Therapeutic Presence

Milton Erickson was reputed to have once said: "You have an unconscious mind, and I have an unconscious mind, therefore trance is inevitable." With this quote, Erickson was speaking to the inevitability of therapeutic value in relationships where unconscious minds are allowed to flourish.

Perhaps an analogous idea is present in Self-Rela-

tions. What I have termed "therapeutic presence" is the ability in a therapist to position him/herself in relation to the client such that the client's abilities to move forward in his searching and personal development are supported and sponsored. This position makes several demands on a therapist. The therapist must believe that clients' own growth processes are present and can be trusted. The therapist relaxes the egoic control she has over how therapy is conducted while still maintaining a sustained and well-integrated knowledge of how psychotherapy is conducted. Through this dual process, therapists have to trust that they will get the information they need through this process of openness to the relational field. In a way, this can be described as an act of faith on the part of the therapist. Faith that the answers the client seeks are in the client, and that they will emerge when properly sponsored in the therapeutic conversation. In *Self-Relations*, the presence of such a position is even more important, because in the intersubjective world of the relational field, it is assumed that the therapist's attitudes, beliefs, etc. are transmitted at a felt level into the field, affecting both him/herself and the client.

What is involved in preparing a therapist to take such a position? In working with psychotherapy trainees in supervision, I have often told them (with a little "Irish twinkle"), that one of the most important purposes of clinical supervision is to undo the effects of our graduate education as therapists. In the normal course of graduate education, psychotherapy trainees are taking classes, taking tests, preparing papers, etc. In most of these situations, they will be evaluated on whether they can intellectually produce the "right" answer. It is no surprise, then, that when they begin clinical training, therapists frequently take the same basic orientation into their beginning work as psychotherapists. If they are fortunate, they learn quickly how limited this approach to psychotherapy really is.

Operating from this graduate-school-constructed position as a therapist requires one to try to guide the process with intellectual knowledge. While the intellectual knowledge from graduate coursework helps in the important task of understanding human behavior abstractly, anyone doing therapy any length of time at all has learned how little this helps in the moment-to-

moment process of therapeutic conversation. Fortunately, most psychotherapy trainees are fully cognizant of this and realize that they really don't know very much at all about how to utilize their abstract knowledge to help clients. Unfortunately, a common response to this state of affairs in a psychotherapy trainee is a state of desperation and neuromuscular lock. The trainee becomes tense, concerned, and desperately searches through their inner and outer resources for the necessary knowledge. This position frequently takes things from bad to worse. As our trainees search unsuccessfully for the "right" answers, they frequently find themselves becoming more uptight, pessimistic, and fearful. In some cases, they may be tempted to blame clients and construct such notions as "resistance" or believe their clients "not ready for therapy," etc.

The challenge that supervisors face in this process is, in essence, to sponsor the ability to sponsor. Or stated otherwise, to sponsor the therapeutic presence of the psychotherapy trainee. Working as a clinical supervisor, one begins to notice similarities between the ways in which psychotherapy trainees disable themselves as therapists, and the ways in which psychotherapy clients relate to themselves and the problems they face. Just as clients develop ideas about the situations and "problems" they face in their living that cause them to alienate themselves and make "enemies" out of their experience (Gilligan, 1998), psychotherapy trainees develop "problems" in relation to their clients and other aspects of their own development.

As previously described, *Self-Relations* therapy demands that the therapist begin by taking certain "leaps of faith" in working with clients. These "leaps" include faith in the presence of abilities in the client to solve their problems, and trust in the relational field to bring to the therapy what it needs to progress. Sponsorship, or awakening of therapeutic presence in a psychotherapy trainee, begins with a similar position. As a supervisor, I frequently identify situations where I can recognize how a supervisee is creating a therapeutic bind for themselves. While an abstract discussion of this sometimes is helpful in inducing behavior change in the trainee, it is better facilitated by a more experiential learning process. The process of identifying, developing, and utilizing those experiential learning moments in

supervision is greatly facilitated if the supervisor can relax into the relational field of the supervision experience. In so doing, the supervisor's skills of sponsorship are brought to bear on the relationship with the supervisee. The supervisor begins to look at the "symptoms" the psychotherapy trainee is experiencing as representative of the "growth edge" they are experiencing for themselves as a therapist. The supervisor takes a "leap of faith" by believing that fostering an open relational conversation about these "problems" or "symptoms" our trainee is experiencing will advance their development as a therapist. When allowed to experience and talk about their problems as a psychotherapist in such a relational field, the psychotherapy trainee begins to re-view and re-visit their experience as a therapist, whether their concern is generalized or client-situation-specific. In this relational field, problems dissolve (Anderson, 1997).

In talking about our past experience of supervision, one therapist I supervised recalled how certain situations would "frustrate me and cause me to get the DSM and start talking axis II." She said: "You would ask questions about how that was important and why I was going there. I ended up learning about clients and learning about myself, because you would ask me not to just look at (the client) but also look at myself." In this situation, one could say that this trainee therapist experienced "frustration" as a "symptom." She wanted to eliminate this frustration. We could have engaged in an intellectual discussion of "countertransference." Instead, we utilized the supervision process to help her learn from her frustration by understanding it experientially (and not only intellectually). Specifically, to go from trying to eliminate "frustration" to developing an appreciation of what can be gained from the experience of having a "problem" when one understands that "the symptom is the solution" (in therapy and in supervision).

Resonance and Perturbations

What Are We Feeling in the Fields?

What happens when we are engaged in relational or experiential knowing? Consider a common type of conversation in psychotherapy supervision. Supervisor and supervisee are sitting around in a conversation about psychotherapy. Maybe it's a discussion of a specific case.

Maybe it's a discussion of a general issue. Maybe it's a conversation about a supervisee's process or some general concerns and questions he has about himself as a therapist. In any of these conversations, both supervisee and supervisor will be awash in feelings, ideas, perceptions, sensations, etc. As previously discussed, all of these would be seen as important sources of information. The conversation would include a variety of both intellectual and experiential awarenesses. How are people feeling? What elements of abstract knowledge are relevant? What impressions do we have in these various conversations? Indirectly, what do we sense the client is feeling? Where is the trainee getting "locked up" in some kind of bind? These types of questions are responded to with a blend of experiential and relational awareness, and intellectual understanding. Attention is paid to which ideas, themes, etc., seem to flow and cause awareness and thought to become open and relaxed. It could be said that under these conditions, an idea, proposition, etc. *resonates*. It seems to want to continue and promulgate itself. In Self-Relations supervision, we remain open to this type of presence. Alternatively, sometimes ideas, beliefs, models, behavior, fears, etc. can have a very different effect. It might be experienced as a disturbance or discomfort in the relational field during a supervisory conversation. We can call these *perturbations*. These may signal the need for some type of attention. Perhaps opening up a new area for conversation. Perhaps changing strategies. Sometimes it might be just signaling a need for the therapist or supervisor to become more relaxed and centered.

Using Experience

In Self-Relations supervision, just as in Self-Relations therapy, we honor subjective and impressionistic experiences such as these and consider them important sources of information as well as useful resources. For example, one intern I was supervising knew she had more difficulty with one client she was working with than any other. This usually relaxed and good natured young trainee therapist would become tense, irritable, and much more negative and pessimistic than normal with this particular client. For this trainee, this reaction became a "problem." We were discussing this client in supervision. As we did so, it became apparent that the

usual pleasant rhythm of our supervisory conversation was *perturbed*. We both experienced tension, irritability, pessimism, etc. We discussed this for a time, and I asked the trainee to stand. After she did so, I instructed her in some basic techniques of *centering* (Heckler, 1997). She had her eyes closed, and I asked her to think of the client. As she did so, she noticed being pulled to one side, and even involuntarily took a step to restore her balance. We discussed this a little, and discussed how she could concentrate more on being centered, while *slowly* bringing the client into her awareness. This process allowed her to experience remaining centered in the presence of a client she was finding disturbing. This type of experiential learning allowed her to progressively improve her ability to remain centered while in therapy with this client, and bring more of her clinical strengths to bear on the situation.

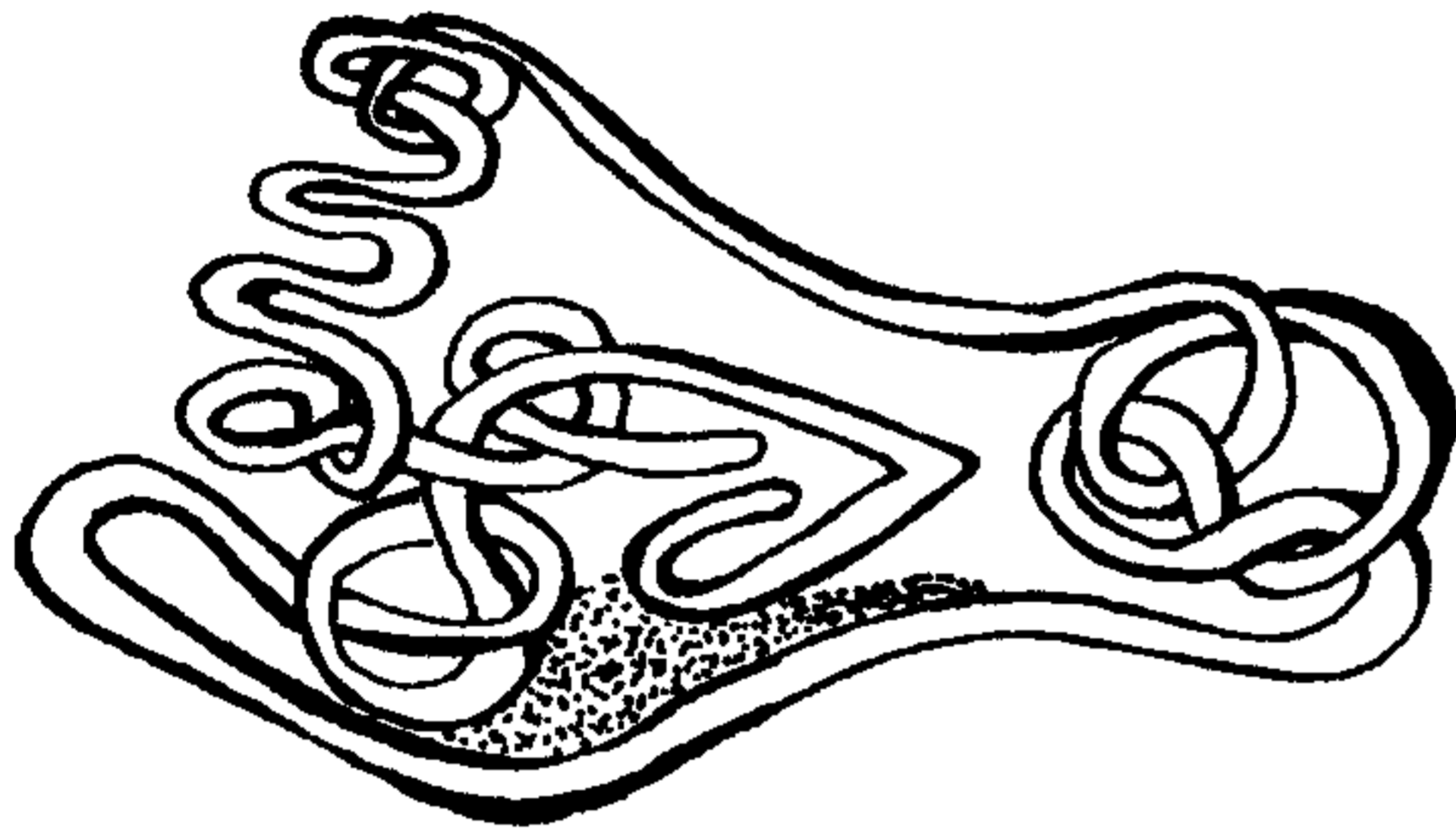
This brief vignette highlights some of the important ways experiences such as this can be utilized in psychotherapy supervision. Our relational and field-based experience allowed us to be sensitive to felt disturbances in the relational field in the supervisory conversation. Belief in the importance of knowledge of this type allowed us to discuss these sensations and utilize them for learning, rather than considering them unimportant. They allowed us to utilize a physical method of learning and practice (Whitelaw, 1998). Finally, responding to this field-based and experiential knowledge provides a way of enhancing a trainee's abilities to use themselves as a sensitive clinical instrument. In this process, theoretical, abstract, and intellectual learning is also facilitated as psychotherapy trainees learn about and recognize the concepts they were taught in their classes in real life terms.

Reflections

I would like to close by reflecting a bit on the experience of trying to bring Self-Relations into the supervision process. I find supervision to be a delicate process. As a supervisor, there is often a sense of awesome responsibility. One needs to attend to all sorts of demands from all sorts of systems. Trainees, clients, families, agencies, training programs, professional associations, and licensing boards all ask for different (and sometimes conflicting) things. By itself, it's enough to drive a supervisor crazy! Self-Relations, at its most basic, allows and encourages the acceptance of this responsibility in a peaceful and centered way. It's a way of sharing in a vast legacy of generations of psychotherapy supervisors (as an intelligence greater than oneself) dating to the dawn of this path or "way" we call psychotherapy. In my experience, this peace allows a developmental focus on the person-of-the-therapist who endeavors to follow on this path. It allows for a relaxed and open focus that helps bring a settling integration to the disparity of demands facing us as supervisors. We realize that in the personal and professional growth of our supervisees, we help meet these disparate demands; just as those generations before us have done. Last but not least, there's an experience of profound gratitude and humility that I didn't initially expect to find in the role of supervisor. We get to share in the courage shown by our trainees as they grapple with the changes our profession demands of them. We get to witness the developmental unfolding of our trainees by reviewing and revising our own thinking, understanding, experiencing, etc. All of this helps us keep our own personal and professional selves alive, present, and fresh. I now know enough to thank my trainees and students for allowing us to walk this pathway together.

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*The Business Leader as an Incurable Deviant:
A Self-Alignment Approach to Leadership Development*

Julian Russell is founder and Managing Director of PPD Consulting Ltd, a business leadership coaching firm based in London, England. His passion is helping people make the most of their unique capabilities and talent. Visit www.ppdconsulting.com or contact him at julian.russell@ppdconsulting.com

Cynthia Indriso, B.A., M.P.H., is an NLP Coach and Tibetan Buddhist practitioner with a passion for helping business people make a difference in the world. Visit www.Vivasinfo.com, www.CynthiaIndriso.com or contact her at Cynthia@CynthiaIndriso.com

THE BUSINESS LEADER AS AN INCURABLE DEVIANT: A SELF-ALIGNMENT APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Your path is yours alone: you are an incurable deviant.
— Stephen Gilligan (1997)

While many factors influence the success or failure of large corporations, the performance of business leaders is undoubtedly a key one. A small variation in the performance of a leader in a billion dollar organization can cost millions of dollars. Given the speed with which markets can change in the global economy, business leaders may well be feeling vulnerable these days as the pressure on them to adapt quickly to fluctuating market conditions and still maintain high performance has never been greater.

Business schools are excellent at teaching leaders the “knowing where you want to go” skill set of a good leader. The art and science of creating a vision, supporting it with a viable business plan, mapping strategic objectives and putting in place an implementation plan is highly developed and well-taught these days.

Being a powerful and effective business leader, however, requires not only knowing where you want to go, but also having the personal confidence, charisma, and influence skills to persuade people to follow you whole-heartedly. And business schools are less well-versed in teaching aspiring business leaders how to capture hearts and minds, and how to mobilize feet. More and more business people are acknowledging that the

roots of failed leadership are to be found more often in the personal skills and style of the key players than in their organizational business skills.

Executive business coaches are increasingly being hired to help business executives survive. Over 10,000 executive coaches work for businesses today, and that number is expected to exceed 50,000 worldwide in the next five years (Berglas, 2002). And increasingly, their advice to clients is more often than not about “power and relationships” (Chaffin, 2002); that is, business leaders need the most help in developing their personal skills — relationship management and self-management skills — rather than their business skills.

Leading through Embodiment

This chapter is about the development of business leadership charisma through self-alignment, which we also refer to as “leading through embodiment” (Deering, Dilts & Russell, 2002). Self-alignment is about having the personal confidence and charisma to take people with you. If you know where you want to go, if your behavior is consistent with your values, and if your code of conduct is transparent and authentic — people will trust you enough to follow you, even if they have different values than yours. Self-alignment allows a leader to align with others who then willingly join the leader to fulfill his or her strategic vision.

This chapter is organized into two main sections. The first describes the three main influences on the model: Dilts' levels, Gilligan's Self-Relations theory, and the exploration of life calling. The second section illustrates the practical application of our model using case studies based on real people's lives.

As we will see, this "inside-out" approach to leadership development draws on several frameworks and tools, particularly Stephen Gilligan's theory of "Self-Relations" (Gilligan, 1997). The name "Self-Relations" is explicit — it is about your relationships with yourself. A leader comes into greater internal alignment by learning to integrate what Gilligan calls the "cognitive" self — the thinking, rational self — and the "somatic" self — the feeling, emotional self — into a "relational self." (See Figure 1.)

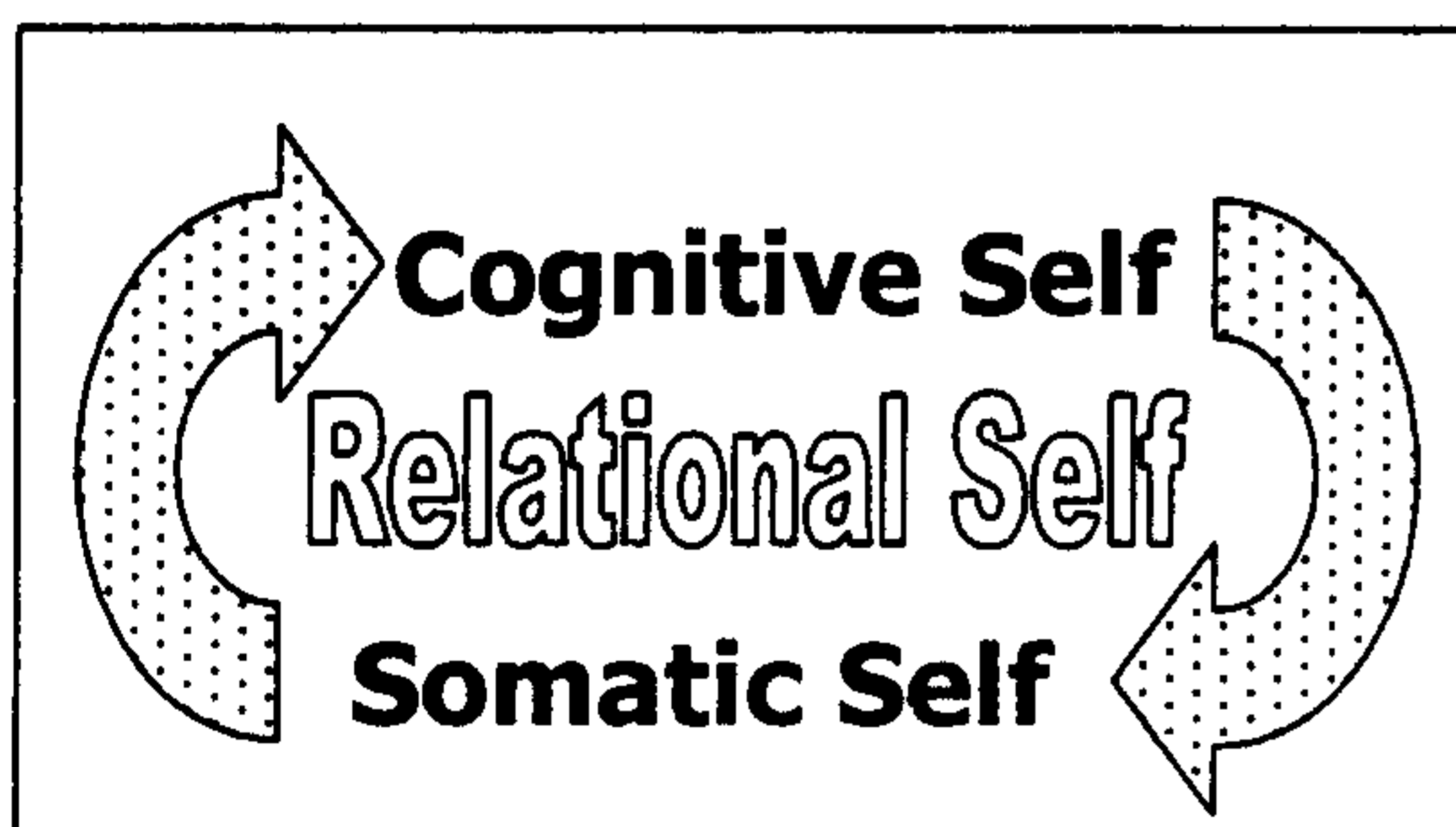


Figure 1. The relational self.

Another essential tool of this approach for achieving personal alignment is the exploration of personal mission, or "life calling." People with a sense of mission have a greater sense of meaning in life and thus tend to be happier. Similarly, studies of high performers suggest that those people with a strong sense of "calling" are more motivated and more successful than other people with similar capabilities.

Almost anyone can become a leader whom people want to follow by applying this self-alignment approach. This is because it is essentially about helping an aspiring

leader to become more fully and truly themselves, rather than proposing trying to become more like a generic model of an effective leader — which is the usual approach to leadership development. One learns how to follow one's passion and become more fully oneself through the conscious and outward expression of one's values and beliefs, competencies, and behaviours. As self-belief and self-confidence increase, so does personal charisma and leadership presence.

An "Inside-Out" Leadership Development Approach

The most widely used leadership development model is known as a "competency framework." A competency is the combined effect of a range of behaviors that can be observed and measured. Self-assessments and questionnaires that contain a detailed description of key skills and corresponding behaviors are completed by bosses, colleagues and subordinates in order to produce a picture of an individual's competencies, which are then compared to a benchmark or standardized leadership profile. Leadership development and executive coaching techniques can then be used to help a manager fill the gap between their current competencies and the desired leadership competencies. Competency frameworks and their analysis are a very useful and effective approach to developing leadership potential, particularly because they develop self-awareness in an aspiring leader and help them to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

The Dilts' Logical Levels Model

But as Dilts' (1996) groundbreaking model emphasizes, capabilities and competencies are only one aspect of leadership development. Leadership talent is also affected by other dimensions of a person's life. As Figure 2 shows, Dilts classifies these dimensions into six levels: the environment, behavior, capabilities (competencies), beliefs and values, a sense of personal identity, and personal ontology.¹ As Dilts explains, each level makes an

¹ Dilts also uses the term "spiritual" in his model, but various commentators have pointed out that this can be interpreted as "religious," whereas there are other non-religious approaches to the meaning we attribute to our existence. These can be organized into at least two other general categories, in addition to world religions: there are scientific explanations (big-bang, physics, biology and evolution) and also humanist explanations (scientific explanation plus the view that we can give meaning to our lives by seeking to better ourselves and humanity in general). As the Dilts model functions equally well in helping to determine people's ontology, whether religious or non-religious, we have chosen to use the term "ontology," which is defined as the science or study of being.

Dilts Levels		
Environment	Where?	
Behaviours	What?	What you do
Capabilities	How?	Skills and competencies
Beliefs and Values	Why?	
Identity	Who?	Personal mission or "life calling"
Ontology	What else?	Spiritual, humanistic, scientific?

Figure 2. Dilts' logical levels model.

important contribution in its own way. Beliefs and values, for example, determine how leaders use their competencies and subsequent behaviors. Personal identity is formed in three ways: (1) from one's ethnic, social, cultural and psychological background; (2) from one's current roles in the world at work, home and leisure activities; and (3) from personal aspirations — the sense of who we are becoming and who we will be in the future. Our sense of identity impacts our behavior as does our "personal ontology;" that is, our view of "what life is all about."

Dilts' paradigm creates a vast net or operating framework that brings together a myriad of techniques and models that can include tools from many disciplines. At the level of environment, for example, tools can come from disciplines ranging from interior design to psycho-geography; at the level of beliefs and values, tools can be drawn from psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, cognitive behavioral therapy, brief and systemic therapies, neurolinguistic programming (NLP) and organizational development, to name but a few.

Gilligan's Self-Relations (SR) Model

While the Dilts Logical Levels model is a powerful and effective approach to personal alignment, it does not explicitly address certain key dimensions that are essential to personal development. These dimensions are variously named "conscious mind" and "unconscious mind," thinking and feeling, mind and body. They are what Bateson (1972) calls "those multiple levels [of mind] of which one extreme is called 'consciousness' and the other the 'unconscious'" (p. 129). While these dimensions are implicit in all of Dilts' work, Gilligan (1997) explicitly focuses on them in his Self-Relations work.

Gilligan calls these dimensions "cognitive self" and "somatic self" and places them at the level of identity in the Dilts model. The "relational self" is the process of integrating the cognitive and somatic selves. A high degree of cognitive-somatic integration in a person is intuitively visible to others as "congruence," charisma, or even "leadership presence." Every business person knows of colleagues who have excellent business skills, but very little leadership ability. In a powerful and effective leader, mind and feelings sit comfortably with each other.

Self-Relations is not primarily concerned with talking *about* the somatic self — it is a methodology for communicating *with* the somatic self in the language of the somatic self. The SR practitioner learns to communicate directly with the emotional center or heart of another person. A coach with SR training, for example, leads clients into greater internal alignment by helping them to communicate from both their cognitive and somatic selves, demonstrating the on-going process called the relational self.

Others also make the case for emotions and feelings as an essential foundation of leadership. Like Gilligan, Beck (2001) shows how the "essential" self is playing an increasingly important role in the development of business models, plans and strategies. Our cognitive self is how we like to present ourselves socially in the world: "conforming, imitative, predictable, plans and is hard working." Our somatic self is our essential nature: "unique, inventive, surprising, spontaneous, and playful." Beck points out that what used to succeed in business was consistency, routine, hierarchically controlled information, insistence on rational logic, reliance on tried and tested methods, and cultural conformity.

What succeeds in business these days is flexibility, innovation, lean structure, open communication, tolerance of ambiguity, openness to new ideas and cultural diversity.² These are qualities and characteristics of the relational self.

In the modern business world governed by complexity and teetering on the edge of chaos,² leaders need to have a well integrated approach drawing both on cognitive and somatic selves. This integrated processing of information between cognitive self and somatic self is key to what Goleman (1995) calls "emotional intelligence." If we are not sensing other people with our feelings as well as our mind, we are likely to be inept at influencing either the cognitive self who wants a rational argument, or the emotional self who wants to feel safe.

The Crucial Role of the Neglected Self in SR

Self-Relations theory identifies a negative version of the somatic self as "the neglected self." The *neglected self* represents the worst feelings we have about ourselves at our darkest moments, or the elements of ourselves we would most like to remove with psychic surgery, if that were possible.

It is very often the neglected self of the budding leader that is stopping them from becoming the fully glorious and charismatic leader that they aspire to be. Without dealing with the neglected self, efforts to help leaders improve their competencies, or to "think positive," is like re-arranging chairs on the Titanic. It won't make an iota of difference.

A key presupposition of SR when working with the neglected self is that "the problem is the solution." The very element of ourselves that seems to be the problem is in fact an untapped part of our potential that, if sponsored and integrated, will become an invaluable resource. The very thing that is holding you back as a leader is untapped potential waiting to be leveraged.

The Six Premises of SR

The six premises of the SR model (Gilligan, 1997) make it a unique and powerful leadership development tool. To understand how these premises can be applied, the following describes them from a personal and organizational business culture point of view.

Premise 1: An indestructible 'tender soft spot' exists at the core of each of us.

Each one of us has a "soft cuddly side" and although this can be much derided in business culture, this tender soft spot is the source of a leader's intuition about other people and the place in leaders that enables them to act with emotional intelligence.

Premise 2: Life moves through us, except when it doesn't.

Life is dynamic and not static, and so is self alignment. A person cannot be permanently "integrated." We can only continue to be attentive to the on-going process of "integrating," or learning as we go. Most of the time we can integrate the different dimensions of ourselves and thus are capable of dealing with any issue that confronts us. Sometimes we get "stuck," however, and need help to get moving. "Leadership" is similar: it is not a thing, but a complex process of relating. Leading is a process in the river of life where new challenges will face us at every turn.

Premise 3: Life can be great, but sometimes it hurts like hell.

In the river of life, things can feel both wonderful and painful. To keep our somatic self connecting in all leadership situations, we sometimes need to acknowledge the sides of ourselves and other people that are in pain before we can proactively go about the business of solving whatever situation confronts us.

Premise 4: There are two of each of us:

Relationship is the basic psychological unit.

We each have a brain and a body. Integrating the

² "The dials of our economic dashboard have started spinning wildly, blinking and twittering as we head into new territory. It is possible that the gauges are broken, but it is much more likely that the world is turning upside down" (Kelly, 1998). We discuss the implications of a turbulent economy on business leadership development in detail in *Alpha Leadership — Tools for Leaders Who Want More From Life* (Deering, Dilts, & Russell, 2002).

two allows us to work out where we want to go, to align our whole self with that direction, and to influence other people to come with us.

Premise 5: An intelligence greater than each of us exists in the world.

Life is bigger than each of us. When we feel connected to something bigger — whether it be family, or organization, époque, country, species, biosphere, solar system or life itself — identifying with wholes that are larger than ourselves enables us to become more flexible and creative and thus solve many problems.

Premise 6: Our path is ours alone: Each of us is an incurable deviant.

We are each unique, and the more we have awareness of our special qualities and talents, and also our vulnerable areas, the more we can express ourselves clearly in the world. In coaching a leader, it can be very empowering to say, “You don’t need to fit the norm. Be yourself. Take your own characteristics and develop your own unique brand of leadership.” Leaders with self knowledge can play to their own strengths, recruit members into the team to cover for their weaknesses, and develop a plan that is both a stretch as well as achievable.

“Life Calling” and Criteria for a Successful Life

The Dilts paradigm and Gilligan’s SR model are cornerstone elements of an inside-out leadership development framework for self-alignment. The third essential element is the exploration of *life calling*, or personal mission, which we define as an attempt to:

... resurrect the unaccountable twists that turned your boat around in the eddies and

shallows of meaninglessness, bringing you back to feelings of destiny. For that is what is lost in so many lives, and what must be recovered: a sense of personal calling, that there is a reason I am alive. *Not* the reason to live; not the meaning of life in general or a philosophy of religious faith — . . . But . . . the feelings that there is a reason my unique person is here and that there are things I must attend to beyond the daily round and that give the daily round its reason . . . that I am answerable to an innate image that I am filling out in my biography. (Hillman, 1996, p. 4)

If you are clear about your “call,” and embody it in your somatic, feeling self, then you will be aligned and passionate about what you are doing. This will consequently be reflected in your behavior. Dilts places “calling” at the identity level, because it flows via your beliefs and values, through your acquisition of competencies, through behavior, and out into the world.

It is essential to pay special attention to the role of each individual’s life calling, because it is what brings each person into action in the world to make their special mark as a leader. Clarification of an individual’s life calling can have an enormous impact on a number of areas, particularly on: (1) individual high performance; (2) career planning; and (3) organizational succession planning.

1. Individual high performance.

The achievement of individual high performance requires that an individual’s personal and somatic agendas are being met at the same time that the organization’s agenda and goals are being met. If you as a leader are fulfilling your organization’s objectives, but you feel that

Figure 3. Dovetailing personal and business agendas.

	Cognitive Self	Somatic Self
Business Agenda	Organizational purpose, long-, medium-, & short-term objectives	Organizational culture and emotional climate
Personal Agenda	Purpose (life-calling), long-, medium-, & short-term objectives	Feeling inspired

there is nothing in it for you, then you most probably will not be very motivated. Similarly, if you are meeting your own needs but not creating value for your organization, then you may be simply taking advantage of your position. High performance is when both personal and business agendas are dovetailed. Figure 3 indicates some of the different challenges for each agenda, for both the cognitive and somatic selves.

We all benefit from a sense of meaning: going somewhere that feels worthwhile — doing something with our life that is compelling and fascinating and delightful. It can be very helpful to see how today's actions fit within a 10-, 20-, and 30-year time frame — our vision of who we are becoming.

2. Career planning.

When individuals have a sense of their long-term strategic plan — of where they want to be in their life in, say, a decade, or two — it has a major influence on their immediate career decisions. Someone who has no long-term vision will merely respond to opportunities that may present themselves for career development, while people who have a long-term vision will

be much more proactive in creating their career opportunities.

3. Organizational succession planning.

If the organizational ideal is to have highly motivated individuals in key roles, then success planning and leadership development will need to take into account the aspirations and sense of calling of the managers. The clearer leaders are mindful about the calling of the leaders whom they are developing, the more closely they can hone job offers to the personal passions of each individual — a process that results in higher performance.

Using Self-Alignment in Leadership Development

Dilts' levels theory, SR, and the exploration of life calling are the three essential parts of an inside-out approach to leadership development that can achieve self-alignment. Figure 4 shows how these different approaches can be integrated into a unified framework. In this section, we illustrate the application of this approach through case examples. Actual names used are fictional and character profiles are composite sketches created to emphasize the points relevant to this chapter.

Figure 4. Inside-out leadership development.

	Cognitive Self	Somatic Self
Ontology	What I would like to believe is the purpose of life	What I actually feel about the purpose of my life and death
Identity and Life Calling	Who I think I am My personal mission	Who I feel I am underneath My sense of life calling
Beliefs and Values	What I would like my beliefs and values to be	How my beliefs and values actually reside in my body and operate despite my rational beliefs
Capabilities	My mental competencies	My emotional, physical and body level competencies
Behavior	How I would like to behave	How I <i>actually</i> behave
Environment	The way the environment looks	The way the environment feels

Using the Integrated Framework

One of the best ways to start inside-out leadership alignment is to use the framework outlined in Figure 4 to explore a client's personal alignment. A series of questions, starting with the five "lower" levels of the Dilts model,³ may be asked.

Identity

What is your career plan? What do you want to be doing in 10, 20, 30 years? What will you be doing in your retirement? How will you know you have had a good life? What are your criteria for success? What is the special contribution you can make to the world as result of your personal history (past), current circumstances (present) and aspirations (future) — your personal mission or life calling?

Beliefs and Values

What are your values? Do they fit with the values of your organization and your management? Are you expressing your values in your behavior? Can you align what you do more in terms of your values? How helpful are your beliefs about yourself, your skills and other people? Is your self-confidence equal to your competence or greater than your competence?

Capabilities

What are your key skills and strengths? What are your weaknesses? How good are you at the technical aspect of your job and at the relationship and leadership dimension? Which dimension do you need to work on to increase your alignment with your values and self-belief and with your sense of personal identity and calling?

Behaviors

Do you walk your talk (values)? What do you need

to do to achieve your goals? Do you look and feel to other people like a leader? When you are at meetings or presenting to groups, how does your behavior reflect your leadership? Does your dress reflect an appropriate image for you?

Environment

It can sometimes be helpful to consider the office and general environment in which the person works: Does your office and your office organization reflect your "brand" as a leader? What perceptions will this create in other people's minds? Do you need to "de-clutter"? What impression will visitors have of you when they see the working environment of your staff?



After a few minutes of light conversation, Joseph, the group CEO of a specialist outsourcing firm on the outskirts of London, said, "Let's cut to the chase . . . I am a Harvard MBA, have been CEO in a number of places, work hard, but am bored with what I do." While he answered questions about his passion, a map of his life space emerged.

Identity: Joseph's history was similar to his father's, whose passion had been for music all his life, but who became a carpenter by trade. Joseph had wanted to study astronomy at university but his career advisor had told him that he wasn't intelligent enough to get into a top astronomy department, and he would be better off applying to do engineering. The degree in engineering had led him into the oil industry and finally into management. Now he feels that if only he had had the right advice, he would now be teaching astronomy at a world-class campus.

Joseph talked about his passion being to "push back the frontiers of knowledge in cosmology and astronomy" and when asked the purpose of this, he replied,

³ In the European and North American business environment, coaches are best advised to avoid questions of ontology or spirituality until sufficient credibility and personal rapport have been established with the client. In our post-modern world, you can ask a client about their sex life in the first session, but ask about personal beliefs and you are entering where angels fear to tread.

“Learning what is currently unknown — exploring the meaning of life through the science.” Quite quickly a first cut or approximation of his life calling had emerged: future sessions would clarify this and align it with a career plan. A transition from CEO to astronomer is quite significant, so creativity, careful planning and rigorous assessment of the plan would be needed.

Beliefs and Values: Several times he said he sees things with “the glass of water half empty rather than half full.” He had previously said that he thought he would find a job that would satisfy him but never had. Was this genuine lack of satisfaction or simply that he was not operationalizing his life-calling sufficiently? Was his desire to be an astronomer now an attempt to reverse history and heal the losses of an empty childhood?

Capabilities: (competencies) Obviously successful as a group CEO, Joseph was using a lot of “action” language that suggests he is a “doer.” He is also a fast reader, and from the speed of ideas expressed in the conversation, very bright. For someone who does not think as quickly as him, he might be hard to keep up with.

Environment: He is good in business but doesn’t like it. His wife is in an excellent job and could support both of them. They have no children, nor do they plan to. Until the 2002 stock market nosedive, he had enough money to retire on, but could probably fill the pot again within a few years and have enough to live on by his mid-forties.

Ontology: While talking about his calling to explore “the unknown,” he said, “I’m not religious — my philosophy is that the world is an insignificant pin-prick in a gigantic universe and that human issues and affairs are too insignificant to matter much.” He then laughed and said something about “except when it gets personal.”

From this Dilts’ level mapping, a coaching strategy emerged. We would explore Joseph’s calling (*identity*) in more detail and really test whether he would need to “explore the unknown” through astronomy as a life calling; or pursue a degree in astronomy as a hobby to redeem the past; or explore the unknown in other ways. In terms of his *beliefs*, we would try to uncover what it would take to break the cycle of him seeing what is not there rather than what is there. As for *competencies*, we would look in more detail at how he manages and leads the business, and we could help increase his alignment

and consequently his charisma. But what about his competencies for major transition? Did he have the guts to give up full-time work and go back to university with a bunch of 20 year olds? Was he sufficiently rebellious to be “an incurable deviant” and completely change career? Does he really have what it takes to be a research astronomer or to teach astronomy? Could he weave together the threads of astronomy and business leadership? In terms of *behaviors*, he was friendly and affable and outward going when we met. He talked fast and voice training to match his voice to the person he was talking to would give him an immediate “quick-win” in the perceptions of the people around him. At the level of *environment*, for him to undertake such a major transition, it would be important to find out in detail what his wife thought about these possibilities.



The following case of Paul gives us another example of how the “inside-out” approach can yield a coaching action plan for a person in terms of where they are now and where they want to be.

Paul came to coaching because expectations about his potential as a senior manager had not been fulfilled as quickly as were expected. As we can see from Figure 5, he had two key beliefs that undermined his interactions with senior people: “What I am good at isn’t recognized” and “People want me to be good at things I am not interested in.” These two beliefs collided with each other and undermined his self-confidence when he was presenting in the boardroom.

He wanted to change this to the belief, “My job as a smart leader is to do what I am good at and delegate what I don’t like.” This would enable him to recruit appropriate people into his team to do the things he is less interested in. This same belief would help him feel more sure of himself and enable him to maintain a positive emotional state while using his excellent communication skills to deal with difficult questions or challenges from board members.

Some digging into his personal history uncovered a reference experience where his father passionately wanted him to be a soccer star. But as a boy, although talented, he was only mildly interested in the sport. His father criticized his son for not trying hard enough and

	Now	Where He Wants to Be
Identity and Calling	Giving commercial birth to creative ideas	Same
Beliefs and Values	<i>Blockages:</i> What I am good at isn't recognized. People want me to be good at things I am not interested in.	The job of a smart leader is to do what I am good at and delegate what I don't like.
Capabilities	Excellent communicator Creative Good at managing creative team <i>Blockage:</i> Panics when under scrutiny from executive board members	Dealing with objections from board members while maintaining emotional stability Confidence to hire people into my team, people to cover my weaknesses
Behaviors	Director of creative agency	Honest self-assessment. Recruitment of people to strengthen the team
Environment	International media organization	Same

Figure 5. Example of mapping a client.

the boy ended up feeling that he was lazy and only gave 75 percent. A belief change technique, called re-imprinting (described in more detail in the neglected self discussion that follows), was used to help Paul change this belief.

Having confidence in one's calling, identity and beliefs, and values at the higher levels can increase a person's self-confidence when faced with gaps in their leadership competencies (capability level). With a high level of self acceptance and self confidence, combined with a high level of self awareness, a leader can give up trying to fit completely into a generic leadership competency framework and accept that they may have areas of weakness in their competencies which may be harder to change. They can instead follow an alternative strategy of focusing on what they are good at and recruiting someone into the team to cover their area of weakness. This also gives them the freedom to pursue their calling more directly and thus be more successful in their work.

Bringing Gilligan's Somatic Self into Focus

Very often, the process of exploring a client's personal alignment reveals a gap between their current state of personal alignment and their desired one. This gap is often somatic, or feeling-based, and thus the somatic self begins to come into focus.

There are four important reasons for focusing on the somatic self in coaching. The first is that healthy expression of feeling is a key factor in a person's charisma. Secondly, inappropriately expressed or unexpressed emotions can negatively impact the quality of relationships. Third, sensitivity to people and the ability to influence are based on somatic sensitivity or emotional intelligence. Fourth, most practical skills are "somatic" in that they involve muscles, emotion and the unconscious (intuition). Only purely conceptual skills are singularly cognitive, and most leadership skills are both cognitive and somatic.



Let's look at how Chris was able to begin to use his sensitivity toward other people to his advantage in an unfeeling, tough work environment.

Chris, a Yorkshire man from the North of England, was a senior executive in the back office of an international investment bank. His hometown had a strong mining culture, and he liked his reputation in the bank as a blunt northerner. However, while being prepared for promotion, he was given feedback that people felt that that he lacked sensitivity. People who knew him well saw him as sensitive with a warm heart, while other stakeholders who did not know him well felt threatened by his blunt exterior. In fact, Chris felt vulnerable and was frightened that people would see how sensitive he was. Despite the tough exterior he showed at work, the "real Chris," the one who went home to his family was extremely sensitive and tender and very much wanted to express love and be loved. With coaching, he began to realize that his emotional intelligence and ability to manage people stemmed from his tender soft-spot (SR premise 1), and this sensitivity was key to bringing people along with him. Over time he learned to show new acquaintances more of his depth, secure in the knowledge that they would also see that he could deliver difficult results in a tough environment.

In addition to the desirability of emotional sensitivity, a surfeit of unpleasant or difficult feelings can undermine a person's sense of self, or belief in her or his capabilities. Each of us has had experiences that make us feel bad when we think about them. These memories become leadership issues when they continue to affect how we express ourselves in the world; for example, when we are nervous about presenting to board meetings because a teacher humiliated us in front of the class in early life.

Using SR to heal such experiences can liberate our current expression by changing the meaning in the virtual world we call "the past." Since our version of the

past only exists in our nervous system, we have full copyright and editorial rights over that version. As Milton Erickson was known to say, "It's never too late to have a happy second childhood." In this process, it is important to maintain a sense of general facts — it is one thing to fantasize about a night out with a film star and something else to believe that it really happened! However, most of our experience is not based on facts but on the meaning we make of them and in our emotions and feelings about them. We can change the meanings, emotions and feelings while leaving the facts intact.

Moreover, our unpleasant memories of ourselves are frequently rooted in our childhood. As children we may have believed that if adults are unpleasant to us, it must be because of something about us. Yet, as adults, we know that other people can be unpleasant toward us because of circumstances in their lives, not ours.

Mary was a client with a fear of speaking in front of large groups to the extent that she would actively avoid any such event. In the beginning Mary had no idea where this fear came from. In exploring her history we found that when, as an eight-year-old reciting from memory in front of a class, her teacher had slapped her for making too many errors. What Mary made this mean was that: "I am stupid"; "I can't learn properly"; "Speaking in front of the teachers is dangerous"; "Groups of people are dangerous places." She began to work on resolving this experience by having her adult self coach her younger self to re-evaluate the meaning of those experiences. The meanings the young Mary made were: "The teacher was screwed up that day"; "I can feel O.K. about myself even around screwed up people"; "There are other classroom situations which feel safe and fun"; "Groups feel different at different times and in different contexts."

In Mary's case, we worked together to teach this knowing to the "younger Mary" in her memory, so that the child who feels humiliated in the classroom can know that this comes from the teacher's life, not her own.

Behavior	The behaviors that seem to happen of their own accord, that pop out when we least expect it, and embarrass us, humiliate us or expose us in some way
Capabilities	The skills of the neglected self: perhaps child-like innocence, rebelliousness, neediness, rage, sulking, etc.
Beliefs and Values	The most negative or unhelpful beliefs we have about ourselves and other people. The beliefs or values that are deep inside us that we are most ashamed of and attempt to keep secret from the world
Identity and Life Calling	The sub-personalities we try to keep secret from the world. Our worst fear about who we are. The opposite of calling: self destructive and self sabotage tendencies
Ontology	What we believe life is about when we wake up with nightmares or in other less than happy states

Figure 6. Inside-out leadership and the neglected self.

The beauty of this work is that it is so simple for the cognitive self to coach the tender soft spot (Premises 1 and 4) and that once this has been done a few times, it can become an on-going part of our inner experience.

Redeeming the Neglected Self

A unique feature of SR is the assumption that the neglected self — the part of us we most hate — has a special power yet to be tapped. By bringing it into the light of day and finding out its purpose, we can make the most of that potential both as human beings and leaders. Figure 6 combines both the Dilts and Gilligan models to offer an integrated approach for exploring the neglected self.

The self-evaluation from these questions allows a neglected self to begin to make its presence felt, and from there begins the process of establishing rapport with this untended and unloved part. So often, the very element that we are trying to eradicate is the very humanness that makes us someone worth following.

Take the case of Charmain.

Charmain gets into work at 7 A.M. and leaves at 7 P.M. She cooks for her two teenagers

when she gets home and then does more work after dinner. She takes advantage of a good relationship with her husband and seldom has time with him alone. At the weekend, their activities often involve the children. At work her subordinates complain that she is too involved in detail work and her peer group say that she is not sufficiently influential outside her department and across the business.

What does this driven part of Charmain really want? What would happen if that need were genuinely and fully met?

Sometimes the redemption of the neglected self can be the only way forward if the leader is to further develop their career and potential, as Joe's case illustrates.

Joe was a director of his company, responsible for a billion dollar budget, and on his company's "high potential" list. His parents went through an ugly divorce when he was 11 years old. His mother broke down — crying, shouting, screaming, and at times hitting the children — and demanded emotional support from

them. Joe decided then that emotions were “bad” and that he would never show his own or get in a confrontation with others. Now he finds that his own marriage is lifeless as he applies this learning there, and he may yet create the very thing he fears most — the end of the relationship. So little emotional negotiation takes place in the marriage that there is no intimacy of either the angry or the loving variety.

At work his subordinates find him distant and hard to relate to. His bosses consider Joe’s relationship with his subordinates a minor problem, and view him as a star performer with upward potential. His neglected self is beginning to signal strongly for attention: he goes red in the face and feels like his head is going to explode at unexpected times at important meetings. For him these feelings verge on panic attacks; yet when colleagues were discreetly interviewed, no mention was made of it. He finds this loss of control so frightening that he has considered resigning.

The first step in coaching was to help him deal with the symptoms — the feelings of panic at meetings, so that he didn’t resign abruptly, and continued to pro-

vide value to the organization while he sorted his life out. One factor that has kept the pace of Joe’s inner work slow is the fear that if he starts to feel his feelings and talk about them at home, his marriage may become threatened. Both he and his wife seem to have selected each other as people who didn’t express deep inner feelings — the process of change is scary to both of them. Joe’s work has gone beyond the bounds of coaching, into the realms of psychotherapy. Yet the outcome of his psychological development will be very important for his potential as a leader. To continue to provide value to his organization at the current level, and to have any hope of achieving the charisma and presence that would make it possible for him to be promoted to the highest echelon, Joe needs to allow more of himself to play a part in his life.

Embodying “Life Calling” as a Leader

The exploration of life calling addresses the question, “Where am I going?” at the identity level of Dilts’ model. To answer this question, we need to also consider the other questions of, “Where have I come from?” and “Where am I?” As Figure 7 indicates, there are two key approaches to life calling: a cognitive sense of personal mission and the somatic sense of being passionately drawn to something.

Figure 7. Identity and life calling.

	Cognitive Self	Somatic Self
Identity and Life Calling	Who I think I am My personal mission	Something is calling me Something emerging that I am passionate about There is a light at the end of the tunnel

Life calling can be explored in many ways. One of the most interesting approaches is to take individuals on a “guided fantasy” to the end of their lives, to their healthy old age, and then have them review their lives. “How do you know you have had a successful life? As you look back, what was important?” One can then ask, “How can you do more of this now? How can you make sure that you truly fulfill your criteria for a successful life? How does this inform your leadership in the situations that face you at the moment?”

The answers can be surprising. People who a few minutes earlier were stuck in the mire of everyday business issues may suddenly pop open unexplored areas of their lives. Often the coach becomes witness to a very natural process in which individuals reveal their personal emotional agendas from the home or family environment with a dawning realization that these same agendas may apply to their work lives. For example, “capacity to love” may not be listed on the organization’s competency framework, but having a caring attitude toward staff will appear in some form or another. Finding one’s calling involves giving up the pretense that the values of our personal and home lives need be any different from those of our work life. Very often the call reveals itself quickly, and the majority of the coaching is working out how to translate this calling within a business environment.

Understanding your calling can also help determine what you will be good at and what you won’t be good at. People usually develop a high level of skill (capability) in the area of their calling, because they are passionate about it. One way to look at calling is to look at a person’s strengths and extrapolate from that, as was done in Anne’s case.

Anne was a senior director of information technology (IT) in a global pharmaceutical company one level down from board level. There were a handful of people with the title IT Director and she wanted to make the next step and become a board-level IT director. However, she is a self-described “Silicon Valley geek” who has spent much of her career being “one of the boys” in new technology development laboratories and she believes that solving the technical problem is all that’s needed.

She has been brought in to manage a number of large scale IT development projects where there is always a fire to put out. In those situations, she has had great success because she is good at simply pointing out the technical problem and a viable solution, which gets sighs of relief from the IT managers and technical people.

In a project that is late and hemorrhaging money, and has supposedly insurmountable technical problems, nobody minds if someone suddenly appears and tells you how do your job without social niceties. But in a normal business environment, people need to be paced and led by having their feelings taken into account and by being stroked, coached, and flattered. If a leader doesn’t take account of the relationship dimension, people won’t follow.

When we began to explore Anne’s calling, it became clear that it was about teaching people how to overcome “insurmountable” technical problems. She began to question whether she really wanted to be a board director, because the proportion of time spent building coalitions of board members around key IT agendas would be very high compared to the time spent developing technical solutions. She decided she could fulfill her calling much better by building a personal brand as an IT “fire-fighter” who could save large multi-million dollar projects. She could talk to a handful of Silicon Valley head-hunters about the projects she had saved and she would have a long list of companies asking her to manage innovative and risky projects.

As with Anne, when a person recognizes their calling, increased self-confidence and clarity about what they are good at can help them become more successful at their job.

The following case of James illustrates how an exploration of life calling can also be the tool to unleash potential that is being blocked by negative self-belief and an unredeemed neglected self.

James was a senior manager in a firm of management consultants. He had not been promoted despite having the necessary competencies, client history and sales. His personal style

was cautious and reactive; he preferred to follow other people rather than take the lead. Since he was of great value to the firm, coaching was requested to help him make the next level. We found several factors that were holding James back, including a neglected self that had not been validated, as well as alien voices.⁴ One additional key factor was his belief of “Why bother as I won’t get promoted anyway?” This feeling of stuckness started to become a self-fulfilling prophecy and he was sabotaging opportunities that would help him get the promotion he said he so badly wanted.

Through coaching, James was able to change his frame of reference. We worked together to look at how “His path is his and his alone” (Premise 6) and to explore how to optimize his expression in the world and the leveraging of his potential. With “movement in the river of life,” his goals became bigger than the issue of a promotion, or other career opportunities elsewhere. What became important was his “calling,” special contribution to the world or “legacy.” Once “the flow” was moving again, he found himself able to look at opportunities in his work and life where before there had only been blockages.

Thus an exploration of life calling can also serve as the bridge that leads a person to realize a dream of a completely different way of work and life.

Conclusion

An “inside-out” approach to business leadership development focuses on personal psychological alignment as the key to achieving presence, charisma, and influence. One learns how to follow one’s passion and be-

come more fully oneself through the conscious and outward expression of one’s values and beliefs, competencies, and behaviors.

There are three essential dimensions to this approach. One is the Dilt’s Logical Levels model, which provides a broad framework that links leadership talent to the various dimensions of a person’s life, personality, and state of being. These dimensions are classified into six levels, each of which makes an important contribution in its own way. Another is Gilligan’s Self-Relations model, which focuses especially on the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind, which he calls the “cognitive” and “somatic” selves, respectively. His “relational self” is the process of integrating our cognitive and somatic selves. As this chapter emphasizes, Gilligan’s thinking provides a direct and accessible way to work with the somatic dimension of a person’s business leadership potential — the feeling and emotional self. The third dimension to this leadership development model is the exploration of personal mission, or life “calling.” It is essential to pay special attention to the role of each individual’s life calling, because it is what brings each person into action in the world to make their special mark as a leader.

Through a few case studies based on real people who have benefited from the self-alignment approach, we have attempted to illustrate our assertion that “almost anyone can become a leader whom people want to follow.” Just as importantly, we have tried to show that everyone can have a more fulfilling and successful life, and that it is never too late to do so.⁵

Acknowledgments

Our special thanks to colleague Bob Janes for his helpful comments and suggestions.

⁴ “Alien voice” is a light-hearted SR term used to describe internal dialogue that one believes to be one’s own, but is actually an internalized parental or adult voice from one’s childhood. Dealing with “the aliens” is a way of talking about making a separation between one’s own views and feelings and those influences that attempt to make us something other than we are.

⁵ During the last days or moments of one’s life, the last chance to have a successful life may be a religious conversion: finally taking refuge in the arms of a higher power.

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POETIC INTERLUDE 2

Improvisation

(Charles Holton)

the moment before
my hands reach out
i sit on the black wooden bench and
feel the energy swirling,

and not just of thoughts.

mosaics of possibility cascade,
unwritten fugues suggest new harmonies, structural
devices yet undreamt of
and
tunes no-one has played.

the colors between black and white
and the densities between transparent
and solid discuss their plans for me.

as in a dream, it can
take just a moment
or hover
out of time:

when the vortex coalesces
into clarity,
a single point,

i know what to do.

***Poetry as a Grounding Practice:
Truth-telling from Neglected Voices***

(Dvorah Simon)

first: breathe.
airily. solidly. expansively. groundedly.
breathe out to your fingertips.
breathe into your darkest, tightest part.

your breath
is like a lamp, illuminating an ancient
cave. what are the drawings, damp and
shy, that you find there, on the walls of the cave?

pick a part, a place inside. your heart.
your blood. your bones. your left little toe.
pick it now. say hello to it. be polite.
you are well-known to each other, but in a way,
strangers too. act like a host, with a delicate and
much anticipated guest. the guest's eyes shine
with a message, both dense and clear. the guest has
sounds, rhythms, and words for you: listen.
bells, breezes, drums. the sound of clacking,
whipping, whining. crashing waves. thunder.
dew drops, softly dropping, so quiet. so quiet.
the sound of arguing. the sound of bitterness. the ache of
passion and the equal ache of peace.
what do you hear? no word is too insignificant or
wrong.

i will be silent, now, while you listen.

what do you hear?

write it down. now. look at it.

look at the word or words. caress it with
your eyes. repeat it. if it tells you other words that are its
friends, its trail, its next,
write them too.
sound them out. dance them. sway with their singular
beat. breathe them.

when all the echoes are winding down, ask your words:
are you still lonely? or are you content?

if the words are content, if the sounding of your phrases
makes you settle, somehow, into an
easier stance or breath, or brings to life
an energy or voice and that energy or voice is
shouting "yes, thank you!" and all you want to do
is read it over and over and say: i wrote this:

look! what i wrote. its *here* it came out of *me* and i
didn't even know it was there!

then, you are done. if on the other hand,
your words are sighing, limping, and alone,

repeat the process. do it as many times as it takes. it can take
many minutes or many days or many years. i have even heard it
said it can take
a lifetime or two.

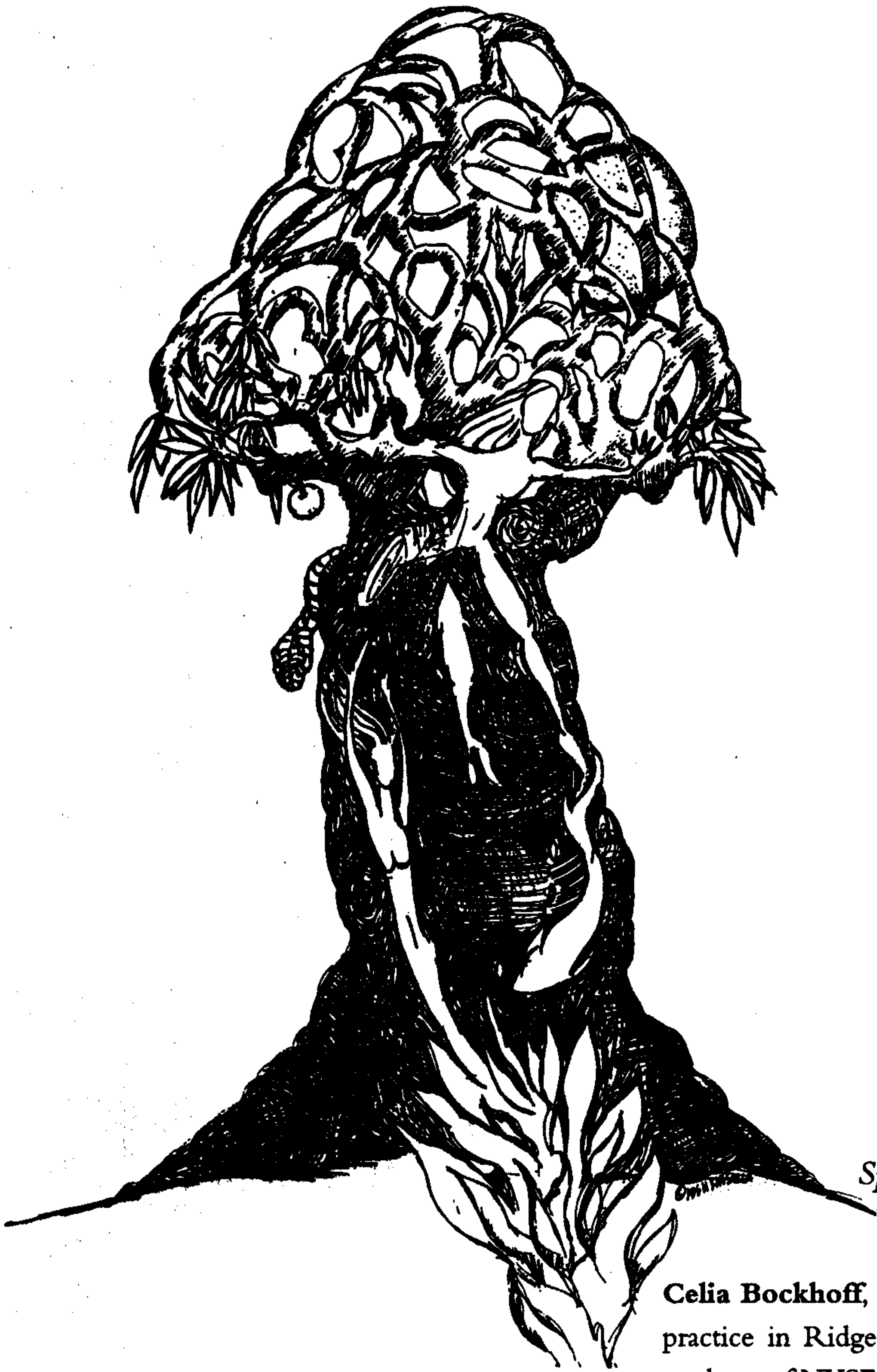
but it is worth
the effort.

to ground yourself
in your own breath, your own words.
to tell the truth from
neglected voices.

to tell the symphony
that is you.

SECTION III

SELF-RELATIONS AND SPIRITUAL PATHS



*Immanent Blessings:
Sponsorship and the Archetypal Goddess*

Celia Bockhoff, M.S.W., L.C.S.W., B.C.D., has a private psychotherapy practice in Ridgewood, New Jersey. A student of Stephen Gilligan and graduate of NYSEPH, she utilizes Self-Relations, Ericksonian, and mindfulness principles in her work. Celia's therapy practice and workshops specialize in the reclamation of deep feminine wisdom in the sponsorship of both relational healing and personal empowerment. Her website is www.celiabockhoff.com

IMMANENT BLESSINGS: SPONSORSHIP AND THE ARCHETYPAL GODDESS

An old Greek proverb says, "Start with Hestia." Hestia is the first of all the Olympian gods. She is the hearth, the sacred circle of the home: the center of spirit. As we begin, we invoke this first, primal goddess archetype: *the circle*. In a chant by pagan musician Rick Hamouris, we sing: We are a circle, within a circle, with no beginning, and never ending.

Pagan activist and writer Starhawk sees casting a circle as "an enacted meditation" that awakens our inner selves. "The outer forms are a cloak for inner visualizations," she writes, "so that the circle becomes a living mandala, in which we are centered" (1979, p. 72).

In Self-Relations psychotherapy, this "living mandala" of the circle can be described as the relational field, a "living nurturing presence that supports a person in her awakening process" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 23). It is the context, the space, and the connection to a greater energy. It is the experience of belonging to something more. Gilligan acknowledges that this field can be "felt, understood, and used in many, many ways" (p. 57). A felt belonging in the relational field may be experienced as "self-transcendent," or "communion" with a greater power. In invoking Hestia the Greek goddess whose form is a circle, we invite the relational field into ourselves in the shape of the feminine.

Why specifically invoke a goddess? Why summon

feminine energy? Why not just invoke "the relational field" or "a greater power"?

While the words "relational field" or "greater power" are by their nature abstract, the goddess is a tangible embodiment of that concept. If we found a different symbol to make the relational field concrete, would it be the same as invoking a goddess? At the core of this question is how the archetypal divine is perceived.

Self-Relations psychotherapy explores how trauma or violence can precipitate a break from the relational field, and contribute to symptoms or problems based in fear and disconnection. As Self-Relations therapists, we must examine how embedded symbols of the sacred, both conscious and unconscious, have contributed to the violence and trauma of women, and men. How have our perceptions of the archetypal divine connected or disconnected us from our own power? What curses have we suffered, as individuals and as a culture, by being split from sacred feminine archetypes?

This chapter is about rediscovering that which has been lost, in our own lives and in the lives of our psychotherapy clients. It is about reclaiming that which belongs to us; that which has been both benignly and violently wrenched from our beings. It is about tapping into a vast body of feminine wisdom. In Self-Relations terms, it is about reconnection. It is about healing the

breaks. It is about embracing the blessings that only a goddess can bestow.

*We can rise with the fire of freedom — truth is the
fire that will burn our chains;
We can stop the fire of destruction — healing is the
fire running through our veins.*

— Chant by Starhawk

There are millions of conceptions of the divine. But what are the dominant pictures that permeate our culture? When I visualize “God,” why does the image of a muscular bearded man reaching out to touch the finger of Adam pop into my head?

I see Michelangelo’s God because the image is everywhere in our culture. The archetype is not only easily available in our cultural visual warehouse; it is also deeply embedded in our unconscious. Where is the feminine in this picture?

As a civilization and as individuals, women and men have been denied access to feminine imagery that is truly our birthright. Most of the religious archetypal images of women available to us have at best marginalized and at worst demonized women. We all have been subject to the curses and alienation of misogyny. Gilligan sees curses as central to trauma: a negative imprint that implants “life-denying ideas” into the victim. Without doubt, women’s souls have been wounded by life-denying curses for centuries, even millennia. The deluge of curses to the feminine soul is beyond the scope of this chapter, beyond the scope of words themselves.

If we glimpse briefly at this flood of curses to the feminine, we witness Gilligan’s idea of negative sponsorship, the implanting of negative or alienating ideas into a person, in literally biblical proportions. Objects depicting sacred goddesses dating back 30,000 years were dismissively labeled “fat ladies” by 20th century archaeologists: a curse to women’s bodies. The biblical Leah was said to have “tricked” Jacob into marrying her: a curse to women’s authenticity. Mary Magdalene was labeled a whore: a curse to women’s sexuality. For four hundred years, as Christianity took hold in medieval Europe, millions of women healers, nurses, and teachers were systematically hunted down and killed as witches: a curse to women’s survival itself.

In the 20th century, women were still being denied access to education, money and power, and remained trapped under patriarchal control. They were still being raped and abused, often with the approval of the law. The medical community became the purveyor of women’s bodies: some women don’t even remember the births of their own children. Through films, television, and other media women were bombarded with images of impossibly “perfect” women. Women learned to hate their own bodies — to look in the mirror with disgust. They learned to diet until they weighed 90 pounds, to augment breasts, to redesign chins and noses, to cut down thighs. They learned to hate themselves.

Where has the proliferation of feminine curses led us? Brilliant creative women have taken their own lives: Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Frida Kahlo. Depression, self-starvation, self-mutilation and dissociation have become “women’s issues.” Our clients share untold numbers of stories about disempowerment, abuse, and alienation. As women have lost their deepest connections to their bodies, sexuality, authenticity, spirit and power, men have lost daughters, wives and mothers, and the gifts of their own feminine aspects.

How do we as therapists, and individual women and men, cope with this continuing onslaught of curses, the relentless persistence of negative sponsorship for women in an entrenched patriarchal culture? The task seems almost overwhelming. Gilligan (1997) suggests that negative sponsorship can be overcome or externalized through “a combination of blessings and centering practices” (p. 54). Are there any blessings powerful enough to excise hundreds of years of misogynist curses?

*Ancient mother, I hear your calling, ancient mother,
I hear you call.*

*Ancient mother, I hear your laughter, ancient
mother, I taste your tears.*

— Traditional Chant

Most Americans have grown up in a patriarchal culture, based on Judeo-Christian teachings. Religion and spirituality have been male-dominated, hierarchical concepts. The divine is seen as “out there” or even “up there”: apart from us, and accessible only through religious authorities that have access to “Him.” Patriarchal

religions have not only restricted our direct access to the divine; they have taught us that the divine takes on a superior, male form. The idea of having divine power *within oneself* is largely antithetical to our western monotheistic religious culture.

Monotheistic religions have this in common: if there is ONE god, it is a male god. *Polytheistic* religions have this in common: they have goddesses.

Polytheism offers myriad ways to connect and identify with the divine. When we look into a pantheon of gods and goddess, whether they are Greek, Roman, Hindu, Sumerian, or Shinto, we look into many different personalities: diverse reflections of ourselves. We also look into the earth itself, for the gods and goddesses of these traditions embody the cycles of days, moons, seasons, and lifetimes. The deities reflect our lives on this planet in all its agony and ecstasy. They bring energies of 'neglected selves' in many forms.

As we enter the 21st century, there is new interest in investigating these old religions, in a quest to reclaim the missing icons in our spiritual and psychic lives. Although we are now accessing ancient documentation and archaeological sources for this knowledge, the wisdom of polytheistic feminine archetypes is often more accessible through our subtle bodies.

In Self-Relations psychotherapy, an essential element of the work is sensing invisible wounds through a *felt sense*: feeling their somatic presence in one's body. The neglected energy seen in goddess archetypes may be embedded in our somatic selves in a way not easily described. It is possible that all women, sharing a collective unconscious, feel the ancient goddess. Her energy resides in our cells, in our wombs and our essences as women. If we cannot find her in the stories of Madonna or Whore, of Florence Nightingale or Barbie, we can find her in our dreams. We can feel her in our bodies.

Through the evidence we do have about her, we know that the "Ancient Mother" has had many manifestations. She was athletic. She was sexual. She was abundant. She was pregnant. She was young. She was old. She was adorned with jewels. She was bare. She was flocked by animals. She was as large as the moon and the earth. She was as small as a drop of rain.

She was there when a girl first menstruated. She was the maiden. She was in the act of sexual union. She

was the lover. She was there when a mother's belly swelled with a new life. She was the mother. She was there when old age set in. She was the crone. She was there when life was taken away. She was death.

The goddess, above all, represented *immanence*: the divine within. What does it mean, then, to embrace this knowledge?

She changes everything she touches, and, everything she touches changes.

— Chant by Starhawk

To conceive of the goddess as a *divine feminine force within oneself* is a radical idea for women (and even more radical for men!). The idea itself has tremendous power, and healing potential.

The many manifestations of the goddess allow for an opportunity to personalize her in a very unique way. The goddess is whomever we perceive her as *at any particular moment in time*. Her presence blesses us in all aspects of life. Let us consider, then, this idea of blessing, this notion that the goddess or feminine divine can change whatever she touches.

In Self-Relations, a key idea is the notion of sponsorship — the act of "vowing" one's presence to be with a client's experience in the deepest possible way. According to Gilligan (1997), "sponsorship is the relational process by which we connect with, touch, bless, guide, provide place and proper constraints, introduce traditions, and otherwise support a living presence to assume human value" (p. 123). Sponsorship includes the act of "blessing." In embracing sponsorship in therapeutic work, a therapist 'touches' a wounded place in a client with her full presence. She resonates with the experience of the client, while maintaining her own center. There is an energetic exchange that takes place, an almost palpable flow. The therapist may then bless this wounded place with words, or even with just her presence itself. The message is "it's okay. I can see and feel this neglected place that you've hidden for all this time. I will not run from it. I see and feel all the awfulness of your wound. And I see much more. I see the counterpart of that horror: I see your strength and radiance. I know who you are, beyond all the messiness. I am aware of a much deeper part of you, the part that no

ugliness can destroy. And I can see all of you, and be with it all.”

This “blessing” that takes place is intrinsic to Self-Relations work. At its best, this work is profoundly experiential for both client and therapist. In the act of sponsorship, in the space of a blessing, a shift occurs. The acceptance of the “terrible secret” or the “deep inadequacy” is felt profoundly. When this happens, space is created for movement into something new. An opening emerges, perhaps at first felt as relief or unburdening. A letting go of the problem allows the ‘mist to part,’ and a new clarity to emerge. With new insight, the client is able to go deeper, and reach that core that has been buried for so long. This is a very powerful moment in the therapeutic process.

For either therapist or client, *calling the goddess into oneself is a form of sponsorship*. She witnesses and blesses the most hidden parts of us. When one embraces the notion that this blessing is *divine* in its nature, the effects are that much more powerful. But even without the *belief* in her divinity, the *idea* or *archetype* of the goddess is very potent.

One of the key differences in accessing goddess symbols in the sponsorship process is the *intrinsic nature* of complementary energies in various archetypes, as well as within individual goddesses themselves. When thinking in patriarchal/hierarchical constructs, energies or aspects of human behavior are often polarized into distorted opposites. An act can be good or bad, worthy or unworthy. Embedded in these distinctions is the act of *judgment* or *blame*. Goddess archetypes offer a template of complementary energies *minus* the artificiality of idealization or devaluation. A goddess can give life, as well as take life, because she reflects the pure energy of nature itself. She can nurture or destroy, without labeling either act as “good” or “evil.” In this way, goddess archetypes represent the nonjudgmental acceptance of complementary energies. Their images expand our thinking outside the hierarchical/patriarchal belief system that either demonizes or canonizes.

Mother, Maiden, Crone in me, all three in harmony

— Chant by Shekhinah Mountainwater

The goddess is seen in many aspects. Westerners most commonly think of her in her Mother aspect, as we think of Mary. We call our planet “Mother Earth.” The Mother represents the divine feminine at its most ripe and full. The ancient “Triple Goddess,” an integral part of all old European pantheons, had three aspects: Maiden, Mother and Crone. These aspects were first identified in the cycles of the moon: waxing moon, full moon, and waning moon. (The symbol of the triple moon, a circle flanked by a left facing crescent and a right facing crescent, is sometimes seen crowning ancient goddess sculptures.) In the human life cycle, the aspects were youth and puberty; parenthood and maturity; and old age and wisdom.

Each of the three aspects of the Triple Goddess is an archetype that carries its own individual significance and symbolism. The Maiden archetype represents youth and new life. She is seen as the season of spring, the seedtime in creation, the time of new beginnings and growth. The Maiden is the creator of new ideas. She is full of energy and curiosity. In her hunter/warrior form, she can be fierce and sometimes frightening. But her tenderness and love of nature keep her mindful of protecting the vulnerable. The Maiden is sometimes called the “virgin.” The word “virgin” originally described a woman unto herself, who was unmarried or independent.¹ The Maiden is an adventurer: she is your partner in crime. Her enthusiasm can get you into trouble, *or* it can open doors to new possibilities.

Images of the Maiden aspect of the goddess from around the world include Kore/Persephone, Hestia, Artemis, Athena, Hebe, Astraea, Maat, Neith, Anuket, Blodeuwedd, Brigit, Ostara, Parvati, Maya, and Ixchup. For most of these goddesses, we see common symbols for the Maiden: a hunter of great intelligence, imbued with fierceness and an open heart; she has the tools to

¹ See Walker (1983), “Virgin Birth” entry, pages 1048–1049.

cut through mazes and opposing forces: she prepares for the journey of life.

As I work with Amy, I see the embodiment of the Maiden archetype. Amy has had doubts. She has frightened herself out of relationships with guys too many times. Maybe it's because her father left her mother to "find himself" when she was 11. But now, at almost 18, she's so sick and tired of worrying about being left and being lonely. Pretty soon, she'll be away at college, and on her own. She knows it's time to get out of her shell more. It's time for her to say what she's thinking, without being afraid of the consequences. It's time for her to tell her father the truth about how she has felt abandoned by him. Even though she's afraid that he'll withdraw his love if she tells the truth, it hurts too much not to. It's time to take a risk.

The Mother archetype represents fullness and maturity. She is seen as the season of summer and early fall, the time of ripeness and harvest. She blesses and nurtures, feeds and nourishes. She is sexual and fully developed, naturally intertwined with all life. She is confident and knowledgeable, disciplined and secure. She loves unconditionally, yet maintains fierce boundaries when necessary. The Mother is the most universal of all feminine archetypes, as well as the most personal. As Marion Woodman (1997) states, "The image 'mother' is a tuning fork that sets off vibrations far beyond the realm of the personal mother. It resonates in the creative matrix at the core of the psyche — the matrix that contains both the devouring mother and the cherishing mother" (p. 24).

Indeed, images of the Mother aspect of the goddess contain both dark, brutal characteristics and loving, positive traits. Of the thousands of Mother goddesses around the world, the names include universal names like the Great Mother and Ma, as well as Gaia, Demeter, Aphrodite, Astarte, Selene, Hathor, Isis, Mut, Nut, Inanna, Ishtar, Lilith, Cybele, Devi, Aditi, Uma, Durga, Tara, Kwan Yin, Amaterasu, Freyja, Frigg, Danu, Margawse, Gwenhwyfar, Sedna, Spider Woman, Changing Woman, Ixchel, Coatlicue, and Pachamama. These names and many others carry thousands of different representations. Yet here, too, there is universality in their attributes. All Mother goddesses embody the symbolism of birthing, creation, and knowledge. As D. J. Conway (1994) describes her, "The Mother is the Keeper of the treasure, the central point of the spiral or labyrinth. She is, and

ever has been, the churning cauldron of all creation and the re-creation deep within the collective unconscious" (p. 74).

Gwen holds the archetypal energy of the Mother in many forms. She loves her children. They have been her life. But Gwen married young, before she had a chance to figure out whether she wanted something else besides a husband and kids. Lately she's begun to think of herself as capable of more. At age 33, Gwen has begun taking classes in writing and psychology. She has been mixing colors in interesting ways on a drawing pad. She has been thinking about graduate school. Gwen has been having dreams. In one dream, she was in a temple. The temple honored a woman — a beautiful wise woman in a iridescent blue gown. She was giving this woman a bath in her dream, washing her feet. She felt happy to be in her presence. The beautiful wise woman seemed to bring light and love wherever she went. Gwen felt peaceful in her presence. Gwen wondered: 'could she be me?'

The Crone aspect of the Triple Goddess is perhaps the most complex of the three. The Crone represents death and rebirth, transformation, introspection, wisdom, mystery. The Crone's season is winter, the time of death, of long nights, of going underground or within. Her domain is the end of cycles, the darkness before the light. In this domain is her mystery, her wisdom, and her powers for initiation. The Crone makes change and renewal possible: without her life remains stagnant. While the first two aspects of the Triple Goddess have been incorporated and even celebrated in our culture, the Crone has been cut off. The word crone, and other ancient words used to describe an older, wise woman, such as 'hag,' now elicit images of ugly, evil, old women issuing spiteful curses. It wasn't always so.

The older, matriarchal view of the Crone accompanied a philosophy less centered in the ego, more accepting of natural cycles. Just as seed developed into ripening fruit, then withered away, so growing up would pass through maturity into growing old. No power in earth or heaven could rescind this cyclic law, which is why the Goddess of waxing and waning was thought more powerful than any god. As the birth-giving Virgin and the death-dealing Crone were part of one another, death and life

together were like the new seed within the withered fruit, so visions of the young Goddess invariably merged with the old one. (Walker, 1985, p. 29)

The process of aging was revered in ancient times. The positive qualities of the Crone — wisdom, healing skills, moral leadership and deep intuition — have become lost in our fears of death and our disconnection from life's natural cycles. Yet, there is an abundant reservoir of rich archetypal energy in the image of the Crone.

Consider some of the Crone's manifestations: Hecate, Kali, Caillech, Sheela-Na-Gig, Nekhbet, Nephthys, Sekhet, Tiamat, Ereshkigal, Circe, Cybele, Cerridwen, Macha, Morgaine, Hel, Bertha, Skadi, Mara, Chih Nu, Pele, Ixtab, Xochiquetzal. Many of these goddesses are seen as "Dark Mothers," leading us through the veil from life to death. The crone has much to teach us about acknowledging the darkness within ourselves, and trusting that there are immense treasures to be found there. In her fearlessness and wisdom, she is a powerful teacher.

Janet is just now beginning to embrace the fierceness of Crone energy. She has felt lonely ever since her husband died five years ago. He died too young, a vital minister in his prime whom everyone loved. Janet's three sons have all grown and left home now. Janet has worked her way up to the Director of Religious Education in the Northeast region of her denomination. Janet's two oldest sons have children of their own, and Janet loves to see them on her visits to the South. But Janet feels unsettled. She's baffled by what has happened recently: more and more people seem to be coming to Janet for advice and support. Janet listens lovingly, and gently guides them as best she can. While she enjoys "dispensing wisdom" to others, she has come to feel it is time to say no sometimes. It is time to do what she wants to do. And sometimes, Janet says, that will be listening to people's problems and helping them. And other times, it will be taking a long walk or a bath, or calling a friend. "I will decide myself," Janet says.

There is much to be learned from the symbolism of the Triple Goddess. While they traditionally represent specific stages of life, the energies of Maiden, Mother and Crone can be present at any time in a woman's (or man's) life cycle. Even so, several recent scholars have sought to expand beyond the limitations of the Triple

Goddess. Joan Borysenko (1996), in *A Woman's Book of Life*, chooses to describe the stages of a woman's life in seven-year bio-psycho-spiritual cycles. In *The Women's Wheel of Life*, authors Elizabeth Davis and Carol Leonard (1996) identify 13 archetypes for women, one for each moon of the year. Around the central archetype of Transformer is the wheel of twelve other archetypes: Daughter, Maiden, Blood Sister, Lover, Mother, Midwife, Amazon, Matriarch, Priestess, Sorceress, Crone, and Dark Mother. Patricia Monaghan (1999), in *The Goddess Path*, organizes ancient goddesses into four categories instead of three: Daughter, Lover, Mother, and Crone.

Monaghan (1999) notes "although there is a cycle of aging and development implied in the names of these goddess figures, in fact, we can engage any of them at any point in our lives" (p. 19). She goes on to say that men can also participate in these energies, either via the women around them or with their own feminine energy.

So what does 'participating in goddess energies' mean? There are thousands of ways to do this. In truth, every woman or man chooses for her or himself how (or whether) to invite goddess energy in.

As an individual, I invoke her energy in many ways. I invite her into my meditations, my rituals, my music, my walking in nature, my bathing, my conversations, and much more. As a therapist, I invoke her energy in session to assist my own understanding of a client, to sponsor a particular energy, or to transform an experience. I may sense her energy in myself or in my client. In addition, a complementary archetypal energy may arise, and I may intuit an unacknowledged experience of the client's. I may invoke an archetypal aspect of the goddess (such as Mother or Crone) or I may invoke a particular goddess with specific characteristics.

In Self-Relations psychotherapy, integration of an archetype is made possible by sponsorship, or human presence. As Gilligan (1997) states, "the value of the archetype is not inherent; it is determined in each moment by the persons present in the relational field" (p. 161). It is the human presence of the therapist that can make the blessing of the goddess possible. It is the connection *made*, the touch *felt*, that allows an archetype to transform experience. In this sense, the goddess is embodied, in therapist and in client. We feel her *im-*

manence. We feel the divine within ourselves.

In the ancient pantheons of our ancestors, thousands of goddesses exist. We have lost many of their names and even more of their mythology. But some remain. Through ancient texts, artwork, and our own innate body wisdom, we can recreate and reclaim their stories as our own. Through the energy of goddesses such as Artemis, Kuan Yin, Kali, and Demeter and Persephone, therapist and client can sponsor and embody energies that hold, witness, challenge, generate, and nurture new ways of being in the world.

*Holy maiden huntress Artemis, Artemis, maiden,
come to us.*

— from Triple Goddess Chant by
Peter Soderberg

Nancy

Nancy was scared out of her wits, almost every day of her life. She woke up with her heart beating fast. She barely made it through the day without crying.

Her older brother Rick had recently been intimidating her in bizarre episodes: casually mentioning his ability to strangle her any time he wanted to; hiding in the closet of her apartment; and in the worst episode, terrorizing her while taking her on an errand in the car. He had been driving down the highway at 100 M.P.H., swerving erratically. When Nancy asked him to stop, he screeched to a halt, and sped up again just as she began to step out of the car, pulling away with Nancy half dangling out the door grabbing for dear life. Somehow she eventually was able to make him stop the car, and to jump out and run.

It had been months since this worst incident, and Nancy was as scared as the day it had happened.

Evidence came pouring in about Rick: He had quit his job, he had cut off ties with his friends, and he was beginning to talk to imaginary beings. Nancy knew he was “crazy.” It increased her fear. In her sessions, she traced her fears back to other “crazy” childhood voices: to the unpredictably terrorist and controlling behavior of her alcoholic father. As she spoke of her father’s bizarre “rules,” her anxiety and anger increased. She remembered that she was required to be in the house at all times, unless in school. She had never had a friend over.

Her father would punish her mother whenever Nancy broke his rules. When Nancy was 10 minutes late, her mother would get hit. Watching her mother in pain was unbearable. Nancy became a “good girl” at a very early age. She learned what it took to please her father, and did what she had to do to protect her mother. As Nancy traced her fears back in sessions, her anger emerged: anger at her father for his brutality and for being her prison guard, anger at her mother for not leaving and for not protecting Nancy.

Nancy’s most important way of coping over the years had been sports. At first she became involved in sports in high school to please her father, and as a “legitimate” way to stay out of the house. Later she found that the physical activity significantly reduced her nervousness. It got to the point where she would have a panic attack if she went without exercise for too long. Nancy was an outstanding athlete, and at 23, had won every award possible in the athletics department of her college. Nancy was strong and muscular, yet her Irish face was fair and tender. Layers of running sneakers, warm-up pants, team sweatshirts, nylon jackets, and a well-worn cap covered her body.

As Nancy pulls her baseball cap down over her eyes and wiggles in the chair in my office looking at the door, I wonder what had happened to the athletic goddess of the soccer field. Why does she retract herself into the chair? Watching her restless anxiety is painful. Nancy tells me she cannot deal with this; she doesn’t know why she’s even here. She says she thinks she needs to go now, and then she stays. Why does she stay?

Th: Why do you stay here?

C: I don’t know. I think I’m crazy. There’s probably nothing you can do for me.

Th: What are you feeling in your body?

C: Tightness in my stomach. I think I have to go now. *But she stays.*

Th: You can stay with this.

C: There must be something I can do.

Th: Yes, there must be.

Nancy can score five goals in a soccer game and think nothing of it. Nancy can pitch a perfect game. Nancy is the best defender on the basketball team.

- Th: What is it like when you play sports?
 C: It's like I'm in a different world. I don't even think about what I'm doing. I just do it.
 Th: That's amazing.
 C: Not really. It's easy for me.
 Th: It's really an easy thing for you to do.
 C: Yes.
 Th: Some people think it's amazing.

Ah. It is wonderful that Nancy can get into the "zone" in sports so effortlessly. But she has no idea how incredible that is. How sad when women minimize their accomplishments. How tragic when they don't see their own glory. Nancy doesn't see her glory. She doesn't know she is the goddess.

Th: Do you know the story of the Greek goddess Artemis? Artemis's birth was a difficult one. Her mother, Leto, was forced to give birth to her on an underwater island, after having been pursued by monsters and curses. First, she gave birth to Artemis, who then helped deliver her twin brother, Apollo. Artemis became a warrior and archer who defended others against abuse or moral depravity. Her weapons were not used randomly, but only in the defense of vulnerable women and children. She was the guardian of women, protecting young women, nymphs, and pregnant or laboring women. She had little to do with men, and never had children herself.

Artemis was a goddess of the wild, living with animals, and defending them against ruthless hunters. She lived in the woodlands. She was a true nature girl. She was not afraid to use her weapons, not afraid to live alone.²

As I tell the story of Artemis, I hold the image of this Maiden Warrior in the wild spaces of Nancy's life. Although attached to a brother by birth, she must separate from him and now defend against him. She must use her own arrows — the strength and resilience she has

gathered from her success in competitive sports — to stand and turn around and face her attacker. Like Artemis, Nancy must gather her kindred beasts — her friends, teammates, and two other siblings — to protect against her father and brother's terrorism. There will be new threats to face. Her father and brother will reappear, especially if Nancy goes back again to aid her mother in her escape. The vulnerable girl who quivers in anxiety within Nancy needs Artemis' warrior protection. She needs to return again and again to her own warrior strengths, turning and facing her opponents.

In sessions that follow, Artemis' energy becomes stronger and stronger within Nancy. She begins to embrace and sponsor the energy in all aspects of her life. As she does so, more "kindred beasts" are gathered to her, in the form of a close knit women's rugby team, who reflect back all Nancy's fierceness, tenderness, and mischievousness. Nancy's anxiety diminishes, her fears now protected by the shield of Artemis.

*Engrossed is the bee of my mind, on the blue lotus
 feet of my divine mother.*

— Chant by Paramahansa Yogananda

Laura

Laura has relapsed. She was doing so well, had been in recovery for years; recently sober for over a year.

"I thought it wouldn't mean anything. . . . I kidded myself, of course. I thought 'what could one joint hurt? It'll be fun.' Then he offered me cocaine, and I said 'What the hell. I've already smoked the pot.' It was stupid. Now I feel like an idiot. This isn't what I wanted. And I'm scared as hell that you are going to report me for being an unfit mother. I'm so scared I'm going to lose custody — I'm going to fuck everything up."

Tears come in abundance. The first ones I've ever seen from Laura.

- Th: I won't report you, Laura.
 C: You won't?

² For more details in the Artemis story, see Monaghan (1999), page 128.

- Th: Of course not. You are a wonderful mother.
 C: I would never do it with the kids around. They were with John for the weekend.
 Th: You love your kids. I can't see you hurting them. It seems like that is the last thing you would do.
 C: No. I would never hurt them. But look what I did in the past. They lost their mother for months at a time. I was doing heroin for god's sake. Making trips to the city to god-awful neighborhoods just for a pick up. Then I was in Hazelden for months. But I had to do that. Okay. So I'm better now. But how could I be so stupid last weekend? How could I risk everything?

Laura is circling around herself. Coming in from different angles, poking.

- Th: You are angry with yourself.
 C: I'm furious with myself. I'm a fucking idiot.
 Th: Not the first time you've felt this way.
 C: Are you kidding? I'm the queen of low self-esteem. I'm so bad.

She can go on, just as she has many times in the past. She can find endless minutiae in her self-criticism. I feel the emptiness within her. A chasm. A dark hole.

- Th: There's a darkness there.
 C: I'm so tired of this. How I feel about myself. Isn't it enough already? Why can't I give myself a break?
 Th: There is an emptiness within you . . . starving for your understanding and compassion. Where is it?
 C: I don't have it. I don't deserve it.
 Th: You are the one person who has been declared exempt.
 C: Hah. That's right. Okay, okay. So I know I need to be easier on myself. But how do I do it? I have no idea where to begin. This has been going on for so long now, I don't know anything else.
 Th: How to begin.
 C: How do I begin?

How? I breathe in and I breathe out. Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.

- Th: How do you feel about your children?
 C: I love them deeply.
 Th: Is your love for them conditional?
 C: Of course not.
 Th: Why not?
 C: It's just beyond that. I will love them no matter what they do. It doesn't matter.
 Th: This just seems to come naturally with children.
 C: Yes it does. It's so easy with them. *(sigh)*
 Th: Yes. So easy. Where is that part of you?
 C: What?
 Th: The part that loves unconditionally.
 C: Here *(belly)*, and all over.
 Th: It really radiates doesn't it.
 C: Yes.
 Th: Where are you?
 C: What do you mean?
 Th: Where is your center?
 C: Hmmmm. Same place I think.
 Th: Yes. I guess it is.
(Breathing in. The bee of my mind. Breathing out. My divine mother.)

Kuan Yin's image appears before me: the Buddhist goddess of compassion sitting on a bed of lotus leaves. She is calm, peaceful, and radiant. Her hands rest in a meditation mudra at her belly. Eyes half closed, lips in a half smile.

From the belly of Kuan Yin, I speak.

There is that place, right there within you. That compassionate place. Sometimes we need to go outside ourselves a little to find what's right there. Breathe in and breathe out. This takes practice. This is a skill that is developed, compassion. You can practice this for yourself.

Each day, sit in meditation, counting your breaths. Practice observing. Nothing more. It is from this place of nonjudgmental observance that you will begin to discover your compassion for yourself: that very same compassion that the mother in you knows

C: She curses horribly at people, even people I love. She throws things sometimes. She tells people to get out and never come back.

Th: And sometimes she wants to hurt you.

C: Not lately. Just other people lately.

Th: How often has she been around this year?

C: Just a couple times this year, maybe a couple times before.

Th: Dark Ruth.

C: I hate her.

Th: I wonder about her.

C: You wouldn't want to meet her, believe me.

Th: You think not?

C: Forget it. She's wicked.

Th: I like wicked women.

C: Not this one.

Th: Really? I think I like her energy. Wow! She makes things happen!

C: That's for sure.

Th: She doesn't pull any punches.

C: Nope. She says whatever she feels like saying.

Th: Like Kali.

C: Who?

Th: Kali, the Hindu Goddess who has bloody skulls dripping from her neck. She cuts through bull-shit.

C: Ooo! A real bitch.

Th: Bitchy as they come. I love bitches.

C: Why? You're crazy!

Th: As my friend says, everyone has an 'Inner Bitch'. Like Kali.

C: Your friend doesn't know Dark Ruth.

Th: I'd like to know her.

C: Maybe some day.

Th: Kali saved the world. There were men on the earth who were hurting women and children. They wouldn't stop. They were drunk with power. The goddess Durga tried to battle the men, but they were too strong. They kept coming back. So Durga concentrated very hard, and created Kali. Kali jumped out of Durga's forehead. She was a part of Durga, but was much fiercer than Durga could ever be. She took out her huge sword, and laid into all those brutal men. She cut off their heads, until there were

none left. She made a necklace from their bloody severed heads, and proudly showed it to the women and children of the village. From then on, they all worshipped her. Kali had saved them from tyranny.

C: I'll have to get a necklace like that.

Th: Kali Ruth! *(laughter)*

Ruth integrated "Dark Ruth" a little bit at a time. And the war cry "Kali Ruth!" became our call for the times Ruth's fierceness needed to be sponsored in her life. Ruth's depression still overwhelms her at times, and she isn't always able to access the fierceness she needs to battle her demons. But sometimes, she is.

*Return to the mother, return to the mother, return
to the mother, die and be reborn.*

— Traditional Chant

Emma

The way the Demeter/Persephone story is told tells us much about our perceptions of mothers, daughters, violence, sexuality, life and death. We can tell this story from the perspective of a patriarchal culture, or we can tell this story with a knowledge based deep within ancient feminine wisdom — from an era before conquests and struggle for power — from an era of egalitarian life that honors the power of earth herself.

The way we tell the Demeter/Persephone story can change everything. It can be a story about a young woman's abduction and violent rape in the face of a mother's helplessness, or it can be a story about how a Mother honors her daughter as she recovers jewels from darkness.

Emma's descent into hell included abuse, rape, lies, exploitation, manipulation, and secrecy. At an early age, she fell into horror and brutality at the hands of her father and his brother. Her emotionally absent mother was trapped in another time, another place. Emma's cries remained unheard, her bruises unnoticed. She was alone and unprotected too early. Way too early.

Where are the gifts of this story? How can you tell it differently, if it's all you know? How can you find a Mother within, when the only mother you've known is

still lost in her own cloud of numb grief, just as she always has been. . . .

Emma is beautiful. Fiery hair and penetrating eyes — with a mischievous grin and a sharp tongue. Emma is relentless. She writes scathing letters to the editor. She alienates and endears herself to you at the same time. She wears big shirts and overalls with bright colored sneakers, except on the days when she wears short skirts and a little top with her belly button ring showing.

Emma's intelligence shines like a lighthouse beacon, periodically blasting through her fog of insecurity and self-doubt. There have been times when she couldn't drag herself out of bed, when the tears seemed endless, and the world seemed devoid of compassion.

It is difficult to listen to Emma's Story. When the news first came out, when her sister reported to a teacher at school what the dad had been doing to all three girls, when they first arrested him and her uncle, Emma was taken to a therapist. Emma was 9 then, the oldest of the three. The work was so difficult that her therapist quit the profession when she ended with Emma. Emma is afraid that I will quit too. The Story is too horrific. The Story poisons anyone who hears it. The Story is so terrible, Emma tells me, that she has had to modify some of the details so that people will actually believe that it happened. That's what they told her to do in court when she was a child. They told her no one would believe that she had been sexually abused by so many different family members, not to mention being filmed for pornographic movies shown to who knows how many people. Tone that Story down, they told her, just stick with your father and your uncle. That's plenty. No one will believe the rest.

Emma has decided not to tell the Story of that particular underworld again. But the Story keeps coming up in her dreams: She hears the screams of her sister, and is unable to help her; she is being chased, she cannot escape; she is strapped to a bed in a pool of sweat and blood, and no one can find her. And the Story comes up again in her waking life when she receives a letter: your uncle is up for parole, do you want to speak at his hearing?

How far does a sharp tongue and mischievous grin get you when your Story won't go away?

This is the way the story is traditionally told. Demeter, Greek goddess of the earth and harvest, had a beautiful daughter named Persephone. One day, Persephone was brutally kidnapped by Hades and taken to the dark Underworld, where she was forced to be his queen. Months and months passed, and Persephone could find no way out of this land of despair. When Demeter discovered where Persephone was, she was furious, and threatened to bring famine to the earth unless she was returned. Zeus sent Hermes to bring Persephone back from Hades. However, Hades had already tricked Persephone into eating the food of the dead — four pomegranate seeds. So Persephone was forced to return to the Underworld for four months of every year. During the four months when Persephone is Hades' queen, the earth becomes bleak and barren. Upon her return each year, Demeter again blesses the earth with life and growth.³

Emma has decided to write to the parole board, and to read her letter at the hearing for her uncle.

C: I am not going to lie about it. They need to know what kind of man this is.

Th: When will you write this letter?

C: This weekend, I'm going to write it.

But that weekend, her boyfriend breaks up with her. "It's too stressful to be your boyfriend," he says. Another casualty of the Story. We talk again about the parole board.

C: I don't want them to see how scared I was, how scared I am. If they see that, they win. Nobody knows what really happened. They wouldn't believe it anyhow and what good would it do. They think he's a model prisoner. They can't even imagine what he's capable of.

Th: So tell them.

C: I can't.

Th: Why?

C: Then they will all know how alone I really am. Then I'll really be alone.

³ Paraphrased from Aliko (1994), page 40.

Th: You are alone. And you're not alone.
 C: I am alone.
 Th: Where is your mother?
 C: She is not my mother. She's not even a good sister. She has no idea what it takes to be a mother.
 Th: But you do.
 C: Of course. I'd make a great mother.
 Th: Then do it.
 C: What do you mean?
 Th: Be your own mother.
 C: How can I do that?
 Th: You know what you need more than anyone. What do you need?
 C: Just to be loved. Just to be seen. Someone to know I am here.
 Th: You are here, and I see you. You are loved.
 C: I don't know why.
 Th: Every child deserves love. Your child deserves love: Your child, your little Emma, and your big Emma too. All a mother has to do is love her.
 C: My mother can't see me.
 Th: She's in too deep in her own grief.
 C: I have to give up on that.
 Th: You may not find the mothering you need there.
 C: And I have to be my own mother now.
 Th: Yes.

Emma's letter was written the next weekend. She took her phone off the hook. She locked her door. She wrote and she cried. When her tears clouded her vision too much to write, she wrapped herself up in her blanket and rocked herself. She slept. She woke again, and wrote again. When she was done with her letter, she read it aloud to herself in front of the mirror. She cried again.

She read her letter to me in the next session. She cried.

Th: It is beautiful.
 C: Maybe I'll take out some parts of it.
 Th: Leave it all in.
 C: I will leave everything in it, just the way I wrote it.



C: I wouldn't have chosen my life differently.
 Th: You wouldn't erase it?
 C: No — not that I would want to relive it, I wouldn't of course. But now having been through it, I see the ways it has changed me for the better. As strange as that must sound, I know things now I never would have known otherwise. I can create things in my art I never would have been able to create. I am capable of feeling and understanding things I never would have felt or understood.

Many of the ancient stories are lost. We have pieces: fragments of art that tell a story before the story was word. And we have a deeper wisdom, knowledge somewhere in our collective unconscious, a knowing of our deep connection with our Mother. The Mother who carries through our own darkest moments, into the unknown: who cradles us through the nights of wordless cries.

The story of Demeter and Persephone goes back a long long way, long before written history. *The Mother is our reclamation of own innate compassion and wisdom. Her daughter is our journey.* The way the story is told changes everything.

There was a time when the great goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone roamed the hills together, laughing and playing in the beauty of the natural world around them. They ate luscious fruits and berries, bathed in cool waters, and braided one another's hair. Persephone loved to run with the animals, and Demeter would watch her youthful energy with joy.

One day, Persephone was gone from her mother for longer than usual. When she returned, she was quiet. After a long time, Persephone finally told Demeter what was wrong. She told her mother that it was time for her to go away. She told her that she had discovered another world under the Earth, and that she needed to explore that world. She insisted that there were jewels to be found in the darkness.

Despite Demeter's protests, she knew she must let her daughter go to find her own way and make her own discoveries. With tears and hugs, they said goodbye. Persephone promised she would return.

Persephone was gone for days, weeks, and months. Demeter grieved for her daughter, covering herself with a blanket of snow. Finally, after months of stillness and cold, Demeter felt the ground move beneath her. From an opening in the ground, Persephone appeared once again.

In her mother's loving arms again, Persephone told her mother the story of her journey. She had ventured to the darkest lands beneath the earth, and emerged with emeralds, rubies, sapphires and amethysts. As her jewels spilled over the ground, flowers and plants sprang up, and life returned to the earth once again.⁴

*Earth my body, water my blood, air my breath and
fire my spirit*

— Traditional Chant

Rachel

The idea of the oneness of body, soul and spirit, of the immanent divine, was intrinsic to many old goddess religions, and is at the core of new goddess traditions as well. In Self-Relations Psychotherapy, it is the concept of relationship that is key: the relationship between somatic and cognitive self, the relationship between self and other (me and not me), the relationship to the relational field. According to Gilligan (1997), problems or symptoms occur when there is a break between any of these links: symptoms can represent a “break in beingness . . . a break in belonging . . . and a break in relatedness” (p. 65).

While Gilligan (1997) illustrates the concept of divine immanence by reminding us that the “Kingdom of God is within” (p. 46), goddess archetypes take us closer to the sacredness of the body itself in many ways. The body can be not only the instrument of our connection to the divine; it can also be divine *itself*. Gaia's body is the earth. Sheela Na Gig's menstrual blood nourishes life. The goddess is breath itself, fire and heat itself. The body's pleasures are a sacred aspect to her divinity. There are many ancient stories that celebrate the sexual union of the goddess and her consort as a divine act.

For women today, a return to reverence for the body, and ultimately the recognition of the body as sacred, is critical in the reclamation of our sense of self worth, our sexuality, and our health and well-being. The patriarchal split of Madonna/Whore is deeply felt in the somatic life of a woman. Unattainable expectations and ideals of the body are posted at every turn. How does a woman find her way to honoring her own body? And while many women may be grappling with disappointment each time they look in the mirror, others are harming their own bodies in ways that would have been unconscionable in the era of the great goddess.

She needs to talk. She only has a few minutes. She thinks there might be a problem, but she isn't sure therapy will help. Probably it won't do anything, because she really doesn't want to change anything anyhow, and everything is fine. Maybe it is time to go now.

Th: What is the problem you don't want to tell me about?

C: Nothing much. I just scratch myself sometimes.

Th: What do you mean scratch?

C: I cut myself.

Th: Where?

C: My arms, my legs sometimes, anywhere I can hide it.

Th: How often?

C: I don't know. Whenever I feel like it. Sometimes once a week.

Th: Sometimes more?

C: Yea . . .

Th: When is the last time you cut yourself?

C: Yesterday.

Th: Where did you cut yourself this time?

C: My arm. Lately it's just been my left arm because I hold the Exacto knife with my right hand and I'm trying to let my leg heal now so I can wear shorts this summer.

Th: May I see your arm?

C: You want to?

Th: Yes.

⁴ Paraphrased from Edwards (1991), pages 180–183.

I know I have to see her arm but I'm not sure why and I'm not sure whether I can stomach it. She pushes up her sleeves: the top layer an oversized old worn plaid flannel shirt, the bottom layer a cotton long sleeved tee. On her wrists old rope bracelets and a chain, and on her neck a dog collar. High top sneakers with different color laces, and on her head messy long brown hair folded over the sides of her eyes. As she pushes up her sleeve my eyes go up and down her body until finally they land on her arm. Looking for skin, I find very little, just layers and layers of scars. Old deep scars of fleshy white, scars with the redness of a shed scab, fresh red ones. All on top of each other: criss-crossed, random, but purposeful. In the moment that my eyes land on her arm my heart drops. It falls and crashes at the bottom of my belly. My eyes well up with tears involuntarily as if I am punched hard. There is no escape from the pain and shock. 'I've got to find my center now,' I think. 'Where did my center go?'

One breath in and out, I let my center hold the punch, and lift my eyes once again. She pushes the sleeve down quickly.

Th: Oh Rachel.
 C: So that's it. Nice, huh?
 Th: Not really.
 C: Yeah well . . . whatever.

Nothing had really prepared me for Rachel. She wasn't the first client I'd seen who cut herself, but I'd never witnessed wounds so severe before. Rachel was incredibly intelligent and insightful, but she had no shred of self worth. It wasn't even on her radar screen.

In weeks of work with her, Rachel was hardly more trusting than the first time we met. Her cutting remained outside her: outside of her relationship with herself and her own body, outside of her relationship with the other, outside of her relationship with spirit. Broken connections were everywhere. There were times that Rachel's cutting slowed, even stopped for a few weeks. There were also times Rachel wouldn't come to sessions for weeks at a time. Then she would. It seemed like a connection was slowly, gently being seeded between Rachel and me, between Rachel and life. Then she stopped coming, and said I'm too busy, I

have no time. Maybe next month. Not right now. Rachel slipped away, a trick she knew all too well.

Rachel didn't know something — something I desperately wanted her to have the experience of. She didn't KNOW her body was the earth: a temple of the sacred. She didn't KNOW that the blood that she shed each day from her own body was divine blood. She didn't KNOW that her life was precious; that each breath she took was a gift. She didn't SEE her bright fiery spirit, the flame that shone and shook each time she stepped into a room. Rachel's connections were broken. If I allow myself to envision the best possible outcome, therapy was a tiny seed, planted in a rocky soil, waiting for rain.

So where is the happy ending to this story?

Even now, I feel the emptiness of Rachel's disconnection. My only comfort is in knowing that raindrops always go back to the ocean, and that rain falls everywhere, eventually.

*We all come from the goddess, and to her we shall
 return,
 like a drop of rain, flowing to the ocean.*

— Chant by Z. Budapest

Ultimately we all reconnect back to one vast compassionate womb. There is a river of life. Life and death, death and life. We are all born. We all die. We all go back to the source. This is my belief. This is my connection with the divine, with the greater intelligence of the universe.

There are lots of stories out there: vast warehouses, both within and without. They are hidden treasures: they are jewels of the earth. There are thousands and thousands of years of honoring the goddess that are ours to recover. These healing stories belong to women and men. They belong to the earth and all her creatures. There are many arms of the goddess, many ways back to the source. The manifestations are just that: manifestations. Spirit lives in between the manifestations, in between the words, in between the chants.

Where is this work then, the outreaching smile, the ax wielding hand, the lotus blossom, the mothering breast? Where is Her work in the work of Self-Relations?

The goddess sponsors us, with or without words, in

her many manifestations. Sometimes she appears as the Maiden, Mother or Crone. Other times she appears as Priestess, Matriarch, or Lover. Sometimes she is Artemis, Kuan Yin, Kali, or Persephone. Sometimes she forms a circle. Other times she forms a spiral, or a web. Sometimes her elements and seasons come through the doors of the therapy room. Her cycles, her moods, her deep

ways of knowing, are all present. Sometimes I tell her stories, sometimes they are told by my client. Sometimes they are not told at all, but felt and embodied.

The ancient feminine is the legacy of reclamation of earth and spirit. It is a reclamation that takes place within our own bodies, our own psyches, our own lives. Whether or not her name is spoken, she is here.

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*Applications of Self-Relations in Religious Settings,
Healing Communities, and Faith Development*

Rev. Sandra J. Lydick, M.Div., L.M.S.W., is an ordained United Methodist clergywoman and Licensed Master Social Worker who lives in Ft. Worth, Texas. She is serving as a Chaplain and Social Worker at Mental Health/Mental Retardation of Tarrant County in their Early Childhood Intervention program working with children ages birth to three-years who have developmental delays, and their families. She is soon to start a Pastoral Counseling ministry at her church one day a week. She is married to Larry, and together they have four adult children and two grandchildren.

APPLICATIONS OF SELF-RELATIONS IN RELIGIOUS SETTINGS, HEALING COMMUNITIES, AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT

First Attention

Following a traumatic exit from pastoral ministry that in many ways felt like getting out of an abusive relationship, I began a period of healing in which Self-Relations psychotherapy has been an important resource, and has led me to seek a career change to become a therapist. Central to my healing process has been the application of the idea in Self-Relations of making a commitment to oneself — of connecting cognitive self and neglected self, and integrating aspects of one's being that have not been blessed or given a place to be. Betty Alice Erickson, a therapist and daughter of Milton Erickson, said about a person who had suffered childhood abuse and was continuing later in life to act in unhealthy ways, "What a pity. She had the *opportunity* and *resources* to heal, but didn't avail herself of them" (private conversation 1998). That statement was a therapeutic challenge. Because I had the opportunity and resources to heal, I vowed that I would do so.

One pathway to healing from a Self-Relations perspective is that of connecting with one's soul by paying attention to what brings us into a felt sense of well being. The statement often made by Steve Gilligan in his workshops and supervisions, "To whom or what does one give first attention?" is an important message for religious persons who have been taught to be *selfless*. To connect the concept of an indestructible tender soft

spot at one's center with the idea of that being the place of one's soul often creates a transformative shift. The question often asked by Gilligan in his workshops, "What do you do to get back to your center after a difficult day?" evokes responses that resonate deeply — listening to music, being in nature, spending time with family and friends, going for a walk, gardening, dancing, fishing, playing golf (golfers love hearing that playing golf is a way of connecting to their soul! I've even had one golfer ask me to write a note stating that his playing golf is holy work). For me, it is getting a massage once a week, taking walks in beautiful places in nature, and most recently, returning to a faith community. To honor and cultivate practices that connect one to his or her center/soul seems to me to be a core value of Self-Relations teachings and a beginning place for religious persons to practice treating their body as their temple of God.

Many health care professionals, including nurses, therapists, and clergy, are in need of healing because they have given too much, are burned out, and in need of restoring the connection to their center, their soul. A businessman, who was a committed family man and dedicated to his church, shared with me in a pastoral counseling session that he faced inner emptiness. As he talked about his life, it became apparent that he spent his whole life giving to others. I suggested that when he was sitting in church and listening to a sermon on self-

lessness, he was to recognize that the message did not apply to him. He, like many others who tend to give too much, needs to give first attention to his soul's voice crying out to be heard.

Sponsoring Neglected Selves

Self-Relations emphasizes sponsoring the neglected parts of ourselves. Often these parts are negative feelings and emotions that religious people are admonished to push down or ignore. Feelings like jealousy, anger, resentment, fear, loneliness, and sadness need our adult competent self to be with them in a way that gives them expression without allowing them to act out inappropriately. In religious settings where I have introduced the Self-Relations idea of our being an Annie Sullivan to our Helen Keller (who was like a wild animal until her teacher became her sponsor and gave her words for the unnamed world in which she existed), there is an immediate response of understanding. As we become sponsors for the unnamed, unclaimed parts of our selves, integration and transformation can occur. Gilligan (1997) describes practices to allow naming, integration and healing. These include allowing oneself as healer to be touched by the neglected self of a person needing sponsorship, distinguishing the feeling center from the emotional experience held in that center, and proper naming, which Gilligan says, "involves seeing an experience, touching it with human presence, holding it, and giving it blessing" (1997, p. 109). He teaches a technique for healing called Tonglen which involves breathing in the feeling of a negative experience, emotion, or person, holding that feeling in one's center, touching it with compassion, then breathing out a positive feeling (an image of a person, beautiful place in nature, or process that gives an experience of love and openness). This practice can be used for helping to heal oneself or another, although for many people that I've worked with and in my own experience, it may take awhile to connect and hold a positive experience when one is in the midst of trauma and suffering.

Returning to Soul

The commitment for my own healing has taken me on both outward and inward journeys. This commit-

ment to honor my soul has taken me to the Island of Crete where I experienced the Divine Feminine in caves, at springs, on mountaintops, and near ancient trees. One revered tree at Paliani Convent grows behind the oldest Greek Orthodox convent in the world continuously inhabited by women. On Feast Days, a priest comes to the intimate, richly adorned chapel to conduct a ceremony with the nuns, villagers, and farmers. Then, all go behind the church and have a feast under the Myrtle Tree, which is also revered. The legend is that an icon of the Virgin Mary and Son was found at the tree trunk. After being placed in the chapel, it mysteriously reappeared at the tree the next morning. Incorporating the ancient belief in the power of the Divine Feminine (known in ancient cultures as The Goddess), there is an icon of Mary and her son to worship both in the chapel and at the tree. In front of the icon in the chapel are strung rings, other jewelry and tokens of the healing power of prayers answered. The tradition is that when one's prayer is answered, one returns to the chapel to bring a gift to the Virgin Mary. My cognitive, educated, scientific self had always dismissed stories such as these as "folk legends" for uneducated people. This idea was to change because of a number of experiences that helped me to understand that the language of folk legends is like poetry; sometimes these stories are the only way to carry the ineffable mystery of the message that the Divine is indeed present and active in the world in ways we do not always understand or control. In this one example, the powerful effect of the ancient convent where the 80- and 90-year-old nuns smile and bow so gracefully and offer hospitality so graciously as they open their tiny gift shop with handmade items while serving their turn in faithful continuity since the 7th century, combines with the intense sensory experience of the small intimate chapel with antique gold chandelier, oil-burning candles, exquisite paintings. While behind the chapel, a magnificent sprawling Myrtle tree — herself a symbol of the Goddess transformed, surrounded by icons of Mary and child, candles, bits of colored ribbon tied to its branches to symbolize prayers — joins with surrounding sculpted hills of olive farms to provide a sacred place where it is possible to have an opportunity to experience the Divine.

Holding Complementary and Contradictory Ideas

This ability to hold two different realities is another core teaching of Self-Relations. The people of Crete hold the ancient values of the Goddess religion (symbolized by their feasting under the Myrtle tree) along with the religious expression of their Greek Orthodox faith (symbolized in their convent, chapel, and liturgy). Steve Gilligan (1997) suggests that there are two of us — a cognitive, rational self and a feeling, somatic self — which when we stay connected to both, offer the opportunity to experience ourselves as whole people. I would add, made in the image of God. The ability to hold complementary and opposing beliefs is a powerful contribution of Self-Relations to religious communities and faith development. Whether our theology is liberal, moderate, or conservative, in order to create a community where people can be authentic, I believe we need to develop the skill of holding our own and opposing beliefs in a field of mutual respect. It is also important to see the complementary parts of others and ourselves because we are more than a single description; that is, we each have a shadow side (which includes un-integrated aspects of ourselves) as well as our positive attributes and strengths. To recognize and give a place for these multiple aspects of self, is to honor the reality of diversity in all its various manifestations. Much of my disillusionment with organized religion resulted from my failure to understand the complexity of unsponsored manifestations of ourselves when we project them in ways that are harmful and damaging. The single most important thing I learned in 90 hours of seminary training was from my Hebrew Scriptures professor. She said the Hebrew Scriptures as well as a faith community was a response to the question, “Can I be who God calls me to be?” To me, Self-Relations psychotherapy is about the wholesome and healthy integration of our being all that God, Goddess, Higher Power, or Life calls us to be.

The Healing Power of Presence

A commitment to heal has taken me to England where I was visiting a daughter during the time of mourning following Princess Diana’s death. As I joined with thousands of people — some of us curious, many paying their respects — at Kensington Palace, it seemed

to me that expressions of grief for Diana opened into expressions of grief for the unhealed parts of our own lives. I brought from that experience an insight *to not underestimate the power of one’s presence to bring healing to oneself or another*. As people and extended families brought their gifts of flowers, stuffed animals, poems, greetings, favorite pictures of the princess, candles, and tied them to tree branches after the fences of the palace were filled and all available space on both sides of the fences surrounding Hyde Park was taken, there seemed to be a collective exchange of caring as we read the messages, looked at the flowers and teddy bears and balloons, and then looked into one another’s eyes, and felt the grief that we held for our own hurts and compassion for the unspoken grief of our fellow human. There are times when we may not know the best words to say to a friend in their time of need, but our presence at the hospital, or funeral home, or sitting over a cup of coffee can be the healing balm for which they hunger and thirst. Self-Relations emphasizes being present to and for oneself, and by extension, one can be truly present for and with another person.

A young teacher in Ft. Worth affirmed the importance of the healing power of presence. She was run over by a pickup truck while she was out walking. This resulted in severe injuries with a long hospital stay and recuperation time at home. She said that an important help in the healing process came from the many simple expressions of concern and caring — cards, letters, phone calls, visits, food. She said she could never express in words how deeply these acts of compassion touched her and her newly married husband. On one occasion after she was home from the hospital, she asked her husband if there was something to drink besides water. Since she was bedridden, she had to depend on him for everything; he was feeling overwhelmed with working, taking care of her, the house and all the other responsibilities. She said she could see him starting to fall apart as he tried to explain that he would have to go to the grocery store to get something besides water, but that the grass needed mowing, and he needed to prepare dinner. At that moment the doorbell rang and some of the teachers from her school delivered several sacks of groceries with a variety of items including juice and

soda. She said it literally saved her and her husband, and that she could never have imagined what several sacks of groceries delivered by smiling colleagues could mean far beyond the moment of quenching her thirst.

You Have Inner Resources

When I teach Self-Relations to Sunday School classes, I utilize the Ericksonian and Gilligan maxim: YOU HAVE INNER RESOURCES! I ask each person to tell one thing they do to help themselves when things are difficult. The responses are often simple, but they are extremely effective, and the combined effect of each person contributing their special technique — singing a psalm to God, praying, quoting a Bible verse, reciting a poem learned from an older nurse, relaxing on the patio listening to the sound of a water fountain, looking for the big picture, spending time with family and friends, spending time with church friends, journaling, going to a day care center, remembering that “I have a future,” reciting The Lord’s Prayer and the Serenity Prayer — helps create a community of healing/healers. The act of speaking about one’s own way of healing opens oneself to connecting with others in the circle. A climate of respect for diversity is palpable and the creative abilities we each have to respond to our need to restore balance, wholeness, and well being are honored as well as strengthened. Indeed, one of the great potential strengths of religious communities is their ability to provide healing for their members. Yet, in my experience, they most often offer support and fellowship with the notion that healing is up to God. To seek intentionally to be a healing community by being more fully present to oneself and others is a goal worthy of pursuit.

Ritual as An Aspect of Healing

The commitment to my own healing has taken me to Bali, where I had an opportunity to spend two weeks studying healing, trance, and ritual. Healing and healers are a common feature of the Balinese health practices and healing is a part of the fabric of Balinese life. As exotic as the healers are, even more profound to me was the importance of ritual in the life of individuals as well as within the community. Each family has its family temple in one corner of the family compound. Here the ancestors of the family are revered and honored through

daily prayers and offerings, and believed to be reincarnated as family members. Beautiful and elaborate offerings are made daily from coconut leaves and flowers, placed in every building of the compound (usually 25–45 small structures in each family compound), at crosswalks everywhere in the village or town, in each business, at all the village temples, and the Mother Temple at Batur. On special festival days, more elaborate offerings are made from fruits and colored sweet cakes which are artistically arranged and piled high on a tray, carried on the heads of the village women as they parade through the streets accompanied by children carrying banners and men playing instruments. They make their way to the temple where the offerings are blessed; the villagers meditate and are blessed with holy water and rice in a beautiful ceremony using flower offerings and incense, amid the background of chanting priests, and then the offerings are taken home to eat! Wherever the Balinese go each day, there are visual reminders, in the form of flowers and coconut leaves, of offerings to God. I believe that to create a sacred space in our own home along with practices that help us connect with our soul helps strengthen our ability to heal.

I have an altar on the raised brick hearth of our fireplace. To remind me of the Divine, collected artifacts from my travels are arranged there. They include a red hand-woven cloth from Crete, shells and rocks from inspiring places in nature, twigs from sacred trees, water from sacred springs and rivers, dirt from the Santuario de Chimayo (near Santa Fe, New Mexico), essential oils including one called “into the future,” driftwood, pictures, icons, statues depicting the Divine Feminine, and musical instruments. I have a replica of an ancient Minoan bird Goddess in my garden. Today, I gave her an offering of an apple blossom and a rose. The Minoans believed that seeing a bird was an epiphany of the Goddess (Gimbutas, 1991). What a lovely idea to be reminded that we are seeing God every time we see a bird, and in every other life!

Practices which help me connect with my soul include: cleansing my meditation area with a Native American smudge stick, solitude and reflection, honoring the sacred with flower offerings, prayer and meditation using candles and incense, music and dancing, placing my hand on my heart and feeling my heartbeat as I

imagine being with the neglected child within (in all her various ages), along with discernment in how and how much I help others. A blessing song has special meaning to me.

May the blessing of God go before you.

May Her grace and peace abound.

May Her Spirit live within you.

May Her love wrap you 'round.

May Her blessing remain with you always.

May you walk on holy ground.

(Winter, 1987, p. 250)

These practices have helped me to be aware of how much I was giving in ways that were not really helpful to others. By loving and healing my own wounded self, I strive to remember to no longer try to spend all my energy trying to heal others, thinking they will then heal and help me. After spending a lot of time in solitude and reflection, I've come to respectfully disagree with Oprah who says we heal ourselves by focusing on others; instead I have learned the multitudinous and creative ways I gave myself away in ways that were not healthy or truly helpful. Perhaps there are many people who are selfish and need to learn and practice being selfless, but there are also many people who need to learn and practice giving nurture and attention to themselves instead of hoping it will happen after or because they have given so much to others. Gilligan (1997) explains the need to experience oneself as a unique being who belongs to something greater than oneself, who is related to self and others through interaction including differences.

Healing in the Context of Community

Hitchhiking through Europe was a popular activity in the 1960s, and being young, adventurous and goal oriented, wearing a backpack as a badge of idealism, I joined the exodus; looking for a place "where my mind comes to rest." To me, this meant finding a spiritual community of like-minded individuals whose love and sharing would "give peace a chance." I have been searching for this place — sometimes visualizing it as geographical space and other times sensing it as an internal state — ever since. Currently, I experience healing community in Self-Relations workshops, supervisions,

and participation in a listserv cyber community where therapists and those who are interested in the practice of Self-Relations communicate on topics ranging from therapeutic approaches to client problems to ecology to the dark Goddess to the desire for greater participation by members of the listserv. The Self-Relations listserv also offers support during times of personal loss and transition. For me, much positive modeling occurs when I read the sensitive, creative, inspiring messages and poetry that people I have never met in person post to the list. Recently, after 5 and a half years, my husband and I have returned to a Christian church in our denomination, and I am once again feeling the blessing of a healing religious community.

Self-Relations as a therapeutic approach promotes healing in community by listening deeply to the expressed needs of another and responding in ways that somatically touch the wound. A friend shared she never received her father's blessing. Another friend and I joined to offer that blessing as we sat together in a cave with a pool of natural hot mineral water in Colorado, a place where Native Americans came for healing. We scooped the water in our hands, placed it on our friend's head and blessed her in the name of the Father, the Transforming Power, and the Mystery of Life. I believe we can create those healing moments even without an exotic environment by intentionally recognizing the need for them, creating a sacred space by being silent for a moment and connecting with our center, breathing deeply and speaking from our heart. There was a yogi song I used to sing to myself during meditation, "Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song. Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song. I will never forget you, I will never forsake you, I will never forget you, I will never forsake you. Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song" (Yogananda, 1974). Recently I realized that the longing for community was to be able to sing that song metaphorically, if not actually, to others and feel it sung to me. The gift that Self-Relations offers to caring communities where a place of trust, safety and hospitality exists, is the awareness that we bring our woundedness with us and as it is properly named, given expression, and adequately sponsored, healing can occur. Even in a community of two, the process can be complicated since each brings her own personal history and vows she has made. Yet it

is this very woundedness that supportive community can graciously sponsor because the nature of life is to restore healing, wholeness, balance, and then move on like the flowing stream that it is. The most powerful image of this was in a Steve Gilligan workshop when he described what happens as the wounds get stitched into our center, our soul, and when life tries to flow through us, and our soul starts waking up from its frozen exile, the wounds are the first sign of this awakening! Thus the pain is a good sign to the therapist, or the community, that the soul is awakening, but of course, to the individual, the tendency is to want to shut down and close up to avoid the hurt. The Self-Relations community is the place where I have most clearly experienced the strength, skill and integrity to provide a container for this work and play to evolve. Yet, as in all communities, there is the danger of the shadow — places where accurate naming of one's perceptions of reality may not be welcomed or sponsored because they challenge someone's ego, or assumptions of hierarchy or power.

I believe that one of the greatest threats to community is silence. Silence about who we are. Silence in not telling our story. Rev. Young Kim, a clergywoman, wrote this poem as an introduction to a booklet *Why Do Women Tell Their Stories?*

Why Do Korean Women Tell Lifestories?

There was an old Korean pop song saying,

"Life is a journey
Comes with empty hands
Goes with empty hands."

Many Koreans liked the song and believed that was true for everybody. Yet some people seem to have to carry something with them when they leave life.

One woman told me
At the end of her story
"I had to share this
painful story of mine with someone
because my pain was too heavy
to carry to the tomb."

She may go with empty hands
but certainly not with empty heart.
Her heart was full of pains
which became her 'Han.'

'Han' is the unresolved pain
during one's life time.
'Han' comes from various oppressions
So it is a unique pain
of the oppressed.

The worse nature of the 'Han'
Is that you have no freedom
to speak about your oppressions
which causes double oppression
and brings multiple pains.

The life conditions of Korean women
brought what they phrased,
the 'times of Han.'
During these times of Han,
the 'Han' is being piled and piled;
repressed and repressed.

If you have such 'Han' unresolved
during your life time
you cannot close your eyes when you die.
The oppressed women were longing
to resolve their 'Han'
and close their eyes in peace
at the time of death.
If they do resolve it
they have no regret of life.

The patriarchal society and the Christian Church
in Korea together have clearly taught
the three ways of being
virtuous women.
that was to
Be silent (means 'Do not speak up')
Be obedient (means 'Do not say No')
Be patient (means 'Do not make change').

Women possessing these qualities

were recognized as
socially respectable
religiously faithful.
Whatever happened
in the life of the community
Whichever women practiced
these oppressive teachings
the honor and glory were theirs.

Who and what could make
the silent woman speak up
the obedient woman say "No"
the forever patient woman
make change
Most women were afraid
of losing the honor and glory
or did not know
what to speak up
when to say "No"
why to make change.

That was one of the reasons why I had to start
'Storytelling' with those women.

The story gives
the teller and the listener
the wisdom to know
what to speak
when to say "No" or "Yes"
why and how to make big changes.
The story gives courage to be
ourselves as wounded.
Story shares its healing power
when it is being told and listened.

Here we have a collection
of women's stories from Korea.
The tellers of the stories
in this book are innocent victims
of the patriarchal society.

In storytelling circles, they were given freedom and
space
to speak about their oppression
and the pain of 'Han.'

They broke the tradition
became pioneers telling the truth
and resisting the injustice
and struggling to change their own lives
and the oppressive culture
in solidarity with the listeners
and readers of their stories.
We hope to carry our common daily cross together
through Storytelling and listening.

My experience in storytelling
with women found that
Story was beauty-ful
Storytelling was wonder-ful
Story making was power-ful
Story had its own key to healing.
I used the key that the story provided me, a listener
Now, I would like to sing a new song:

Life is story
Comes with own story
Goes with many stories.
Life is a journey
To tell your story
To listen to others' stories.

How blessed you are
If you shared your story
How heavy you are
If you carry the untold story.

I hear Jesus' commandment today
"You 'listen to' one another
Just as 'I listen to' you." (John 15:12)

My hope and vision is for religious communities as
well as healing communities to provide a hospitable and
safe place for telling our story, and for the compassion,
experience and wisdom of the members of the com-
munity to hear those stories, be with them, and then go
beneath the story to connect each individual to the
Kingdom of God within, bringing healing and trans-
formation.

An expression of Self-Relations in community

comes from my clinical practice supervisor when she notices the twinkle in my eye after telling me about a dream workshop she is planning for her clients. As she welcomes my ideas, builds on them, and invites me to contribute, I feel "the place where my mind comes to rest" in both a geographical place as well as an internal state of mind.

Faith Development

One application of Self-Relations to faith development is that of sponsorship. As parents develop their own spirituality, they can become sensitive to the developing moral and spiritual awareness of their children. For parents and adults to teach children to name their feelings (especially negative ones), to allow those feelings to have a place, and then to teach their child how to express those feelings appropriately, builds an important foundation for spiritual and moral development. For example, I believe it is important to distinguish between the feelings of envy, jealousy, or lust and the acting out of those feelings. To know that having those feelings is not bad or evil and does not make the person a bad or evil or unworthy individual, leads to a greater acceptance of oneself as a fallible human being. Feelings of shame and guilt can then be applied to one's behavior rather than one's intrinsic worth. Faith development proceeds from a child learning to honor his or her inner values and beliefs and experience a supportive community where those values and beliefs are allowed to mature.

Current studies in child development identify resilience as an ability that allows children to overcome the effects of poverty, homelessness, divorce, school difficulties, deeply troubled family life including abuse, and chronic illness (Berk, 1999). One important factor in fostering resilience is to have a positive sponsor in the child's life — family member, teacher, neighbor or other responsible adult to provide support and a positive model for coping. Equally important is to refrain from nega-

tive sponsorship, which introduces "alien voices" (internalized voices of condemnation). Preschoolers learn moral development through modeling and reinforcement. All children and adolescents need our blessings rather than a sponsorship of neglect, indifference, or criticism, which has the result of a sponsorship of cursing. An adult who honors his or her own soul can be more attentive to identifying and responding to opportunities to teach and reinforce moral and spiritual development in children rather than instill a legacy of self-doubt and feelings of being "less than" made in God's image.

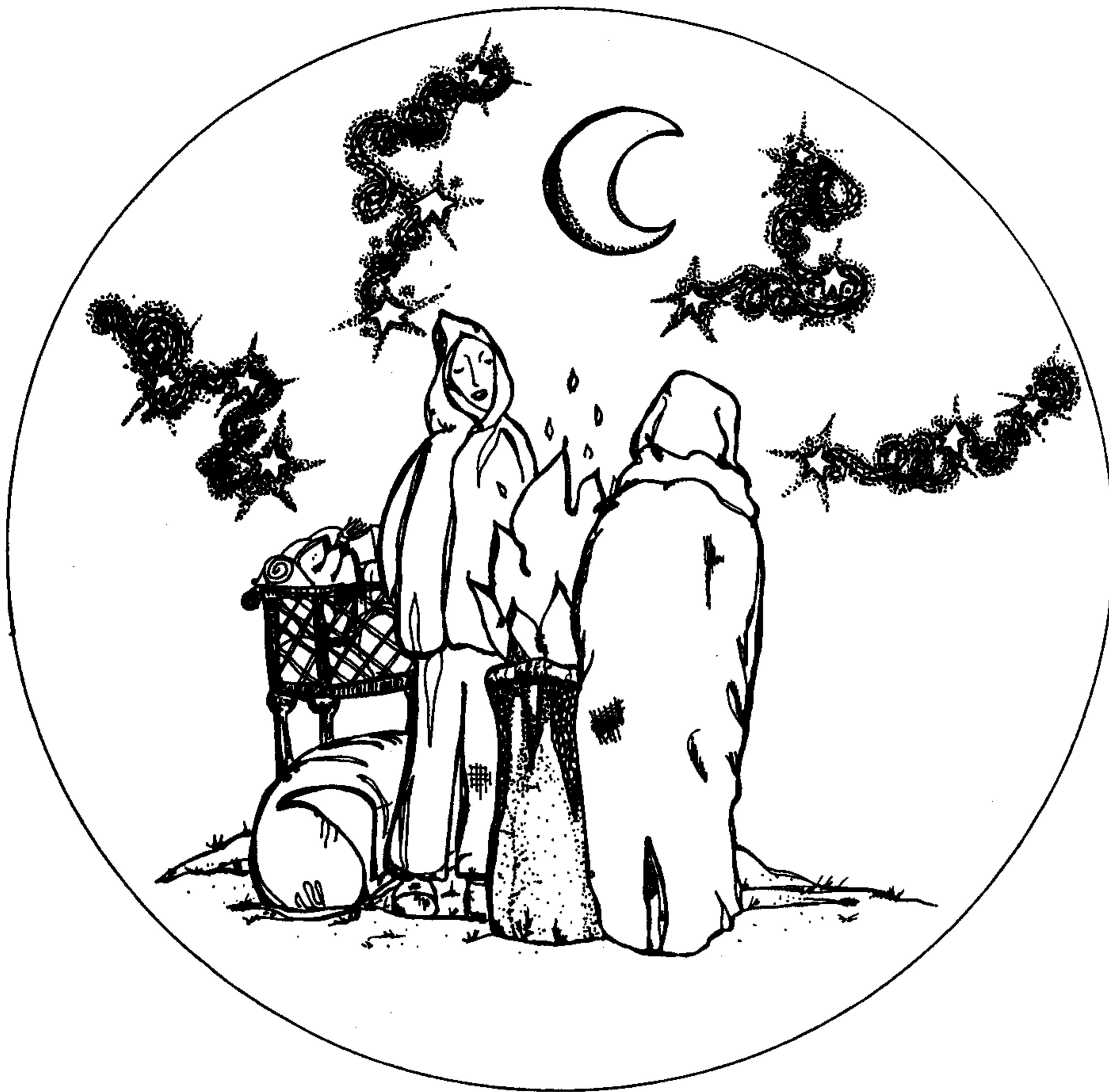
Many parents that I work with who grew up in very strict, authoritarian homes, respond by being overly permissive with their own children, setting few boundaries. When I ask them if they know who Erroll Flynn was, they shake their heads "no." Steve Gilligan (1997) uses the "Erroll Flynn Principle" to describe holding a principle, like Erroll Flynn held his sword, not too loose, not too tight. Many behavior problems that children have is a result of their sensing that there is no parent in control (sword being held too loose) while others have too many restrictions and expectations (sword held too tight). As Gilligan (1997) describes in *Courage to Love*, it is like holding a bird — if you squeeze too tight, it will die; if you hold too loosely, it will fly away. Thus the practice of Self-Relations is an art that needs be practiced in relationship rather than a set of rules to be applied and enforced.

The study and practice of Self-Relations principles has brought me closer to understanding the truth of Francis Thompson's (1917) poem:

All things by immortal power
Near or far,
Hiddenly
To each other linkèd are,
That thou canst not stir a flower,
Without troubling of a star.

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*Street Life: Self-Relations and the Call
to Healing Ourselves and Others*

Kate Marshall, Ph.D., works as a consultant and psychologist in private practice in Boulder, Colorado. She has studied with Stephen Gilligan since 1983, and incorporates many of his teachings into her work. In addition to her work life, as a practicing Buddhist and spiritual seeker, she has incorporated her passion for social justice into numerous volunteer activities. She has worked on homeless issues for the past ten years.

STREET LIFE: SELF-RELATIONS AND THE CALL TO HEALING OURSELVES AND OTHERS

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door*

— Emma Lazarus (1883)

Inscription for the Statue of Liberty,
New York Harbor

Lennie's Story

Eight of us stand in a circle. The ground is crusty, March-stiff beneath our feet. We clasp hands as a man in a bandanna and worn leather chaps coaxes *Amazing Grace* from his twelve-string guitar. A single voice, then a chorus rises as the wind slices our ankles and flings our song into the foothills.

"Lennie¹ was my friend," one woman says through tears. "He never talked bad about anyone."

Other voices chime in. "Lennie shared everything, especially his Mad Dog." Laughter followed by more stories and comments. "Lennie sure liked to joke. He was a real comedian!"

A slight woman with sad eyes introduces herself as Lennie's sister. She passes around pictures: Lennie as a smiling baby; in first grade, impish and innocent; as a

star quarterback in high school, strong and proud in full game regalia; at high school graduation in cap and gown; a grinning uncle Lennie, hoisting his two-year-old nephew aloft. In the last photo taken a year ago when he was 32, he leans against his sister, his eyes unfocused, his body bloated.

Dead for two days before he was discovered in an abandoned building, Lennie's blood alcohol level, at 0.30, was three times the legal limit.

Who was Lennie? (A) A loving son, brother and uncle? (B) A devoted friend? (C) A high school football star? (D) An impish first grader? (E) A depressed and lonely alcoholic? (F) A displaced homeless person, one among two-and-a-half to four million nationwide? (G) All of the above and much more? Stephen Gilligan (1997) describes the multiplicity of possible answers to this kind of identity question in his book, *The Courage To Love*. As Lennie's sister, shelter staff, and friends suggest, all of us defy the shadow of any unitary description.

The tragic street deaths of numerous Lennies in the past several years in our self-reflective and compassionate community have felt like a failure of sorts. Who are we as a community? And who else do we aspire to be?

Even in the midst of sensitivity and caring, Lennies

¹ The name and some details have been changed to protect the identity of the person.

are often ignored, dehumanized, considered to be unworthy citizens. "They" are met with gratuitous violence, considered safe targets for ridicule and aggression. Some of us patronized or pathologized in single or double-digit phrases: chronic street alcoholics, intransigent Vietnam Vets, incorrigible mentally ill, all code words for hopeless and unworkable.

Perhaps our outlooks evolved from tradition. Perhaps they developed as attempts to separate/distance ourselves from the pain and obvious suffering faced on an almost daily basis by these folks.

Homelessness: Literal and Metaphorical Aspects

On the street level, to be homeless is to have little or no privacy, while at the same time engaging in a moment-to-moment struggle to meet the most intimate and basic needs. Where to urinate and defecate? What to do when the shift at work is over and a friend's apartment is no longer available? What happens when there is no more room at the shelter?

To be dependent on the kindness of strangers and friends as a way of life can be shaming and degrading. The effects of homelessness are so profound that it can be easy to forget that the condition is not the defining characteristic of the person.

To have a home is to have a resting place, a dwelling regardless of our physical or psychological state of being. To be without a home, in a literal sense, is to lack a secure dwelling. Strictly speaking, physical homelessness is created and maintained by a public tolerance for the lack of affordable/available housing units nationwide. In addition, there are many conditions and contexts that can sustain street-life as a chronic symptom. These include a variety of separating conditions such as styles of community response, availability of services/housing units for diverse groups, a culture of myths about worthiness and desirability, addiction, etc.

It is not the purpose of this paper to address these concerns at any length. However, the above stands as a gentle reminder of a larger context/mandala into which this tiny story fragment fits. In Jungian psychology, the mandala is a symbol representing the effort to reunify the self (Webster, 1989, p. 870).

In a broad, metaphoric sense, the term "homeless" can be applied to mark the status of a person's disowned and displaced feelings/attributes. Unacceptable or un-

popular desires, thoughts, needs or expressions can all be made "homeless" in a variety of ways. The expression can also provide a tag for an institution or community's discredited and disowned members. When certain internal/external "degradation ceremonies" take place (Osorio, 1976), often around an individual or group's inability to hold and integrate opposites, a person, institution, and/or community can become "alien" unto her/him/themselves. These relational splits or breaks in belonging (Gilligan, 1997) can disrupt the natural movement within the individual or group for unity and relational balance.

Although the above metaphoric usage has its obvious limitations, many of us experience "homelessness" by this standard, at least some of the time. We may encounter irreconcilable internal differences and/or shoulder off unacceptable feelings and aspects of ourselves, often without awareness. These projected and/or displaced "members" lack a proper sanctuary within which to rest, renew and integrate. According to Gilligan (1997), we have not yet found a way to positively sponsor, e.g., properly name, bless and house these currently unacceptable experiences, impulses, yearnings and aspirations.

How can a community of individuals begin to hold and nourish its underutilized, disowned or neglected aspects? As healers, on a psychological level, we work with individuals who are unable to grant certain energies or aspects a permanent comfortable dwelling place within. To broaden the psychic home base is to welcome and befriend the disowned and dishonored energies in each of us in ways that can result in the eventual mature expression of these energies. A part of our work as therapists is to coach our clients in deepening and broadening the connection with self and in expanding the space for the disowned, unsponsored energies that have been cursed and driven underground. In essence, to welcome the prodigal daughters and sons back into an expanded nest.

In this account, I will view "homelessness" from both a metaphoric and literal standpoint as it relates to displacement and the mandala of person-in-community.

Structure and Purpose

Utilizing the framework of Self-Relations theory (Gilligan, 1997), with particular emphasis on Gilligan's ideas of sponsorship and the possibilities awakened by his concept of both/and logic, I will describe SR's use-

fulness for connecting with disowned aspects of ourselves and our communities. Glassman's Three Tenet Practice (Glassman, 1998) and other Buddhist frames will also be included as I highlight experiences that have emerged from my connections with homeless folks over the last several years.

As a volunteer in a collaborative street-based outreach project called Boulder County Cares, headquartered in Boulder, Colorado, I have had the privilege of meeting homeless men, women and teens on the streets. From October through April, our teams connect with community members who aren't eligible or can't/won't use the traditional shelter services provided by the county. We provide basic supplies, transports and referrals to community agencies for these folks. I have also served on the board of the local homeless shelter in the Boulder community for the past six years.

Hence, working within the framework of "homelessness" from both a metaphoric and literal standpoint, I will briefly reflect upon self/other relational split (Gilligan, 1997). I will also touch upon some grounds and conditions for moving towards health and wholeness utilizing the SR framework of sponsorship.

Wholeness and The Other:

A House Divided Against Itself Doesn't Stand For Much

Bill waited at the edge of a busy intersection clutching his "Ride Wanted" sign. On this February night when the temperature was below 40 degrees, he dressed in shirtsleeves and jeans. His hands were uncovered. Needle marks dotted his forearms, and tattoos in the shape of X's were arranged between the diagonal rows of slash marks, like horizontal tic-tac-toe symbols.

"Bill is volatile, especially around women, so be careful," Walter, the lead staff, warned.

Barely 5'4", Bill had been permanently barred from the shelter for brawling and unrestrained alcohol use. Walter beckoned. When I approached, Bill stared beyond me, his pupils the size of small marbles. I greeted him, my smile nervous, tentative. His eyes charted distant territories. Wordlessly he accepted supplies: gloves, a blanket, a hat, a poncho, and motioned to his friend submerged in the shadows.

I stepped back to get soup while Walter tended to Bill's friend. Fingers of chilled air slid beneath my jacket.

I shivered. Despite several months as a volunteer, I was shaken. I thought about Bill's kids, his broken relationships, the moonless night. A torrent of sensations: fear, disgust, numbness, and compassion swirled inside my gut. I was outraged that there wasn't a safe place for Bill that night; disappointed in myself that I hadn't connected more deeply. I was afraid of him.

What was I doing here? Cars sped by and people shouted from open windows. I had an urge to turn away. I reassured myself that I would be home in front of my gas fire in another three or four hours, where I could read a new chapter of *Peace Is Every Step* (Nhat Hanh, 1991).

Self and Other

When folks appear to be different from "us," our minds may tell us that we are fundamentally dissimilar from "them." Unlike Bill, we would get off heroin if we were hooked, for example. We would control ourselves better and not get hacked up in street fights. We come from a different racial or ethnic background. Our original families were more caring, and wouldn't let us live on the streets. We would work instead of panhandle to live, no matter what. We wouldn't piss or defecate behind somebody's rosebush. And the list goes on. The urge to differentiate ourselves and our circumstances from others is a very human one. With respect to Bill, the prospect of living on the streets the way he does is scary and unappealing for most of us.

The consequences of polarizing differences into an "I-it" relational split have been well articulated (Gilligan, 1997; Glassman, 1998; Fromm, 1956). "When the position of other is deemed invalid," a rationale for violence and in extreme cases extermination is legitimized (Gilligan, 1997, p. 35). Adherents of the "survival of the fittest" theory, for instance, might justify some of the gratuitous violence committed against homeless people as part of the Darwinian plan for preservation of the species.

From a Jungian perspective, Bill represents aspects of our "shadow" side. This archetypal figure is characterized by denied, unpleasant, and unsponsored energies within ourselves and the community (Hopcke, 1989). Gilligan (1997) might say that Bill and folks in his shoes express the heart and soul of the community's neglected self; e.g., the unsponsored aspects of our community's inner-being or "*fressen*," (nature) energy.

Oneness

While I fixed soup for Bill, I realized that it was not only my divided emotions that I was noticing. For a moment, I felt connected to a living organism that included all of it: the college students in cars, Bill on his lonely dark corner, his friend in the shadows, Walter, my spiraling emotions and judgments, the community, the police, the moonless night.

In the words of Bernie Glassman (1998), a founder of the Zen Peacemaker Order, a community of social activists and peacemakers around the world, at some level, "we are all part of the same thing, part of the same unity." Although our differences are important, our commonalities as sentient beings-in-the-world unite us to some degree. Hence, on the level of "interbeing" (Nhat Hanh, 1991), I am Bill, and Bill is I. Bill is the community.

Bernie Glassman's Three-Tenet Practice: Connection With Ourselves and Others

I wasn't totally convinced after our encounter with Bill that anything useful happened for him. On the other hand, our meeting had been friendly, and for that Sunday night he had gloves, a hat, and a blanket to shield him from the elements. I also had been deeply touched by a fragment of his world.

According to Bernie Glassman (1998), entering each situation free of fixed ideas (not knowing) is the first tenet of the Three Tenet Peacemaker Practice, and is a fundamental practice for meaningful connection. Deliberate deconstruction of fixed ideas about each other and the world means charting a course that often erodes old parameters of being. "Taking the plunge" into unknown waters removes typical landmarks for structuring our worlds, opening the possibility for real change. Examples of deliberate "plunge" practice might include street retreats or extended meditation sessions. Sudden and unpredictable life events such as an unexpected death can also act in this manner.

Releasing into the place of "not knowing" can allow us to bear witness to whatever the situation holds (the second tenet). Bearing witness with respect to Bill involved paying compassionate and vulnerable attention: to Bill, his friend, to the setting, the college students, Walter, my feelings, the job of the police, the shelter staff who years ago barred Bill for safety reasons, etc.

To be present with tenderness to our own and others' sorrows and rejoicing leads to the possibility of healing. From that place, appropriate action ("right action" from the Buddhist perspective) or non-action can develop (the third tenet).

In the language of absolutes, joining compassionate attendance with spontaneous wisdom can serve as a place of refuge for ourselves and others. In a relative sense, this three-tenet practice makes available a down-to-earth approach to being with self and others in a variety of ordinary situations.

Hence, empathizing with all players in a given context beginning with ourselves, and allowing appropriate action to emerge invites continuous heart-mind participation. More will be said later about the importance of operating within a proper ritual/relational container (Gilligan 1997).

Healing Conditions: Working with Un-sponsored Community Experiences

Having outlined a context for witnessing and attending to the experiences of some folks on the street, I will now reflect upon some additional tools for addressing the needs of ourselves and others in a community.

Opening to Everything

Witnessing life on the street provides many glimpses into the offerings of the human spirit. I am reminded of Joe, whom we bumped into on one of our rounds in the University Hill area. He sat cross-legged on the concrete landing of the "food court," a collection of fast food restaurants designed for efficiency and minimal use of space. A slight man with reddish-blond hair, he looked to be in his early 40s, his cheeks and forehead already deeply hatched by the elements. Although the ambient temperature was in the high 30s, he wore sandals. Joe told us he was camping somewhere in the foothills. After a time he confided that due to the hire of some eager new officers, the police were making more aggressive strikes. He needed to wait to go to his campsite. We offered him supplies, a transport, soup, all of which he declined.

"I'm Artist Joe," he said. He produced a fragment of chalk from his jacket pocket and beckoned us outside where he stooped to sidewalk level. In less than two

minutes, he drew the face of a Greek god with remarkable and resonant detail: medium, slate and chalk. We all agreed that the artist label was not misplaced. After he made this offering, Joe accepted food, gloves and socks as well as a card with our number. He told us he was 29.

Following a pleasant chat in which he promised to spread the word about our operation, he wished us well. The encounter served as a reminder that Joe was a man, an artist, an interested citizen and much much more. He was also possibly chemically dependent and somewhat battered by the elements. Without romanticizing his situation into a starving artist scenario, it felt like the exchange with Joe was a touching example of an awake and compassionate trading of gifts.

Paraphrasing Robert Thurman (1998), I could simultaneously see Joe's suffering and witness his freedom from suffering.

Holding and Proper Container

In SR therapy, a central condition for healing is the presence of a strong "relational container." Without an appropriate "vessel" that can properly hold the mix of relational energies in a given situation, it is difficult or impossible to properly name, hold and integrate the disparate and polarized elements within an individual or group. As Gilligan (1997) states, each difference or distinction needs to be embraced and welcomed on its own terms. The grounds for this embrace must be firm, strong and rooted.

On one of my service evenings, my partner and I were called to respond to a woman who had been asked to leave the shelter for behavior that included racial epithets, explosive temper episodes and other belligerent acts. She was not a drinker and not currently in an abusive relationship, making her ineligible for the other available services in the county. She had no friends who were willing to receive her.

Sondra was a petite woman, 40-something and weighing in the vicinity of 100 pounds. Dressed in a white coat and bell-bottoms, she walked toward us with a rolling gait like a sailor who'd been away from dry land for too long. I discovered later that she had cerebral palsy. The lead staff and I greeted her and after a while asked if she could use a blanket or sleeping bag.

"The state took away my children, and now I can't go to the shelter because of those goddamn niggers. And those fucking police won't help . . ." To punctuate the seriousness of her points, she waved her lit cigarette like a dagger. The embers soon glowed within inches of my face.

After I backed off, my fear was joined by admiration for her spunk. I respected her ability to survive in this crazy context. Because we couldn't offer her anything but a sleeping bag and conversation, she walked away, screaming over her shoulder that we could "kiss her ass a thousand times."

On one level, our community-as-relational-container wasn't yet strong or evolved enough to "take the heat" with respect to Sondra and her needs. What might constitute a proper "relational container" for folks in Sondra's situation? On a relative level, this "vessel" might include a variety of possible relational fields, founded or rooted in multiple arenas that address basic human needs. Dignified opportunities as members-in-community to obtain adequate food, rest, shelter, and medical attention in a context of safety and security, might be one arena. Addressing agency and autonomy through work, or its equivalent, and the recognition of basic worthiness, belonging and acceptance through love and affiliation might be a second. Renewing hope and meaning through spiritual connection might constitute a third (Lasater 1983).

Theories that bypass these relative human realities in favor of the merely absolute or "heaven principles," ignore tangible obstacles and real opportunities. These obstacles include some of the greatest teachers available to the human condition.

I am still haunted by Sondra. The thought of her and others alone on the streets in freezing conditions is almost too much to bear. I was relieved to hear that she had made temporary peace with the shelter and had been welcomed back. Her situation crystallized for some of us the need to address the lack of adequate sponsorship for folks in similar situations.

Positive Sponsorship:

Named and Touched by Human Presence

Gilligan (1997) describes positive sponsorship as "bringing a mindful human presence" to a situation. He points out that such sponsorship awakens self, world and

traditions in a manner that supports a person or group's sense of place in the world.

He also maps distinctions between healthy and unhealthy relational fields (Gilligan, 1997). In an unhealthy relational field, splits occur so that the somatic or belly self is cut off from resources and positive sponsorship. These splits can be worsened by what he calls negative external sponsors. The sources, according to Gilligan, can be family members, institutions, entrenched cultural biases such as racial or gender discrimination, etc. These voices denigrate and work against greater wholeness in the individual's or community's relational field.

In a healthy relational field, the "somatic" or belly self is connected to and positively sponsored by the "cognitive self" or by what he describes as helpful external sponsors.

Other Tools and Techniques

Deep Listening to Cries and Whispers from the Belly Center

From one perspective, symptoms such as homelessness, displacement and the subsequent polarization of attitudes and responses, represent a call for the community to return to its deeper center. Attempts to handle the "problem" through ignorance, cut-off, denial, aggressive relocation or excessive pathologic labeling only lead us further from a balanced internal and external relational field. How can we listen deeply to the unsponsored elements that appear as unintegrated segments of humanity? What kinds of possibilities might arise that can be mutually empowering in each situation?

Fran Peavey, a contemplative activist, describes deep or dynamic listening as "listening to the deepest part of the person or persons: listening to their thinking, feelings, needs, dreams and essence" (Green, Woodrow, & Peavey, 1994, p. 103). In another context or setting, for instance, the seeds of yearning behind Sondra's aggressive meandering, might blossom into a caring and committed passion for setting things right.

Deep listening as utilized by Peavey (Green, Woodrow, & Peavey, 1994) and others goes beyond the words, story or rhetoric. The sigh of the waterfall as it splashes onto the rocks, and the yearning of the rocks when brushed by the water are all part of the picture. This process also includes tuning into our own fears and possibilities. We listen for the stillness from which the

seeds of hope spring. We listen as if our own and other's lives depend upon it.

Cultivating possibility listening within us, our families, our community groups and organizations, can be a powerful tool in clarifying agendas and energizing dreams.

Care of Ourselves and Others

The Three Tenet Practice outlined in a previous section can become a lonely exercise without ongoing support. At least two sustaining conditions come to mind. Participation in a regular mind-body discipline such as meditation can help us cultivate and rest in what Chogyam Trungpa (1984) calls our primordial or basically wholesome nature.

Proper circulation of loving kindness throughout our system (Wellwood, 2000) seems as essential as the ingestion of any daily vitamin and nutritional regime. A variety of methods exist for cultivating such unconditional tenderness towards ourselves. They can include but are not limited to: some forms of psychotherapy, disciplines such as aikido, sitting meditation, centering prayer, yoga, and dance. Loving kindness practices such as *tonglen* (sending and taking) (Chodron, 1991) when incorporated into daily life, can awaken our deeper heart-minds.

In addition, involvement in a network or group of semi-like-minded individuals/practitioners offers an anchoring and sustaining context for ongoing healing of each other and our world. Zen and Interfaith Peacemakers, for example, have support networks that sustain and encourage social activist work from a witnessing perspective. Hence, a context or discipline that promotes and cultivates unconditional tenderness towards ourselves, coupled with a sustaining network, can infuse fresh air and possibility into our otherwise claustrophobic worlds.

Transformation: Ground Path and Fruition

"To transform" means to change form, appearance, structure, conditions, nature or character (Webster, 1984, p. 1505). I am sometimes overwhelmed by the mere sound of it.

Numbing and/or succumbing to the culture of endless desire (consumerism) are understandable responses in the face of painful dilemmas. Issues such as

homelessness often seem too "big" to impact. Therefore, it can be easy to be lulled by the "don't worry be happy" philosophy, and/or a version of "Don't fret, Big Daddy Somebody will take care of 'it' while we sleep."

Bo Lozoff, a Zen Peacemaker activist and co-head of the Human Kindness Foundation, describes working with "big issues" in this manner. "I love people's essential nature, so I never give up on anyone" (Lozoff, 2000, personal communication). He recommends the pursuit of a non-self-involved path of service centered in contemplative practices that "puts ideals into practice, therefore allowing for an undivided life" (Lozoff, 2000, personal communication).

By maintaining an overriding optimism and commitment to the basic nature of all beings, he feels that it is possible to sustain this path of service, despite the lack at times of immediate results, especially with the "big" issues. In the long run, under these conditions, transformation will take care of itself (Lozoff, 2000).

In working with issues such as prison reform or homeless concerns a "big-little" relational balance is called for. By keeping one toe in the absolute (holding the sense of basic nature and possibility), one can be on the lookout for glimpses of a community's or individual's sanity and expand upon that.

Sanity and craziness, by one account, are both aspects of the same relational field. It is spring in my com-

munity. Craziness and sanity: the smell of urine and alcohol commingle with the fragrance of tulips and daffodils on the edge of the courthouse lawn.

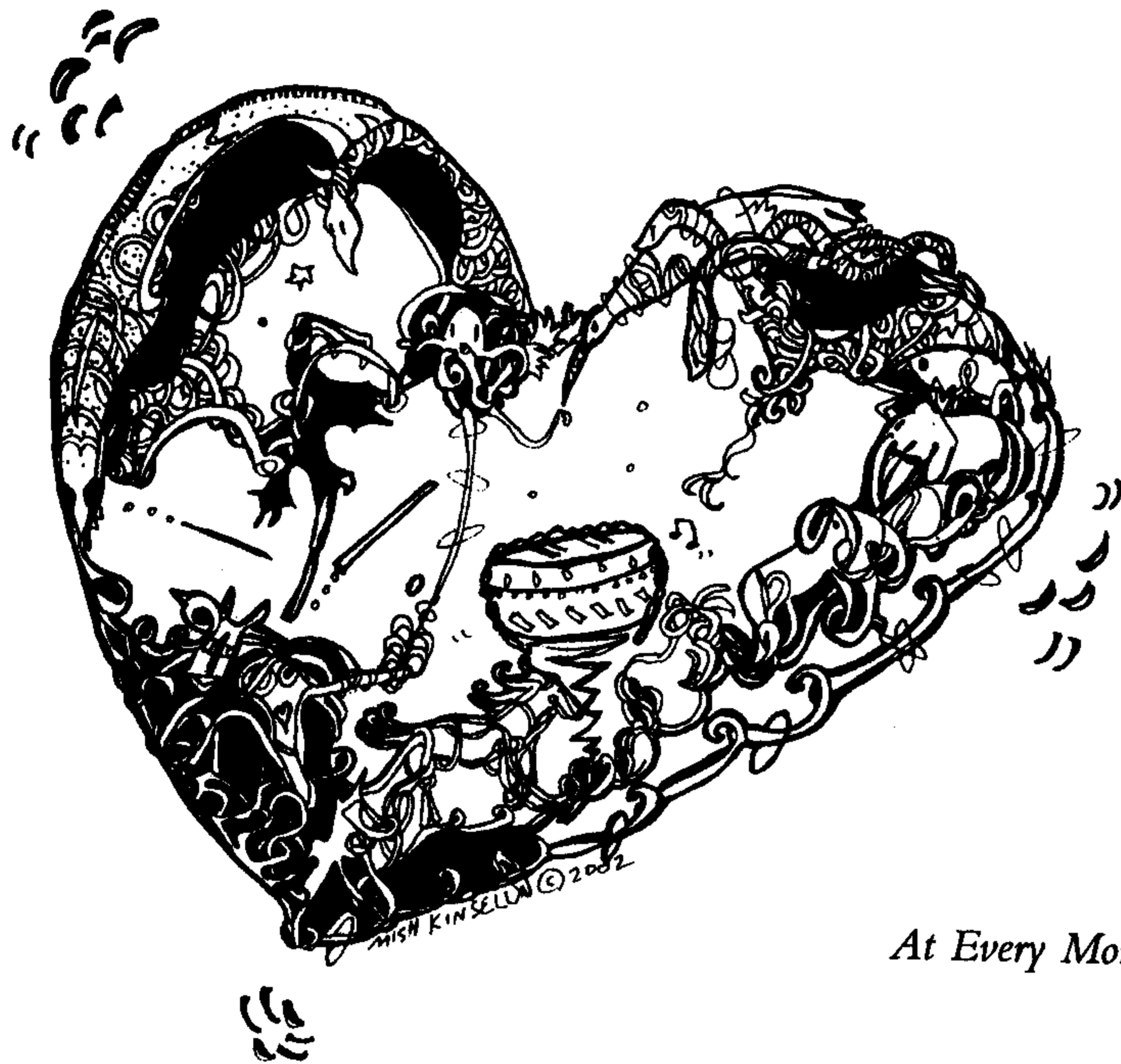
Summary

When a community has large pockets of unsponsored members such as homeless people, the relational field is off-kilter. Our responses to the symptoms of distress and unacknowledged yearnings impact and influence in very important directions. We can, with great tenderness, with gentle persistence, connect to the landscape. Artificial distinctions that place folks like Lennie and Bill in the category of the "almost human other," can be recognized and dissolved. Appropriate and compassionate action will follow.

SR provides a bridge that helps to translate aspects of Buddhism and other branches of Eastern thought into a coherent and helpful method for viewing and acting effectively in a variety of settings. This theoretical base has helped me to relate to my street clients more fully and skillfully and has lent greater coherency to my work. The power of such embodied concepts as sponsorship, working with opposites, and the practices of connection and extension into the field have opened a window of spaciousness for me. This has allowed me to welcome and hold a variety of perceptions and feelings in a useful and effective manner in my outreach work.

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*At Every Moment a New Species Rises in the Chest:
Self-Relations and Sufism*

Sharon G. Mijares, Ph.D., received her doctoral degree through the Union Institute (1995) and completed her post-doctoral work at Mercy-Scripps Behavioral Health Care. She has a private practice in Del Mar, California, and also teaches at Chapman and National Universities. She has studied and practiced Self-Relations psychotherapy for 13 years. She is a member of the Sufi Ruhaniat International (SRI) and a member of the International Association of Sufism's Psychology and Sufism Forum. She is the editor of *Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom: Psychological Healing Practices from the World's Religious Traditions* (Haworth Press, 2003) and co-editor of *The Psychospiritual Clinician's Handbook for Treating Mental Disorders* (Haworth Press, 2005).

AT EVERY MOMENT A NEW SPECIES RISES IN THE CHEST: SELF-RELATIONS AND SUFISM

*Listen to the story told by the reed,
of being separated.*

*“Since I was cut from the reedbed,
I have made this crying sound.*

*Anyone apart from someone he loves
Understands what I say. . . .”*

— Rumi (in Barks, 1997, p. 113)

I am a practitioner of Sufism, often called the mystical branch of Islam. The primary goal of Sufism is that of Unity with the Divine Presence from which all life manifests. It includes the intent of becoming fully human. The process of becoming fully human requires transformational and integrational experience. It means developing a compassionate attentiveness to somatic sensations, inner voices and feelings. In Sufism as I have learned and practiced it, no ego state or archetypal influence is taboo, for how can we talk about creating peace and honoring diversity in the outer world if elements of our inner world are criticized and rejected? This belief is a primary bridge between my practice of Sufism and my work as a Self-Relations psychotherapist.

The primary therapeutic aim of Self-Relations psychotherapy is that of reestablishing a healthy relationship between the cognitive self and somatic self as a means of

re-uniting with the greater universal field. Sufism is an ancient wisdom path that offers profound transformative healing practices, encouraging this process. For example, the alchemical processes of breath and mantric sound practiced by Sufis affect the mind–body relationship and facilitate recognizing the “nafs,” which then illuminates that path for “sponsoring” (embracing) the neglected self and archetypal presences encouraged in Self-Relations psychotherapy.

In this chapter I will share beliefs and healing practices found in Sufism and illustrate their alliance to Self-Relations psychotherapy. The spiritual beliefs and practices of Sufism influence my work as a psychotherapist, and the methods and philosophy of Self-Relations psychotherapy provide a transitional bridge between the wisdom of an ancient tradition and modern psychotherapeutic practice. Examples of work with clients will be included, illustrating the combined use of both alchemical methods of Sufi healing and Self-Relations psychotherapy.

History of Sufism:

An Alchemical Path of Transformation

Although Sufism is usually considered to be the mystical branch of Islam, no one knows for sure when Sufism began or who the first Sufi was. The late Sufi Master Hazrat Inayat Khan believed that Sufism could

be traced back to the Egyptian mystery schools. There are many schools of Sufism; some have a universal approach (an honoring of the one Truth found in all religions), while others insist on adherence to the tenets of Islam. All Sufi orders utilize similar practices and follow a philosophy intended to take the practitioner beyond intellectual belief into the spiritual experience of unity. These practices profoundly effect psychological and spiritual realization, while facilitating healing.

My training has been in the Inayati school of Sufism founded by Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan (1877–1927). Inayat Khan was a Sufi teacher from the Chisti lineage of India who introduced Sufism to the Western world. All Sufi orders use many different meditative breathing practices. Breathing with awareness encourages healing and evokes alchemical, transformative energies.

Sufis also intone sacred phrases, because of their alchemical (transformative) influence. *Wazifas* are specific mantric sounds embodying the 99 Names of Allah — the attributes manifesting out of the Unity. For example, among these names of God are *Jamil* (beauty), *Qadr* (power), *Latif* (subtle), *Aziz* (victory), *Karim* (generosity of spirit). Each is understood as a pure expression of consciousness. The intoning of *Wazifas* invoke specific attunements found in the essence of the phrase. For example, intoning the *Wazifa* “*Ya Jamil*” (beauty) can invoke the attribute of beauty and alchemically enhance one’s human potential. Intoning and breathing practices offer the deepest healing for they attune one to the vibrating pulse at the center of all life.

Alchemy is the spiritual science of transformation. Alchemists were concerned with changing, metaphorically or literally, base metals into gold. (Considering that coal transforms into diamonds, this may not be as illogical as it may seem.) This hermetic tradition can be traced back to ancient Egypt (Freke & Gandy, 1999). Many Sufis believe that it had a major influence on Islam; also, many of the early Alchemists were Sufis.

I once heard the Sufi teacher Shah Nazar Seyed Ali Kianfar acknowledge the wonder and beauty of iron when it was in its pure state. He noted that everything that was not iron had been removed. He did not mention that alchemists had been attempting to change this natural substance into another substance, but rather that they were removing all that was untrue to its real na-

ture. Of course, the idea of changing matter into its ultimate pure state is a metaphor for transformational change in human beings, for Sufis believe there is a pure essence within each life form.

Several years ago, I saw photos of medieval Alchemists’ drawings. They included images of feminine and masculine figures, child and animal presences along with images depicting light and darkness. Opposites were united in these drawings depicting the path to wholeness; for example, matter and spirit, light and dark, masculine and feminine, young and ancient. These drawings and teachings appealed to Jung (see Storr, 1983), who noticed parallels between the alchemists’ descriptions of human transformation and the individuation process taking place within his psychotherapy patients (Storr, 1983).

Breath and sound practices can enhance awareness of the differing and sometimes opposing life forms within consciousness, leading to the emergence of the authentic nature and inner voice of the greater Self. Jung (1969) acknowledged that a person had the potential to become an authentic human being when he or she consciously assented to the power of the inner voice.

For Sufis the development of our full human potential is aided by alchemical processes of breath, meditations, *Wazifa* and *Zikr* (a ritual of remembrance of our Unity with the Divine). The Sufi’s work is to experience the essence of being. The refined breath awareness offers exhilarated transformation.

The late Sufi Master Hazrat Inayat Khan (1999) gave a discourse on the breath. He explained that breath was like a glowing electric wire and that, “as the heat and light are not confined to that glow but are around it too, in the same way the radiance of this circle is breath, which goes on through the body, touches every part of the body . . .” (p. 261). He pointed out that the breath causes a different action and differing results in every direction it travels and that “if the breath does not [move] in one direction, then that particular activity of the body is stopped” (p. 261). Inayat Khan also taught that once the spiritually refined breath has enabled a person to touch the depth of his or her own being, “then it becomes easy for him [or her] to become at one with all that exists on earth and in heaven” (p. 264). This is the Sufi way of describing what Self-Relations psycho-

therapists might think of as the relational self fully connected to the relational field.

In his book *The Sufis*, Idries Shah (1964) shares that this healing is the essential work of humanity. The separation of human beings from their essence is the cause of all pain, disharmony and lack of fulfillment. Shah explains that the quest of the Sufis is “the purification of the dross and the activation of the gold” (p. 219). This is the initiation of what is known as the *Philosopher’s Stone*, which is the hidden essence waiting to be discovered and brought into conscious life.

Zikr is the most sacred Sufi practice of chanting, breathing and meditating upon sacred Islamic phrases. The practice of *Zikr* affects the heart and initiates remembrance of our Unity with the Divine. Sound and breath practices heighten our perception, thereby enabling us to become more aware of the various presences within us that either aid or impede the goal of Oneness (Douglas-Klotz, 2003). This is the work of the Sufi, for it leads to authentic awakening.

The Nafs and Somatic Awakening

Breath and intoning practices also increase the practitioner’s awareness of what Sufis call the *nafs* (e.g., neglected self, ego-states, subpersonalities, and archetypes). They encourage awareness of the subtle, and sometimes bellowing, voices and presences within this vast sea of consciousness. There is a powerful effect upon the psychophysiology of the breather when neural winds move through the somatic armoring and awaken our more subtle awareness. A neglected *naf* — a subpersonality, fragmented self or an archetypal expression — can arise from its hidden cellular cave and demand its due. A child’s cry, an instinctive growl, a reverent sigh — all contribute to our humanness. It is in our best interest to welcome these presences and to learn from them. This awareness leads to integration, purification and transparency. Light, compassion, truth and other divine attributes are no longer blocked by fear and can therefore flow into and have an effect upon life.

The Sufi believes that the soul is longing for union with the Beloved. The Sufi principle of Unity is called *Tawhid*. The longing for this unity can be felt in many ways. For example, Kabir (Bly, 1977) describes it in terms of depression:

When my friend is away from me, I am
depressed;
nothing in the daylight delights me,
sleep at night gives no rest,
who can I tell about this?

The night is dark, and long . . . hours go by . . .
because I am alone, I sit up suddenly,
fear goes through me . . .

Kabir says: Listen, my friend
there is one thing in the world that satisfies,
and that is a meeting with the Guest. (p. 1)

While our traditional biomedical paradigm tries to eradicate depression with medication, Sufis believe depression is rarely simply a biological illness. There is an experiential history involved. The word “depressed” actually means to be “held back.” A portion of consciousness has contracted and life energy has ceased to flow freely through this client. If we believe, as Sufis do, that a state of *longing* leads human beings along a path of ever-deepening knowledge of the self, we do our clients a disservice if we simply drug or try to negate, challenging experiences such as depression. When our clients experience somatic and psychic stirrings, it can be a sign that something within the client is attempting to wake up — to enter into life.

As explained, the term *nafs* applies to more than psychological ego states. It includes subtle atmospheres and archetypal influences within *embodied* consciousness. The 13th century Sufi poet Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi indicates the strength of archetypal forces moving through the body.

The inner being of a human being
Is a jungle. Sometimes wolves dominate,
Sometimes wild hogs. Be wary when you
breathe!

At one moment gentle, generous qualities,
like Joseph’s [or Mary’s] pass from one nature
to another.
The next moment vicious qualities move in hidden
ways.

Wisdom slips for a while into an ox!
A restless, recalcitrant horse suddenly
becomes obedient and smooth-gaited.

A bear begins to dance.
A goat kneels!

Human consciousness goes into a dog,
and that dog becomes a shepherd,
or a hunter.

In the Cave of the Seven Sleepers
even the dogs were seekers.

At every moment a new species arises in
the chest —
now a demon, now an angel, now a wild
animal.

There are also those in this amazing jungle
Who can absorb you into their own surrender.
If you have to stalk and steal something,
steal from them. (Barks, 1990, p. 113)

Rumi tells us that “at every moment a new species arises in the chest.” This is the body consciousness of the somatic self. As our sensitivity becomes more refined, we begin to notice differing qualities of the breath. This leads to a heightened recognition of the *nafs*, the neglected selves. The last lines of the poem tell us that these expressions can lead us to the Sufi goal — opening the door of the heart, which leads to unity with the Beloved. But what does Rumi mean when he warns to “be wary when you breathe”?

Alienating forces often reside in the space where a break between the cognitive self and the somatic self (Gilligan, 1987) occurred. The archetypal fairy tales of hidden treasures (the innocence and purity of being) with dragons guarding the gates allude to this process. For example, a split-off child self can be isolated in a world of its own memories, hiding in non-integrated neural circuits within the body. His or her story and related images are unavailable to higher cerebral processes as they are locked in the limbic system of the somatic self. Perhaps muscular locks in the neck keep these hid-

den stories from flowing through the amygdala, the processor of emotional memory. A “dragon at the gate” (associated with the reptilian brain) between body–mind and cerebral self quickly responds to block the event. Often a client will actually growl or manifest some form of audible caution when these deep levels of consciousness within the body–mind are evoked (Mijares, 1995, 1997).

Sufis know that the term “within” means entering realms of consciousness that go further than simple concepts of physical matter. Consciousness exists at every level of life. Body awakening is also a spiritual awakening (Inayat Khan, 1999; Washburn, 1994).

Although Sufi practices focus primarily in the heart with the goal of spiritual Unity, Sufis also recognize the consciousness emanating within the belly. Gilligan (1997) advises that “centering in the heart may not always be the best place. For example, in dealing with anger or fear it may be more helpful to drop attention lower into the belly . . .” (p. 84). There is a Sufi exercise related to Gilligan’s teaching that I often use with applicable clients. The goal is to establish a relationship with the neglected self or selves. In this process, the client is directed to follow the feeling of breathing down and sense it going lower in the body. Next, I suggest that he or she relax into the bottom of the breathing wave. This is at the end of the exhale, whereupon the breath begins to return in a natural, rather than forced way. The client is then guided

to enter the gentle darkness at the bottom of things. Use the awareness of breathing as a way to remain connected to the part of you that observes and witnesses all of the interactions within. Are there voices, sensations, or feelings on the “surface” of the depths that have been waiting to be heard and recognized? If so, you might begin by asking their names and needs . . . To conclude the journey, breathe toward the self (or selves) in your depths with as much love and thanks as you are capable of breathing in and out. Ask for help by aligning your breath to the breath that began the cosmos, the “Holy Breath,” and feel your own potential for creation, which arises

from "what waits in the darkness." (Douglas-Klotz, 1995, p. 23)

Scientists are now demonstrating that the body-mind is a tapestry woven with rich communications systems, validating the ancient teachings of Middle Eastern and Eastern wisdom traditions. Gerson, Kirchgessner and Wade (1994) have discovered an independent and complex nervous system that influences bowel action and also the activity taking place in our organs. They call this the enteric nervous system, and liken it to a brain in the gut. This system sends and receives messages, just as the brain in the head. It has many of the same messenger molecules and can produce endorphins associated with states of well-being.

Likewise, researchers are validating the intelligence of the human heart. Paul Pearsall, Ph.D., (1998) informs us that neurotransmitters have been identified in the heart as well as the brain. In his latest book, Joseph Chilton Pearce (2002) explains the evolutionary relationship of the heart to the reptilian brain, old mammalian brain (limbic or emotional-cognitive), new mammalian brain (neocortex or verbal-intellectual) and the fourth and largest brain structure (prefrontal cortex). Pearce reports that the new medical field of neurocardiology,

estimates that half or more of the cells of the heart are neural cells like those making up our brain. Some reports claim 60 to 65 percent of heart cells are neurons, all of which cluster in ganglia, small neural groupings connected through the same type of axon-dendrites forming the neural fields of our brain. (p. 64)

He also notes that "an ongoing dialogue takes place between the heart and brain through these direct neural connections" (p. 64). In short, Pearce relates new-found knowledge concerning the heart's ability to regulate and influence brain-body coordination and validates the influential power of the human heart. Perhaps scientists will soon acknowledge that the entire body is enlivened with emotion and consciousness.

Rumi had already declared this in the 13th century in saying "At every moment a new species arises from the chest . . ." This is another compatibility of Sufi psy-

chology and Self-Relations psychotherapy, for both have learned to listen to the body's wisdom.

Bridging with Self-Relations

There are several areas in which the ancient wisdom of Sufism informs Self-Relations psychotherapy. Sufism had a prominent influence upon Carl Jung. Self-Relations utilizes Jung's theory on the universality of archetypes of the collective unconscious. Jung spent many years researching the ancient philosophy of Alchemy, which is founded upon the transformational healing methods of the Sufis. He discovered that the writings and drawings of the Alchemists revealed an extensive knowledge of archetypal forces correlating with his personal experience and research with clients. These teachings illustrated the path of individuation and wholeness.

Jung believed that archetypes manifested on many levels of consciousness, from celestial spheres to the body-mind where psychic structures containing biologically-motivated patterns of behavior related to instinctive life forces and other human expressions reside (Fordham, 1974; Mijares, 1995). Sufis have practices that help the practitioner to become aware of these inner *nafs*. It is said that there are *nafs* of the heart, mind, body and breath — all manifesting as differing qualities.

Self-Relations psychotherapy encourages a relationship between the cognitive self and the feeling self, including primal archetypal energies manifesting within the body-mind. Initially, we must learn to listen to and feel these presences. This is similar to Sufi beliefs regarding the *nafs*, as Sufis also recognize that consciousness arises from the body-mind.

Gilligan (1997) notes that "nothing affects consciousness more than breathing awareness" (p. 75) and that it is of primary importance in relaxing attention. I practice Self-Relations psychotherapy because it harmonizes with my spiritual beliefs rooted in the Sufi tradition. For example, Gilligan, like the Sufis, discusses ways of becoming more fully human and entering into a deepened relationship with the unifying "river of life" (p. 8).

SR psychotherapists assume "there exists a power and presence greater than the intellect and individual in the world" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 22) and support a healing process focused upon "sponsoring" the neglected self (or

selves) as a means of reconnecting to the wholeness of the relational field. The very act of *sponsoring* the feelings and experiences of our neglected selves, a primary tenet of Self-Relations psychotherapy, can lead to *Tawhid*, the Sufi principle of Unity. As we recognize and accept fragmented and rejected selves — often hidden within the body–mind — we move toward greater harmony within the human being.

Stephen Gilligan (personal communication) once shared that he had awakened one morning and found that his previous definition of the unconscious mind no longer made sense. His experiences and those of his clients led to an increasing respect for the inherent intelligence of the body–mind. He began to guide his students and clients to become more aware of the “river of life flowing through each of us” (1997, p. 9). As a result, SR emphasizes that energy is actually a living presence and the unconscious (that which has not entered conscious awareness) is part of this energy field. The subtle voices, somatically felt sensations, depressions and anxieties are important signposts that something is seeking attention.

The language used in SR makes sense to most clients. They feel the disconnection between the cognitive and feeling, somatic selves and recognize the importance of this form of psychotherapy. Learning how to sponsor these presences allows them to enter into a greater relationship with the field of compassion itself.

Paths of Integration: Work with Clients

I utilize Sufi breath, *Wazifa*, and Self-Relations trance processes to encourage my clients' awareness of archetypal influences. This facilitates wholeness, as healing work is alchemically advanced when the client develops a “felt” sense of the neglected self along with an empowering archetypal influence. For example, a woman who has been sexually abused as a child may present as very vulnerable. She usually lacks a felt sense of embodied power. The positive elements of the warrior archetype enable a person to stand firmly in one's beliefs and to protect boundaries (Mijares, 2003).

Specific *Wazifa* practices found in the Sufi tradition can facilitate an awakening of this archetype. Subtle breathing practices found in both Sufism and Self-Relations encourage awareness. The SR practitioner invites

the archetype into a relationship with the other parts of her identity. This will help her recover her respect and greater sense of wholeness.

Another Middle Eastern tradition, early Christianity, spoke of sponsoring this life energy that is “waking up within us.” (Jesus is called Ruah Allah — Breath of God — in the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an. He is considered to be part of the lineage of prophets and teachers in the Islamic tradition.) Jesus is quoted in the Gospel of Thomas, one of the Gnostic Gospel scrolls in the Nag Hammadi library collection (Pagels, 1979), as saying “If you bring forth that which is within you, that which is within you will save you. If you fail to bring forth that which is within you, that which is within you will kill you” (Douglas-Klotz, 1995, p. 148).

Case Example 1

I have been working with a client whose process exemplifies the above advice. She recently returned to therapy because something within her is truly attempting to be healed. Originally she came in requesting hypnotherapy because she believed she'd been abused by a second-grade school teacher. Her capacity to truly “sponsor” anything related to trauma appeared to be rather unreliable as she was emotionally frail and vulnerable, so we worked on more empowering issues. We focused on spiritual, emotional, and cognitive development.

She could easily access qualities of beauty and compassion. She was a devoted mother and loved gardening. She easily responded to trance experience and accessed helpful symbols and inner guidance. But she was timid and unable to speak up for herself. From a Jungian and alchemical perspective, she was very connected to her feminine self in its more compassionate and angelic expressions, but she had not integrated other archetypal qualities including her more masculine side and the more earthy feminine nature (instinctual power) needed to provide strength and wholeness.

This more instinctual nature needed to be cultivated, but in order for her to accept these unknown parts of herself, we needed to illuminate the essence of her spiritual nature and develop her ego strengths. Recognizing and affirming her spiritual nature helped to develop her cognitive self due to the increased intuition and awareness.

We used the Sufi element breaths emphasizing Earth, Water, Fire, and Air. The element breaths are four differing breathing passages that encourage integrating specific energies. For example, in doing the water breath the practitioner is guided to slowly breathe in a "refined breath" through the nose and then slowly out through "softly pursed lips." On the inhalation, the practitioner visualizes a fountain of water being breathed up the spine which flows up to the crown. On the exhalation, the breath energy flows gently through all the muscles of the body. The *Wazifa* intoning practices we used were related to healing energies (the Healer, *Ya Shafee*, and the Remedy, *Ya Kafee*). This practice was done with her in the office and then she practiced them daily as homework.

She had a strong interest in a career in wholistic healing practices, specifically related to gardening and herbology. I encouraged her to pursue this vision, however she did not follow through because of her husband's needs. He was having troubles with maintaining employment and all of her energy and support was directed toward her family. Although I did not encourage hypnotic exploration of the trauma, the neglected self began to manifest its narratives once she began to strengthen.

I had not seen the client for a few months when I received a phone call that feelings of terror had overwhelmed her shortly after watching a television program on abuse of children. Somatic experiences related to previous trauma paralyzed her with fear. Her husband had to carry her to bed because she was having "seizure like" behaviors. She was overwhelmed with metaphoric images of school children having their legs and arms amputated. Regardless, she responded well to breathing processes and trance imagery. She accessed inner guidance and received a visual image that symbolically represented spiritual support. This image gave her strength whenever she felt emotionally overwhelmed. She began to remember some abuse from her family of origin and admirably processed her feelings. A few months later her husband found work in another state and they moved away.

Three years later she returned and requested an appointment. Once again, she was suddenly overwhelmed by images of abuse and bodily feelings of terror. The

environmental changes and resulting stress appeared to have triggered these unresolved inner states. Also, she had been ignoring self sponsorship as she primarily focused on her family's needs.

The memories and associated feelings began to manifest first in my office. Self-Relations psychotherapy was appropriate as her body was evidencing the trauma it had stored for almost 30 years, and she needed to sponsor this terrified part of herself. The memories of the abuse were rapidly forcing themselves into cognition. These memories were coherent. It was obvious that the school teacher had abused and terrified the young child now revealing her story to this woman. The neglected and cognitive selves were reconnecting.

During a session she was overwhelmed with waves of terror. I sat next to her on the couch and took her hand. I could feel the energy and my sense was that "it was strong enough to blast her out into orbit," to force her to leave her body. As I held her hand I spoke to the cognitive self, reminding her that she was a 36-year-old mother of three children, and that this child, her neglected child self, needed love and compassionate healing. I reminded her also of her spiritual nature and her goals. We breathed together as she felt her ability to sponsor the terror of the child, to not be overwhelmed by it and to offer calming healing influences. Since she expressed an appreciation for the Sufi practices I'd taught her in the past, I encouraged her to use them as a gentle way to alchemically soothe and heal the energies released by the traumatic memories. This led to closing the session with a specific Sufi breathing practice whereupon one gently breathes into the belly after intoning the *Wazifa Ya Raheem* (the Compassionate One) and then gently breathes the sound into the belly. In this compassionate atmosphere the client was able to sponsor and create harmony between the cognitive and neglected child self — the goal of Self-Relations.

There is an important individuation element of this healing process. Her anxiety intensifies when she neglects herself. In the past, her energy and caring had focused primarily on her husband and children. Her neglected self will no longer allow this. She has found she needs to insure time for spiritual practices and that she needs to focus on her gardening and holistic healing. Her process has taught her that she must attend to the

energies and presences within. This manner of healing continues to be her work and I trust that she will touch and be touched by an increasingly deepened sense of unity.

Case Example 2

Another example of combined Sufi psychology and Self-Relations psychotherapy concerns a client who had been diagnosed with chronic muscle fatigue and fibromyalgia. This example emphasizes the relevance of the mind-body relationship in psychotherapy.

The client had been the victim of incest from early childhood until early adolescence, when her abusing father died. Her coping style included a lot of partying, drinking, an active social life along with deep spiritual inclinations and affiliations. The conflictive feelings introjected by her father continued to live within her own body and confused lifestyle. She remained distant from her somatic self and the body-mind held all the pain and despair. Is it any wonder that she had these illnesses? Her body was teeming with narratives; if she was going to heal she would need to sponsor the feelings of the child within herself. She was unable to keep this neglected child's grief at bay any longer. Attempts to party at local bars only increased her physical pain.

Jungian analyst Robert Stein (1976) described a client who was somatically gripped by this archetypal force despite his intelligence and mature awareness. Stein suggests that "if we lift the veil of our rational analytical bias, we may catch a glimpse of the offended deity who has become incarnate in the pain and anger of the psycho-somatic process" (p. 74). He then asks, "What transgression has caused the painful agony of this greater power to overwhelm him? What offerings or what sacrifice must he make so that harmony, order and wholeness can be re-established?" (p. 74).

I saw a similar theme enacting itself through my client's chronic muscle fatigue and fibromyalgia. One key to both her physical and psychological healing was the sponsoring relationship between the cognitive and somatic self. Her spiritual nature was her biggest asset. She readily responded to the imagery and energies facilitated by Sufi breathing practices. She learned to sponsor the feelings of the neglected child. The client also awakened to her own ability to channel healing energies as a

massage and energy therapist. This development had been delayed because of the illness and the incongruencies in her lifestyle. As she learned to attend to her neglected self and experience healing first-hand, it flowed out to others. The pain disappeared when she consistently lived up to her ideals. She next enrolled in a course with a healing practitioner to enhance her own ability to heal others. Her life has undergone a significant transformation.

Case Example 3

Self-Relations therapists recognize the relevance of proper naming. It "involves seeing an experience, touching it with human presence, holding it, and giving it blessing. Without this implicit ethical base of love and respect, the named experience will have no human value" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 109). Our culture and families of origin condition us to cast out, repress and despise that which is deemed unacceptable or yet unknown. We respond to traumatic experiences in a manner that is akin to holding one's breath. The relationship with the unifying field becomes disconnected.

I saw the following client for over a year. He wore a prosthetic eye, having lost an eye in a childhood accident. The accident occurred at the time that his parents were divorcing. He was unable to integrate his experiences, resulting in a split between the cognitive and somatic self. This was reflected in his inability to connect with others in the relational field. He longed for, yet avoided, significant relationships in his life.

He continuously worried about other people's response to his prosthesis and had difficulty looking directly at people for this reason. This response encouraged the cognitive self to become more analytical and distanced from others. (In actuality, the fact that he has the prosthesis is not readily apparent.) He has a sharp intellect, but for the most part, saw himself as a victim endowed with nothing but limitations in his life.

Sufi psychology and Self-Relations psychotherapy appeared to be a good paradigm for this young man. He had studied with a Gurdjieff study group, a form of Sufism, so he related well to Sufi philosophy and alchemical healing practices.

Several months ago, as the client walked into my office, I felt a sense of his anxiety and fear. I asked him

how he was feeling. He responded that he felt good. Considering that it wouldn't be fair to take my felt sense of his fear as a fact, I decided to put it to the test by asking him to center into his body and see what he noticed. He immediately described a presence of fear and anxiety in his chest and belly.

The disconnection of cognitive self and somatic self was obvious to him. He described this feeling state as being child-like. We spent some time on the concept and experience of sponsoring the neglected self. We talked about the alchemical process of using the breath to refine the inner atmosphere and create a healing, safe place for this child. Following this preparation, we did a Sufi *Wazifa* intoning practice emphasizing Mercy and Compassion (*Ya Raqman* and *Ya Raheem*). His body-mind awareness deepened in the silence that followed and he felt a sense of compassion for the neglected self.

A core belief was that he would be unable to attract a young lady. When he was attracted to a woman, perceiving an opportunity for a loving relationship, the archetypal lover and inner child longing for love and acceptance rushed forward unrestrained. As a result he would lose his balance, fail to achieve what he longed for and then quickly withdraw in fear of emotional contact. Whenever this cycle occurred, an internalized self-negating/self-critical personality would attack him.

I pointed out that another part of him was suffering as a result of this self-negation and then asked him if he could see that the personality self who suffered was someone other than the one who attacked. He understood this difference. But this self-critical presence had a reasonable intention. My client needed to establish boundaries, protect his vulnerable self, and not reach out randomly towards any relationships that came his way. Self-Relations psychotherapy greatly enabled this young man to slowly sponsor this dynamic and also his neglected self. He was able to transform anxiety into peace.

Eventually the client reported that he didn't need to focus so intently on "changing" himself. He had realized that introjected influences had been keeping him from truly knowing himself. Something within this client was waking up and freeing him from the many alienating forces distracting him from a felt connection with self and others. We discussed how Michelangelo would recognize an inherent form within a piece of

marble; his intention as an artist was to bring out the beauty and power hidden within the block of marble. This was used as a metaphor for the client's perception of his own psychospiritual work. The client particularly resonated to the philosophy of alchemical transformation as it was compatible with his own spiritual philosophies.

This client's awareness continued to develop through breath and *Wazifa* sound processes. This client often intoned one of the 99 Names of Allah and then breathed a prescribed practice intended to promote deep cellular, vibratory healing. As noted, breath and *Wazifa* illuminate, heal and transform consciousness; therefore I often use these practices with clients who relate to spiritual work.

Conclusion

We know that the directions for growing a human body are encoded within the DNA. Perhaps the DNA carries more than the stories of our genetic ancestors and includes the memories of the collective unconscious — narratives of destruction, power and beauty — and the yet deeper memory of our origin.

In the course of my own life's journey and the work with my clients, I have found that love and acceptance (sponsoring), rather than neglect or rejection, is ultimately the way of the compassionate heart. When the breath is trained, refined and focused it stimulates neural networks and subtle channels in the body-mind. Neural winds are increased and cellular memories, those primal, instinctive energies, are awakened within the body as life begins to stir within the somatic self.

The neuronal and cellular tapestry of the body is rich with narratives. Repressed feelings, emotions, ego-states and archetypal forces can be hidden in cellular blocks waiting for the neural winds to open doors to consciousness. The Sufi practitioner uses spiritually focused breathing and *Wazifa* practices to increase awareness and transformation of the *nafs*. This is facilitated by the atmosphere (breath) of compassion. Self-Relations psychotherapists assist the client to sponsor neglected selves in order to mend the break in the relational field. This work does not necessarily have to be spiritual in its interpretation, although the use of poetry and trance states often evoke the spirit and soul of the client. The relational field has ever deepening dimensions — open-

ing into the divine essence at the heart of all life. The Sufi practitioner (as well as practitioners of other spiritual traditions) guides spiritual development — specifically focusing on the heart's longing for Unity.

Focused breathing enhances one's awareness, resulting in an increased ability to hear and feel the *nafs*. The cognitive self begins to respond to the somatic intelligence. We become more aware of the life forces moving through us. Giving reverent and compassionate attention to the various aspects of our humanness frees us to worship the Beloved in all facets of life. The brilliance of the soul's diamond nature radiates without obstruction.

In closing, each Sura (section with a specific message) of the Qur'an begins with the phrase "*Bismillah er-Raqman, er-Raheem*" acknowledging that all of creation manifests in a womb of mercy and compassion. The Sufi's ultimate goal is to recognize the nature of the *nafs* and to transform them with increasingly refined currents of loving compassion leading ultimately to oneness with the Beloved (also referred to as the Friend, the Guest, Unity).

The 14th-century Sufi poet Hafiz addressed this

unity in his poem "We should talk about this problem":

There is a Beautiful Creature
Living in a hole you have dug

So at night
I set fruit and grains
And little pots of wine and milk
Beside your soft earthen mounds

And I often sing

But still, my dear
You do not come out.

I have fallen in love with Someone
Who hides inside you.

We should talk about this problem —

Otherwise,
I will never leave you alone.

(Ladinsky, 1996, p. 7)

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*Witnessing, Naming, and Blessing:
Self-Relations in the Life of a Rabbi*

Jack H Bloom, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist, is one of a handful of rabbis who is a full member of both the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) and The Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative). In addition to his private practice at The Psychotherapy Center in Fairfield, Connecticut, Dr. Bloom serves as Director of Professional Career Review for his Reform colleagues, for whom he created a program to assist rabbis seeking to shape their future.

WITNESSING, NAMING, AND BLESSING: SELF-RELATIONS IN THE LIFE OF A RABBI

It was as an ordained rabbi who had fled congregational life and was working as a clinical psychologist in full-time private practice that I first met Stephen Gilligan. The location near the continental divide, high in the Colorado Rockies, might well have been a metaphor for the divisions within me. Stephen, then 28, was co-leading a hypnosis workshop. I needed all the trance I could get to navigate the rapids of an exquisitely painful divorce. That we would become beloved friends was unimaginable to me. An even greater bonus was Steve's developing Self-Relations which enabled me to fully reclaim the estranged religious half of my identity and then to create a both/and relationship so that I am now at one and the same time both rabbi and psychologist. As both rabbi and psychologist I could see, as well, how the SR concepts of blessing and the relational self can be rooted in biblical insights about a sacred dynamic between human nature and the Divine, and how those same SR ideas provide a framework, rationale, and methodology that blesses rabbis (and clergy of any kind) to be at ease in the role of "blessing-giver."

Being a rabbi or clergy of any kind means being set apart to serve as a "symbolic exemplar," that is, a walking, talking, living symbol standing for both God and the best in humankind. Symbolic exemplarhood, an irrevocable component of clergy-being, is a major source

of rabbinic influence, potency and power. It is also the root of much rabbinic loneliness and isolation.

Initially being a rabbi was seductive. I was treated with respect and deference far beyond my age and knowledge. Yet in a few years approaching mid-career, I found, like many of my colleagues — clergy of all stripes and beliefs that being a symbolic exemplar was extraordinarily difficult. I complained as all clergy do whenever two or more gather about living in a "glass house," set-apartness in the midst of the crowd, always having to be "on," and being treated differently than anyone else.

Symbolic exemplarhood is doubly difficult because it attributes to the rabbi superlative inner qualities and inordinately deep set commitments that must be exemplified in a relatively unprotected arena. The private and public life of rabbis, though un-insulated, is expected to be a seamless whole marked by the warp of integrity and the woof of caring love. Therapists are also experienced by clients as something "other," but have the distinct advantage of being able to be "just plain folks," once the office door is closed.

It was the desire to just be "me" that led me after 10 years in a congregation to become a clinical psychologist. I kept my rabbi "self" under wraps. For 20 years, I did not lead public prayer and did no other

officiating. At the funeral of a beloved older cousin, I offered to do the eulogy, but suggested that my family needed to get a rabbi to recite the required psalms. Yet I always recognized that what I had done as a pulpit rabbi was vital and had changed many lives. So paradoxically as I imbibed and practiced Gestalt therapy, NLP, and Ericksonian work, I devoted part of my career to stopping other rabbis from doing what I did, i.e., leaving the pulpit due to the ravages of symbolic exemplarhood.

I learned over the years that to use the rabbinic power implicit in their being symbolic exemplars, rabbis must *accept* and be *comfortable* with being walking, talking symbols, and need to be *skilled* in using their symbolic exemplarhood as a major source of their rabbinic power, while doing all they can to avoid the enervating price that often results. Self-Relations helped bridge the gap. It enabled me to go from warning about the dangers of symbolic exemplarhood, as important as that was and is, to fully realizing and teaching about the upside of being a symbolic exemplar.

Witnessing, naming, and blessing are rabbinic powers that symbolic exemplarhood aids and abets. Witnessing is open to all who are skilled and sensitive, therapists of all stripes, people in helping work, workplace supervisors and just plain caring folks.

Rabbis and other clergy, being symbolic exemplars, have power to name. This power comes from them being named as “ordained” of God. This is not their power alone; therapists and parents also have it, as does anyone who stands in legitimate authority over another. But being *ordained* has a special quality that comes from standing within a long and rich tradition of naming as a sacred act with all that implies. By being symbolic exemplars of God, rabbis have great power to bless. Establishing what blessings are needed and how they are to be given so that they “take” is a crucial part of rabbinic work.

Self-Relations in Genesis

A rabbi’s charge is, as was the biblical Avraham’s (considered in Jewish tradition as the Father of Jewish

faith), to “Be a blessing”: that having been blessed we in turn, must bless others. This tradition of blessing, rooted in the Bible, can offer illumination to the Self-Relations concept of the relational self as not merely a psychological construct but as a sacred relationship comprised of divinely-bestowed essence.

In Jewish religious contexts it is often said, quoting Genesis, that each person is blessed by dint of having been created in the Image of God (in Hebrew, *b’Tzelem Elohim*). Like any truism this one, so easily accepted and so little respected, requires careful scrutiny. The *Tzelem*, following Maimonides, can perhaps best be understood to be humankind’s cognitive being, since the creating God was and is incorporeal, and any other understanding is or borders on idolatry.

The biblical author, evidently unsatisfied with this partial truth of Genesis, Chapter 1, hastens to add the complementary truth of Chapter 2; that beyond our cognitive essence, each of us is a *living* being because the Living God [YHWH] (from the Hebrew root “to be,” its best meaning is “Was! Is! Will be!”) has infused in us the breath of life, saturating each with the precious gift of *Neshamah* (from the Hebrew root, *NSHM* — to breathe). The *Neshamah* can best be understood as our somatic being, marked by pulsation and throbbing, feelings of all sorts, pleasant and painful, and a sense of corporeal aliveness.

The two, inextricably linked, form the [*Tzelem* ↔ *Neshamah*].¹ The *Tzelem* provides thought, form, and direction. The *Neshamah* gives life, energy, and vitality. The [*Tzelem* ↔ *Neshamah*] is at one and the same time, both indivisible and yet with each part having a life of its own. When “things” are going well both parts are in living interaction and relationship with the other. Thought, form, and direction alone would lead to a useless spinning of the wheels. Life, energy and vitality alone would be directionless, and we would be dragged around aimlessly by our feelings. We are thus not either *Tzelem* or *Neshamah*, but both simultaneously, interacting reciprocally. When one is ignored, incapacitated, or traumatized, the other is grievously wounded. We are

¹ Brackets [] indicate the interrelated unity of these two elements. The double arrow ↔ signifies a reciprocal relationship.

truly blessed when the *Neshamah* sustains the *Tzelem* and the *Tzelem* shapes the *Neshamah*.

The [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] is *not* negotiable. It is a given, ever present in us and in all others. The [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] is *not* contingent on thinking and feeling correctly, behaving one way or another, on accomplishment or the lack thereof, on perceived goodness or experienced badness. Each of us, do what we will or won't, cannot be rid of it. It is our God-given *essence*.

This religious fact accounts for who we humans are and how we are. We ignore it at our peril. All are created this way. If only one human is not so created, all are in trouble.

Blessing others, arguably a rabbi's most important work, requires a great deal of skill beyond the simple desire to do "it." A rabbi must develop significant skills in witnessing and properly naming evidences of the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] — a prerequisite for proper blessing.

That which is *unwitnessed*, *unnamed*, and *unblessed* can never be fully human. And that which is not fully human detracts from God's presence in the world, thus as it were, diminishing God. Witnessing, naming, and blessing the evidences of the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] in ourselves and in others is not easy or simple work.

Witnessing

Though obscured in the murky fog of compromised living, the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] is always waiting to be seen, heard and attended to. When we and/or others turn away from the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*], neglecting it in ourselves, ignoring and disregarding it in others, harm is done, commitments broken, intimacies violated, children hurt, trusts betrayed, and great evil perpetrated. Blame and contempt, anger and condemnation, violence of all sorts directed towards ourselves but even more dangerously at others, increase one's sense of alienation and isolation, turning us ever more away from our [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*], and blocking any chance of experiencing it in others.

To paraphrase Gilligan, the main ingredient in witnessing the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] is intentionality. As Blessed Symbolic Exemplars of God *and* of those icons of God, humankind, a rabbi has made a decision to support and become interested in the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] of her self, the other, and the greater community. She

has taken a "solemn pledge" to witness, behold/take interest in/be delighted by/become attentive to/become curious about/support/acknowledge/protect/honor/ etc., the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] always present and hopefully awakening in each person or community. But intentionality is not sufficient. Practices/traditions/disciplines must be invoked implicitly or explicitly. The great thing about witnessing and sponsoring is that it requires that the rabbi surrender to a larger field than herself. The rabbi is part of a long and beautiful tradition spanning over five thousand years of witnessing the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*].

Neil Gillman (1999) writes:

To the question, "Did Freud (or whoever first talked about egos) discover the ego or invent it" the answer is clearly both. Freud discovered the pattern, at least partially because he was looking for it and knew what to look for. But then he identified it, gave it a name, and fitted it into his broader psychodynamic theory (or myth). But Freud discovered the ego because it was out there to be discovered. The ego itself, in distinction to its name, is not a fiction, not a pure invention out of the blue . . . Does the physicist invent the quark or discover it? Again the answer is both: he discovers the pattern, but because his theory provides him with a name and a way to identify it when it is there, he can then see the quark. But the quark-pattern is out there to be discovered; it is not a fictitious creation of the physicist. (p. 61)

Paraphrasing Gillman, I would add: Witnessing the presence of the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] is like witnessing Freud's "ego," in the sense that the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] is a pattern of activity that is always present in humankind, as an ego is "in" the person. Again, the experience is a relationship experience: The witness brings his interpretive structure (the Bible's religious myth) to his witnessing, and sees the pattern that we call the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*]. Do we discover the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] or do we invent it? Both. We discover and are witness to the [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*] patterns no

matter how hidden. And then our religious task is to name, bless and generally sponsor them so as to bring them to "human being." The [Tzelem ⇌ Neshamah] is not invented. It is both out there and in us waiting to be witnessed.

Evidences of the [Tzelem ⇌ Neshamah] are most often either too strident or too dormant. They are often in flux, out of focus, flowing to and fro, moving irregularly at all times. Our most stringent yet paradoxically relaxed/centered efforts are required to witness those difficult, irascible, unredeemed parts of ourselves and others, and their [Tzelem ⇌ Neshamah] relationship. Witnessing that is the first step towards blessing.

Naming

A name may be thought of as an alias, as on my Macintosh computer, that enables me to access a programmatic reality hidden somewhere in my computer and bring it to view so it can be of use. Rabbinic symbolic exemplarhood provides a special, unique ability to use language to name, to create new aliases, changing experience by revealing hidden attributes, thereby bringing new realities into being.

Rather obviously, naming involves language. Language creates, molds, sustains and changes "reality." Technically, a name is a word or words by which an entity is designated and distinguished from others. Language used this way is of course descriptive. But as J. L. Austin (1975) points out, language can be used to make things happen, to create what has not been there before, such as new statuses, obligations, and expectations. Austin calls these "performative utterances." A performative utterance is when "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action."

Using language this way is very different than saying, "The weather is changing," or "John is tall." Those words do not make anything new happen. They do not create new realities. Naming when done as a performative utterance creates new realities.

"I name this ship *Queen Elizabeth*," said under the right conditions with the proper vintage champagne in a shipyard with a designated person doing it is a performative utterance — the ship goes from being a hulk of steel, wire, and plastic to being *The Queen Elizabeth*. The ship now named begins to have a history and might

be said to even develop a "personality" of "her" own with which many have a "relationship."

The foregoing is very different than saying, upon seeing the ship dock, "That's the *Queen Elizabeth*." That makes nothing happen. It is a descriptive not a performative utterance.

We return to Genesis. "God said, Let there be light! And there was light. God saw the light that it was good. God separated the light from the darkness. God named the light: Day! And the darkness He named Night!" (Gen. 1).

God not only creates the world but by witnessing what has been created and naming it, moves the primeval chaos into a new reality. The light was light, but day is a new reality his not yet created humankind can be in relationship with. And that makes it good.

Man is given the task of naming the animals, after the breath of life has been breathed into him, thus giving order and meaning and relationship. The implication follows that though the creatures exist, relationship with them can only take place when they are properly named.

When we witness constellations ever present though long concealed, garner evidence of the [Tzelem ⇌ Neshamah] so often obscured and sometimes rejected, and by proper naming bring these into human "being," perception, experience and discourse, we create as it were something new. Humans do not and perhaps cannot relate to that which has no name. Naming that which heretofore had no name makes relationship possible. And it is *only* in relationship that "things" attain human "being." Naming makes an I-You relationship possible.

At the funeral of a twice-married man, the first wife "named" the widowed second wife, publicly saying to her at the funeral, "You are a most gracious woman." That act of naming created a new identity that can change and sustain a new and different relationship.

It used to be common knowledge that around age 40, many people felt a sense of discontent. Life was not living up to the possibilities so fervently hoped for. The very work they had dreamed of and been educated for grew increasingly empty of meaning. The marriage partner they had pledged eternal love to now seemed unexciting and boring. The name "7-year itch" had found its way into common parlance, describing the dangers fac-

ing such marriages. Behavior would become erratic and inappropriate. "Burnout," itself only recently "named," was declared to be a cause of the soon-to-be-named syndrome. All this existed prior to "mid-life crisis" being named. Naming created a new entity. "Mid-life crisis" became par for the course, an almost inescapable part of everyone's life cycle. Properly named, it was now less aberrant. It could be related to and treated. Programs, such as the Professional Career Review Program of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, came out of a discussion about rabbis and mid-life crisis, to deal with this now "named" and thus well-established condition.

The name offered an explanation for the person going through "it" and gave those around a way of accounting for their weird behavior. Proper naming changes relationships.

Rabbis, as symbolic exemplars, have great power to name: "You are a *loving* man," "I sense the presence of a *courageous* woman," "You truly are a *big hearted* person," etc. Successful naming becomes part of the other's self-identity. Not all labeling or re-labeling becomes naming. Sometimes repetition is needed, or naming needs to take place in another way and another context.

Naming creates new realities when, after witnessing what is implicit in the universe, constellations ever present though long hidden — patterns in other's behavior — are properly named, and so brought into human "being," perception, experience and discourse. Naming can give a new meaning to those already existing realities that are present but unacceptable, kept from human "being." Naming that which had no name makes relationship possible. And it is only in relationship that "things" attain human "being." Proper naming brings forth what seems like new entities and makes new relationships possible.

The rabbi as witness to the pattern, names it, and invites it into human "being." All clergy need to believe that whatever the state's legal procedures — birth certificates, marriage licenses, etc. — or the requirements of religious law, the experiential "fact" is that it is as ordained clergy that rabbis and others name infants, barmitzvah teenagers, confirm confirmands, marry couples, convert Jews by choice, consecrate houses, and assist the departed on their journey.

Beyond characterological naming, rabbis have the opportunity to do special work with the suffering, the ill, and the dying. This involves witnessing and naming parts of one's personhood that illness has paradoxically either hidden or revealed. Outward courage may mask inner fear, and the fearful may have reserves of courage not immediately on view. Witnessing the ever-present [*Tzelem* ⇌ *Neshamah*] and naming it appropriately is a most important part of rabbinic work.

Life-cycle changes are a fertile field for naming. Rabbis are vested to change reality by naming a baby; change something fundamental in a convert; "Bar Mitzvah" a 13-year-old; "marry" two single adults. Those so "named" are vested with new and different obligations, expectations, responsibilities, and, it is hoped, new ways of perceiving themselves. A rabbi makes it happen with words. Naming a child is paradigmatic of this power. The child is an inchoate blob of protoplasm barely distinguished from the parents from whom it comes. When the traditional formula is uttered, "Let her name in Israel be so and so the daughter of so and so and so and so," the child becomes a separate person with an identity differentiated from the parents. A new status has been created with words.

Experientially, a rabbi's pronouncement, "Therefore, by the power vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife," changes a man into a husband and a woman into a wife — a profound difference! If we would pay closer attention, beyond what we have been taught in our seminaries, to our own mind/body experience, to occasions when we were "named" in some way, "bar mitzvahed," "married," described as possessing some special attribute, we would easily acknowledge this "fact." Knowing that in reality nothing changes and yet everything changes helped me stop fighting and bemoaning the power that being a rabbi gives us, so that we could use it in the service of those we love and who are in our charge.

Being a Blessing and Blessing Others

As ordained symbolic exemplars of God, standing for the best attributes of humankind, rabbis carry a precious, yet burdensome blessing. Rabbis have as their task exemplifying the blessing in themselves, and evoking and blessing in others, the gift of being created [*Tzelem*

↔ *Neshamah*]. At the primary level this means affirming God's blessing and other gifts to us by thanking and blessing God for them.

Joshua Gutoff (1997) points to the relational context of blessing:

And so: God created everything, and we are to love God with everything we are and have; *Shalom aleichem* (literally, "Peace unto you," colloquially, "How do you do" or "Howdy") says God through the scent of the herb, the taste of the fruit. "*Aleichem shalom*," we say through the bracha (*blessing*) . . . the functional meaning of "Baruch Ata" is "You are Present"; the blessing — when said mindfully — helps establish a relationship with God in the phenomenon at hand. (p. 53)

Giving thanks for God's gifts by saying the 100 blessings we are obliged to say every day, or pronouncing (the priestly blessing): "May YHWH bless you and keep you! May YHWH shine his face upon you and favor you! May YHWH lift up his face toward you and grant you *shalom!*," wherein we transmit an ancient blessing formulated by others, that all need and can use, are the *easy* parts of blessing.

Blessing others on God's behalf is the more audacious act. Crucial to being a rabbi, blessing others with one's personal presence and words is one of the ultimate acts of love a rabbi can do. It is a primary way of attending to the [*Tzelem* ↔ *Neshamah*] that is in others and in us.

Gilligan (1997), from a Self-Relations context, emphasizes the importance of blessing and being blessed:

The point is, you really do exist as a human being. Your beingness is blessed . . . The experience of beingness is first known via blessings from influential others . . . Most people can remember someone in their lives — a family member, teacher, friend — who really saw them as special and unique. This is not a cognitive event; It is about seeing and calling forth the spirit of life that infuses each person. Blessings are crucial acts in the emergence of

each person into the world; without them, love and other skillful human acts are not possible. (pp. 216–217)

Talk about influential others?! Sometimes blessings happen because of who we are perceived to be, despite our own ineptness. Thirty-five years after it happened, I was attending a speech at the local Jewish community center. Cindy Dimenstein, then director of the Bureau of Jewish Education, reached over, tapped me on the shoulder, and said, "There's something that I've been waiting over 30 years to tell you. Remember when my family and I were members of your congregation? I was six or seven. Remember how you did birthday blessings? You had all the kids stand under the *talit*" (prayer shawl).

I nodded politely. I detested doing birthday blessings. I did them because my congregants, knowing that the neighboring rabbi was doing them, expected me to.

Cindy continued. "While all the kids were standing under the *talit* you asked each of us our birthday. When I called out, 'September 27,' you said, 'September 27!! — that's a really important birthday, because that's the day next to September 26, my birthday.' My birthday right next to the rabbi's. Wow! Well, I felt so big, so puffed up, so important that I never forgot it. And every birthday since, I've had that wonderful feeling of being someone important."

Some do it better! Michael Paley (1996) affirms the importance and the effects of having been blessed in a crucial way by Zalman Schachter, founder of the Jewish Renewal movement: "May the One who blessed our ancestors also bless this one as he struggles with his adolescence. May he have the energy to finish his college applications and may those admission officers have the clarity to understand his special gifts."

Paley (1996) writes:

I had never been blessed like this before . . . at that moment, being so involved with the issues that Zalman mentioned, it made sense to me that if God could bless our ancestors, then why not me in a moment of need?

Many years have passed since Zalman blessed me, but his charge still rings in my

ears. His blessing helped me to feel part of something greater than myself and to realize that there were worlds beyond the ones that I could see. His blessing gave me a certain sense of much needed harmony with myself, my community, and maybe with the universe at an unexpected moment.”

What enables us to bless another? In Jewish tradition God is described as the “King of all Kings, the Holy and Blessed One.” Earthly royalty is esteemed by the biblical author to the extent that their behavior is consonant with the Supreme Ruler of All. These archetypal demands dovetail with rabbinic symbolic exemplars, who are archetypes of the God who created us. That this is important is affirmed by John W. Perry (1976), who asserts that the King is “the central archetype, around which the rest of the psyche is organized.”

Moore and Gillette (1990) in discussing the archetypal functions of the King point out that:

The first of these is ordering. . . . the second function of the King . . . was . . . blessing. Blessing is a psychological, or spiritual event. The good king always mirrored and affirmed others who deserved it . . . knowing them in their true worth . . . He recognizes them and he is generative toward them. He bestows upon them his blessing. Being blessed has tremendous psychological consequences for us. There are even studies that show that our bodies actually change chemically when we feel valued, praised and blessed . . . if they are (blessed), something inside will come together for them. That is the effect of blessing; it heals and makes whole.

It (blessing) stabilizes chaotic emotion and out-of-control behaviors. It gives stability and centeredness. It brings calm. And in its “fertilizing” and centeredness, it mediates vitality, life-force and joy. It brings maintenance and

balance. It defends our own sense of inner order, our own integrity of being and of purpose, our own central calmness about who we are, and our essential unassailability and certainty . . . It sees others in all their weakness and in all their talent and worth. It honors them and promotes them. It guides them and nurtures them toward their own fullness of being. (p. 61)

Bradley Shavit Artson (1994) points us in this direction with an understanding of blessing that is especially relevant to what rabbis can do:

The earliest hint of a different understanding of Baruch comes from the Midrash (literature which interprets Scripture to extract its full implications and meaning) where the Rabbis explain the verse “and you shall be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2) to mean “you shall be a spring” (Berechah): . . . This *midrash* diverges markedly from the tradition of Baruch as praised/blessed. Here the term doesn’t imply praise or thanks. Instead, being blessed means that *one in turn can bestow fullness and well-being on others*² . . . God blesses Abraham . . . means that Abraham will become a source of blessing, a fount of abundance for all whose lives he touches. [This] reveals an understanding of Beracha (blessing) as causative.

Why is God The Blessed One? Because everything belongs to God and God generously shares it with creation . . . it tells us that God can afford to be generous, since God is the Creator and owner of all there is. (p. 38)

Following Albo (1450/1930), Artson (1994) offers that:

Baruch (Blessed) indicates that God is the source of all blessings, and that all benefits and good fortune of every kind come from God.

² Added emphasis is mine.

If Baruch, (Blessed) is understood as an adjective, then it reveals that God is a steady source of blessing. (p. 38)

Rabbis are blessed with being God's exemplars. Therefore, it is incumbent on rabbis to share this bounty and bless others. Though a truly crucial, inviolable part of being a rabbi, it is often experienced as an embarrassment. The discomfort may emanate from a sense of personal inadequacy or of one's limitations, or of feeling like an imposter as a symbolic exemplar. More generously and less pathologically, it may involve noble thoughts about human equality, the divinity of all humankind, and fear of the potential hubris involved in blessing those already blessed. Our trepidation is that we, unaware of our blessing, dare not bless others likewise afflicted. We may be even more frightened of taking ourselves too seriously and evolving into one of those pompous, grandiose, overstuffed caricatures of what a rabbi can be.

That all too real danger is acknowledged by Moore and Gillette (1990):

The Shadow King as Tyrant ... arises ... when the Ego is identified with the King energy itself, (and) has no transpersonal commitment. *He* is his own priority ... The whole psyche destabilizes. The planet pretends to be a star. (p. 71)

Relationship is the powerful centering antidote to that danger. *Blessing of the other must be grounded in relationship.* Blessing starts in the Blesser's I-You, loving relationship with her other "selves," those very "selves" we struggle to define as "not me." Blessing continues in the Blesser's awareness of her own relationship with God, whose bounty and being has made room in the world for us and our unique "being." Blessing others is in the relationship of who we are with those others who are also blessed, but whose blessing is as it were in hiding. God is both the source of and calls forth from us our own bounty. A break in these loving I-You relationships impedes blessing.

Gilligan (1997) points out that "problems arise when a single identity is isolated from the family of

identities. Solutions occur when relatedness between multiple identities is brought into play."

These multiple identities are present within our "selves" and our own multiple "selves" relationships with others, who are also multiple identities.

We are at one and the same time, the recipient of blessing, the conduit of blessing, and the source of blessing. Holding all these in relationship simultaneously is imperative so that we may enter a similar relationship with those we are called on to bless. This enables us to call forth from them and audaciously bless the often hidden bounty of their "being" — of *their* unique [*Tzelem* ⇔ *Neshamah*]. We who bless are a relationship and a part of a much greater relationship. Blessing is only possible in relationship.

Paley (1996) learned a lot from being blessed:

Years later when I was a rabbi, I would prepare for Bar and Bat Mitzvahs with families by asking them about each person that would be called to the Torah. For each *aliyah* (the honor of reciting blessings at a public reading of the Torah), I was able to "bring down" a blessing tailored to that individual.

That is a giant step beyond the reciting of formal ritual blessings and beyond being a conduit for ancient blessings. Blessing and encouraging the presented, positive aspects in others is very important. Even more crucial and difficult is blessing the part not presented, the part being struggled with, the part which has no human existence and is experienced as the 'not me.' Realizing what it is in others, which is often unexpressed, witnessing the struggle and essence that begs inarticulately for naming and blessing, and blessing both struggle and essence with words of one's own, words not received and not encoded in the text, is a rabbinic skill of the first magnitude. It was this very part that Zalman Schachter touched when he blessed the young Michael. Sensing a young Bar Mitzvah's turbulent energy, a student's sense of inadequacy, the conflict in a mother's heart, the fear behind the brave face a hospital patient puts on, or conversely the courage hiding behind the fear, all the "not me's" that though always present in the encounter, are so often hidden in the shadows, is a prerequisite to

blessing. Yet it is those "hidden" parts that not only are unsettling to their "owners," but also throw us potential Blessers off center as we struggle to deal only with what is being presented. To bless those wounded, hidden parts is a great art and skill.

Blessing those parts, as we mentioned earlier, requires first of all that we be centered, in touch with our own [*Tzelem* ↔ *Neshamah*]. When knocked off center, which will happen all too often, one must have ways of getting centered. Being centered is experienced as a calm alertness of one's own mind/body as one returns to and sustains contact with one's own [*Tzelem* ↔ *Neshamah*]. This makes room for one's own center and allows an act of *Tzimtzum* (literally "contraction," from the kabalistic idea of God withdrawing to make room for the creation of the world) that makes room for the other's presence with neither being compromised. It is from this centered place that a rabbi as a symbol can bless the other.

And You Shall Bless Me Also (Ex. 12:33)

It is the middle of the night. He who will be known down the ages for his hardened heart, is now heart-broken. His heir who had been the guarantor of his, Pharaoh's own divine status, is now dead in his arms. The supreme ruler of the upper and lower kingdom, embodiment of Ra and of Horus, the gods of Egypt, his divine dynasty brought to its knees, defeated in the battle as to who the living God really is, is abjectly doing what he must do. Having summoned Moses and Aaron, he is sending them and their people on their way. Letting go of a work force, he frets for his failure in failing to guarantee Egypt's future, a solemn duty with which he has been charged. And as he presses them to leave with no further delay, in an act that is either *chutzpah*, stupidity, pitiful, or all of these, asks to be blessed. Bless me also, Pharaoh asks of Moses, guardian of the teaching, and of Aaron, master of the cult, the plenipotentiaries of the living God, the very people who have brought this dreadful night to be.

If blessing is an attribute of the God who shares His bounty and goodness with all His creation, of whom does Pharaoh ask this blessing? What is the bounty/blessing Pharaoh seeks?

The careful reader will duly note what follows. The

children of Israel had done according to Moshe's words: They had asked of the Egyptians objects of silver and objects of gold, and clothing. God had given the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, and they let themselves be asked of (Ex. 12:35–36).

And the self same astute reader will note the careful use of the words: "So did they *exploit* the Egyptians" (Ex. 12:36). The Egyptians, despite their great anguish that night, are able to see beyond the Israelites as enemy. They respond to what they are asked for. They share their bounty.

From Moses and Aaron, no blessing is forthcoming. Pharaoh's plea goes unheard and unheeded. No blessing/bounty is forthcoming. There is no salve for his wound. There is no blessing that Egypt will survive. He is not promised that his torn heart will heal. He is not reassured that there is a future worth having for the humbled representative of Ra and Horus.

Perhaps the silence came from anger over centuries of slavery; perhaps from an understandable feeling of wanting the whole thing over with; perhaps from the haste duly recorded in scripture of getting out; or perhaps more crucially from not being aware that it was in their power and even perhaps their duty as representatives of the living God to bless even Pharaoh.

What was the overflowing bounty Moses and Aaron, God's plenipotentiaries and indeed all Israel had in full measure that wondrous/appalling night? It was in the reality of the contact with the living God, who had heard their cry and come to redeem them. That God, whose bounty could include even Egypt, as it indeed had in the days of Joseph. It was relationship with the God, one of whose nicknames was "Baal HaRachamim" (Master of Mercy) whose compassion is over all. Now Pharaoh and his people are those who suffer and are deeply wounded. But even though we understand the feelings of Moses and Aaron, nonetheless there is no bounty of the living God shared with Pharaoh.

And so we note (Ex. 14:5) that inevitably, the un-blessed suffering heart flips back, hardens this time with no record of divine intervention. Dare we say because it was not witnessed or blessed at the propitious moment? And so pursuit and enmity, the desire to subjugate resumes. Without blessing of the suffering and pain, and that which is noble in Pharaoh, the hardened heart

reasserts itself. And though the story inexorably leading to the covenant at Sinai must include the redemption of God's people, nonetheless, a mighty horde is destroyed. And it is told that God's joy in His own triumph could not be complete.

Because Rabbis are God's Exemplars, blessing

others is incumbent upon us. Blessing others, sharing God's bounty is a truly crucial and inviolable part of being a rabbi. As Symbolic Exemplars of God, we can do no less. Our people and the world call out to us in their pain.

Bless me also.

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POETIC INTERLUDE 3

An Entirely Different Angel

(Dvorah Simon)

Sometimes we seek
a bad thing.

And sometimes,
it is like an addiction. An almost satisfaction.
Redemption without consciousness,
circling over and over,
with marginal variations —
just enough to keep you hooked.

And there is a lot of investment,
and drama, and pride, and each take is more
convincing than the last.
Only a little farther, this time,
and the wound will be healed.

But the wound is not healed.

But sometimes,
another thing occurs, a true thing;
Maya's treasure. Willing chains that
are a womb of awakening,

The way Israel had to go down to slavery,
to Egypt, to be born, out of the narrow places,
out of the waters of the sea.

Sometimes,
we choose a bad thing,
a time of lying in the earth. Of blindness,
of subjugation. Obescience to a dark lord,
or to darker imaginings.
Sometimes, there is sacrifice, and pain,

and glory in it, and shame,
and a terrible release, and the sudden, searing fire
of awareness . . .
in which the old nightmare is finally named,
and brought forth, and claimed, almost as a
lost child, given up so long before,
we've forgotten the light of its birth,
but only kept the pain.
And in this confluence, finally,
of self and self,
your voice is heard.
You come into your desire, and name it "good."
The hidden spark is released from the prison in which,
hidden, it could only be seen as monstrous.

Free, it floats, lightly, an entirely different angel,
and you are touched, with blessing, with an almost
unbearable regard, and there is something musical,
but it is not music. And something inside,
something in you, that has not smiled for a very long time,
smiles.

But all this, of course,
is lies.

The truth is a thousand times more delicate,
more joyous, and more grave.

A Danger of Angels

(Beverly Voss)

Tradition says: Stand by the well
and draw up water,
bucket by small bucket.
Stand on the shore.
Watch waves lap up.
Draw back from the tide.
Sit in a concert.
Hear the music.
At the end, clap your hands.
If you're bold, whistle.
Give a small shout.
Oh! So bold!
And all the while,
something is restless.
Something stirs.
Something dark
whispers at your back.
A rustle of wings.
But no one's there.
You gaze down the
well's stony sides
and see a face
rippling back at you.
Beckoning.
A whisper:
Come in.
Get wet.
Go deep.

Beverly Voss, L.M.S.W.-A.C.P., is a psychotherapist, poet, painter, mom, dancer, and gardener who lives in Austin, Texas. She gives seminars on creative journaling, expressive painting, nurturing resilience, and recovery from vicarious trauma.

See what lives down here.
A river perhaps that
rushes under your life.
You feel terror.
You feel no.
You feel yes.
The ocean too murmurs:
Come in.
Get wet.
Swim.
Let waves hold you up
and knock you down.
Sweep you off
your timid feet.
Batter you on rock,
in swirling sand.
And the music says:
Be mine.
Move out of your
still, pale appreciation
and into heat of color
and sound, the place
your body knows.
The breath on your
neck grows hot.
A danger of angels says:
Go! Into the well.
Down dark stone walls where
your very breath echoes,
your heartbeat quickens
and you meet the face
that's waited for you.
The face that saw the
stirring. The one that
knew a bucket of water
was too small a portion
for your growing thirst.
Go! say the angels.
All your life you've
stood on the shore.
Stayed in your seat.
Jump! Swim! Dance!
You may die.
You may drown.
You may live.

Do This

(Beverly Voss)

Follow color.

Follow the look of gold-yellow
next to burnt sienna next to
turquoise and cobalt blue.

Follow the lines in asphalt
that look like Persian script
escaping from a prayer.

Follow the shadow cast by sun
that paints an inky branch of
redbud on the morning blind.

Follow the smear of
brush dipped first in grey,
then red, then orange.

Fall into the darkness of
wet black paint glistening
like an oil slick
or like death.

I pause and want to weep.

Nothing I write,

Nothing I draw

shows the beauty I see.

Nothing shows

the restlessness,

the horror,

the danger,

the dread.

Nothing praises

enough the green tulip

that opens pink — a gasp

of quiet glory.

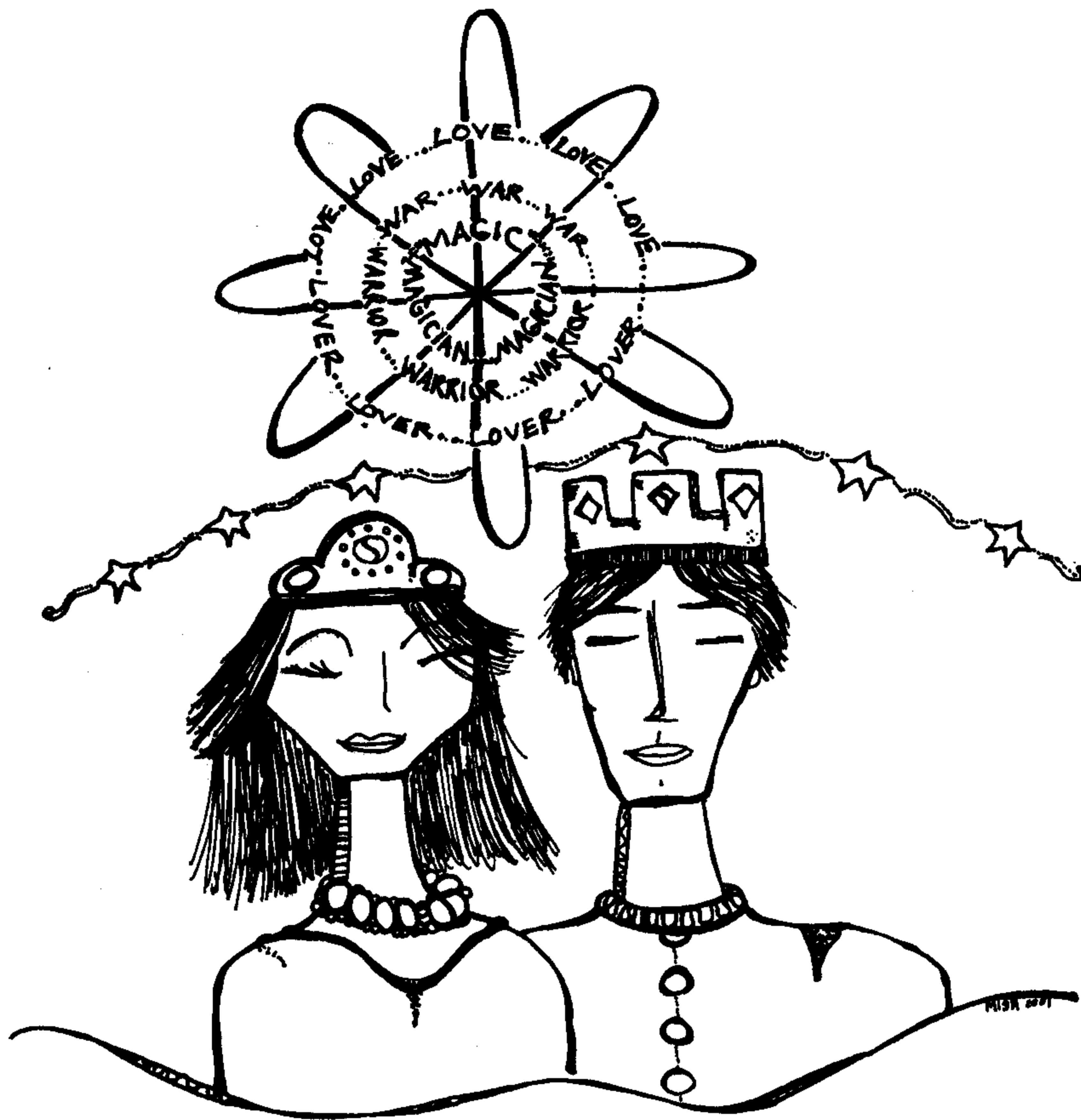
Who cares!

whispers the muse.

You are the song of God
and the song is never God.
But in failing to be God,
sing louder.
Draw more wildly.
Dance more freely.
God will smile . . .
and you will be the smile
of God.

SECTION IV

DIMENSIONS OF SELF-RELATIONS



*Kings, Queens, Warriors, Lovers and Magicians:
Archetypes of Transformation*

Robert Rossel, Ph.D., is a psychologist in Vermont. For the last 33 years, Dr. Rossel has also nurtured an abiding love of music, meditation, writing, and art. He is currently writing a book about his association with Steve Gilligan and Self-Relations. His long association with Steve over the years has convinced him that psychotherapy is an exquisite art form and that the greatest artists of all are those whose medium is life itself.

KINGS, QUEENS, WARRIORS, LOVERS AND MAGICIANS: ARCHETYPES OF TRANSFORMATION

*The earth is weeping, and
it is our bodies that know it.*

— Cherie Martin Franklin (1996, p. 2)

Introduction

Although the concept archetype and its use in psychotherapy has its origins and has played a prominent role in other psychotherapeutic traditions (Jung, 1959), my appreciation of its power, elegance, and relevance to clinical practice came after I was exposed to the notion of archetype in Self-Relations workshops and residentials with Stephen Gilligan. The idea that the unconscious is not a thing but rather a being, originating from Erickson's legacy, was also instrumental in shaping my way of thinking about archetypes in my clinical practice (Erickson & Rossi, 1979). I found few concepts more suited to linking the somatic self and cognitive processes to vital and energetic currents flowing in the relational field than the notion of archetype. The Self-Relations practices of deep listening, blessing, challenging, and connecting with deep currents flowing in the self create a fertile soil for curiosity about how these archetypal energies may be named, blessed, and utilized in sponsoring generative processes awakening deeper levels of self awareness and a vital connection to the world (Gilligan, 1997).

This chapter begins with a brief description of an

exercise I have used frequently to explore archetypal knowledge and experience and to sponsor transformational self-relational processes that awaken and utilize basic archetypal energies. It then discusses four archetypes, namely, the King/Queen, the Warrior, the Lover, and the Magician, that have played a prominent role in Self-Relations, and shows how I have used this exercise to explore and utilize these archetypes for generative change and transformation in a clinical context.

After examining the relevance of these archetypes to the question of identity in self-relational processes, and in considering how such exercises might be used to heal wounds, nurture vision, and develop futures, I present a case drawn from my clinical practice that clearly illustrates how the archetypal work played a central role in organizing the entire course of therapy with one particular client. I was indeed fortunate to be able to work with this extremely bright and engaged woman who we will call Malia. She had a deep and intuitive appreciation of archetypal knowledge and experience and was very responsive to imaginal processes evoking these archetypal energies. I was even more fortunate that several years after we stopped meeting, Malia was willing to talk with me about the therapy and how it was instrumental in a life-transformational process.

The chapter ends with her own description of how she utilized the therapy and her experience with these

archetypes to transform her life. Let us begin with a brief description of the exercise.

Journey to the Center of Self

The exercise described below is used to deepen the relationship a person has with their more essential or archetypal self. I have used specific applications of the exercise with many clients, individually and in groups. I modify the text as I go along, depending on what I sense would be relevant and useful for the individual or group I am working with. My adaptation of this exercise is one of several techniques I use to help clients explore and deepen their relationships with themselves.

It involves a relatively straight forward guided imagery in which the client is invited to visualize a field across which they are walking. Their journey takes them to a structure which they see on the horizon. Clients are encouraged to use their imagination to fill in details, sensing the shape, textures, building material, decoration, and "feel" of this structure. They are also encouraged to use all their senses — vision, touch, smell, taste, sound — as they enter the structure so that the experience will be deepened. Although they are encouraged to enter the structure, they are also cautioned that they have a choice and may elect not to enter (or leave the structure at any time). This is for the purpose of giving clients some choice over their level of participation and permission to disengage at any time if they feel a need to.

Then the interior of the structure is described, but I again leave a great deal of room for clients to exercise their own imagination. I generally paint a picture of a central hall with four doors, one straight ahead, one to their left, one to their right, and one behind them. I tell the participants that behind the four doors are the rooms (realms) of the four archetypes and the exercise is designed to allow them to have an experience of their relationship to these four basic archetypal energies. I usually direct them first to the door on their right and suggest they knock on the door and tell them that there they will most likely find their Warrior. I tell them the door may or may not open to them (it usually does) and even if it does, they are reminded that they have the choice of entering the room or staying on the outside.

If they enter, I encourage clients to use their imaginations to experience their relationship to the Warrior.

What does the room look like? What does their Warrior look like? What does it feel like to be in his/her presence? Again, I encourage clients to engage their imagination fully and leave a lot of room for unique experiences. Finally, I encourage my client to ask a question of the Warrior, "What do I need to do to strengthen myself in this quadrant?" and wait for an answer. I then bring the experience in this quadrant to a close by suggesting that the Warrior and my client may have a gift or token to exchange in memory of the experience and ask my client to thank his or her Warrior for making contact and to make assurances that he or she will return at a later date.

The client is then directed to go across the hall where he or she will find a door leading to the room (realm) of the Lover. After completing the experience with the Lover, clients are directed then to go to the door on their right, where they will meet the Magician and then, after completing that experience, again across the hall where they will meet the King/Queen. The experience with the Lover (and the other two archetypes) is structured in roughly the same way as that of the Warrior, with the same general directions, questions, and closure. It is not essential that any particular order is followed in meeting the archetypes. I try to remain flexible and guide the experience so that clients have an opportunity to fully engage their own unconscious resources within a loosely structured guiding framework.

After clients have met all four archetypes (or had some experience of their relationship, or lack of such, with them), they are encouraged to leave the structure and return to the field of grass, noticing any changes in their experience walking out of the structure and across the field. They are encouraged to return to the structure frequently to notice changes in their relationship with the four archetypes and also possibly the changing relationships among and between them.

This is an adaptation of an exercise created by my late dear friend and colleague Linda Ellen, M.S.W. Linda had created this powerful exercise based in part on Robert Moore & Douglas Gillette's (1990) analysis of Jungian archetypes of the male experience, in part on the writings of Joseph Campbell (1949) on mythology, and in part an application of Stephen Gilligan's training exercise using these archetypes in working with Erick-

sonian hypnotherapists. When I was first introduced to the archetypes in Linda's workshop, I found them very powerful and moving for me personally. But I did not fully appreciate their impact until much later when I incorporated specific aspects of the exercise in my work with many different clients — both men and women — and saw their power and relevance when applied to specific lives.

When I participated in Linda's workshop, I experienced many things in meeting each of the archetypes, but found the experience in meeting my King the most profound and unsettling. When I entered his room for an audience, I discovered to my great shock and dismay that he was dead! All the Courtiers were in mourning. The flags in the castle were at half mast. The kingdom was in disarray. No one knew what to do with me. Finally, I was led down a long hall to a large room draped in black with all the pictures covered with mourning cloth. Sooty torches burned in wrought iron stanchions. It was damp and cold and smelled of death. I soon discovered I was in the crypt of the dead King. He was lying in state, dressed in his armor, stretched out on a large marble slab, with his sword grasped by his hands lying across his chest. I could not speak. There was obviously no blessing or audience. All I could do was witness this sad event and try to comprehend why this tragedy had occurred.

When the exercise was over, I told Linda about the scene with my dead King and asked her what she thought it meant. Without hesitation. Linda said, "You have to go out and find your King and try to revive him." I knew immediately she was right. But how? How does one revive an important part of oneself that is experienced as dead? I had no answers, but at least felt I had an important question to reflect on in thinking about my future. This is exactly what I set out to do over the next few years. The imagery of the dead King spoke volumes to me. I saw it in my invisibility and in my failure to speak out on things that were important to me. I saw it in the years of feeling not quite grown up, not quite in command of my power and my voice. I saw it in my failed writing projects and in the lack of ritual and ceremony in my life. I saw it in my unwillingness or inability to mentor, champion, and bless others.

I decided I must focus on these things. My intui-

tion told me that this is what the image of the dead King was leading me to do. I went back into therapy. I incorporated more ritual and ceremony in my life. I began taking myself seriously as a writer and as someone who had important things to say. I established my own private group practice. I became active in the leadership of my state psychological association. I frequently checked in on each archetype to see how it was doing and to notice changes. I remember vividly the day I checked in and discovered that my King was alive. His crypt had been transformed into a sick-bed and he was being ministered to by the Lover and Magician, the former massaging and stroking him and the latter providing magic potions. The Warrior was out trying to keep things from completely falling apart in the kingdom while the King was recuperating. But he was alive!

This was around 1990. I have continued to check in on all these archetypal figures over the years. I have watched each change as I have changed. I have also seen their relationship change as I have become a more whole and integrated person. I have befriended them as they have befriended me and become a more integral part of my identity, a kind of inner barometer of how well I am doing in managing my relationship with myself. Through this process I have seen my King heal, get out of his sick-bed, find his voice, and come into his own as an alive, happy, confident, grownup man.

This whole dynamic process may seem rather strange until it can be experienced directly. It is difficult to convey its meaning and importance on paper. A more direct understanding of the experience will hopefully be attained when I discuss other dimensions of the archetypes and then share Malia's case.

The Archetypal Self

Self-Relations owes a great deal to Jung for his lucid writings about archetypes (Jung, 1954, 1959, 1919/1971). Jung, more than any of the luminary figures at the origin of modern psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, explored how universal themes captured in myths, fairy tales, art, and dreams embody psychological processes and structures common to the human condition across all times and cultures. Although it is hard to provide a simple and clear definition of archetype as Jung used it, at one point he said that archetypes are "primordial

images" that describe "the instinct's perception of itself" (Jung, 1919/1971, p. 71). By this I think he means that archetypes are basic psychological images representing structures that are deeply embedded in the human psyche, structures that become particularly manifest in times of crisis or personal or social upheaval. In *Self-Relations* we are drawn to archetypes not so much as descriptions of basic psychic structures as we are to seeing them as universal processes or currents flowing in the psyche and relational field that are awakened during times of profound identity shifts in therapy. Steve Gilligan (1997) expresses it this way:

Self-Relations therapy assumes that . . . symptomatic experiences are often archetypal in nature: they call us to transcend the boundaries of the cognitive self and become part of a deeper human experience. In this regard, an archetypal presence serves as a sort of sponsor for a person: it awakens her awareness to a presence inside of herself and the world, and guides her processes of developmental growth in that archetypal area. (p. 156)

As therapists we see these awakening currents or symptoms as a gift from the unconscious and seek to find ways to sponsor and support those parts of the psyche that are coming to life. Working with symptoms in this way offers a way to link painful and highly personal transformational processes to universal life themes and resources lying deep in the unconscious and in the transpersonal realm. The effect of such work is that our clients are able to link the particularities of their situation to a larger context of meaning within which their suffering can become interpretable and ultimately liberating. It allows them to see beyond the chaos and extreme suffering of the moment to a larger and more stable field of meaning and purpose holding their life. Seen in this way, archetypal work allows the therapeutic relationship and therapeutic outcomes to move from the realm of "merely personal," or individual, to the realm of what the poet Galway Kinnell termed the "truly personal" — individual experience reflected back into community and tradition (Norris, 1996, p. 100). In other words, as we deliberately evoke, name, and touch

these deep archetypal currents in our psychotherapeutic work, we are opening the relational process vertically to the gods and the transpersonal world and horizontally to a soulful connection found in our common human experience.

Many of the archetypes Jung worked with — Warrior (Hero), Lover (Prince), Magician (Trickster), and King/Queen — have become important in *Self-Relations* as ways of naming basic human impulses that are unleashed by life's vicissitudes and that are awakened in times of extreme pain and suffering. The shadow forms of the archetypes embody some of the ways these same basic human currents or energies become blocked, distorted, or perverted by abuse, neglect or other forms of human distress. Since the archetypes of Warrior, Lover, Magician, and King/Queen will play a predominant role in the case study that follows, let us spend a few paragraphs discussing how these particular archetypes fit into the broader context of *Self-Relations* work.

In *Self-Relations* the Warrior is generally associated with the acting and responding aspect of the psyche. The Warrior embodies fierceness and the willingness to fight for, and if need be, sacrifice the self for a just cause. The shadow of the Warrior is the cold blooded killer who has lost all sense of connection to the value of life and the call to a greater purpose. In *Self-Relations* work, we seek to sponsor the Warrior quality of fierceness, balancing it with the other more tender and playful impulses. At the same time, we seek to transform the perverted or shadow manifestations of Warrior energies when they threaten to destroy a client's ability to live life fully with awareness, tenderness, and integrity.

The Lover embodies tenderness and the impulse to love, protect, nurture, and procreate. The Lover's domain is compassion, sexuality, and the impulse to merge and dissolve boundaries. The shadow of the Lover is found in sexual perversion, obsessive need or desire, the obliteration of boundaries, and the need to possess or be possessed by the other. In *Self-Relations* our commitment again is to sponsor the tender impulses and to bring them in balance with other archetypes, so that tenderness is tempered with the Magician's awareness, the Warrior's fierceness, and the dignity of the King/Queen. If tenderness is not fully integrated with these other basic human impulses, it is more likely to find

itself embodied in the more distorted immature shadow forms. When we see the shadow of the lover in therapy, it often manifests itself in the absence of boundaries, in sloppy sentimentality, in compulsive caretaking, or in passive-aggressive acting out. This serves as a potent reminder that each of these archetypal energies is as integral to the therapeutic relationship itself as it is to self-relational processes taking place in our client's lives.

The Magician embodies extreme awareness or sensitivity. In Self-Relations we also associate the Magician with play, magic, and mischievousness. The Magician lives at the margins of experience. He or she is able to transform, transmute, or mediate experience and open new possibilities. He or she is drawn to all forms of esoteric knowledge, particularly those that involve the supernatural. The shadow of the Magician is found in black magic and in the fascination with the Satanic. We also find the shadow of the Magician in the trickster who uses magic and illusion to obscure the truth and in the fool's disrespect of the just order of the King or Queen. Again, therapeutically our interest is in finding and bringing these energies into play in the service of self-transformational processes. Humor, playfulness, and a sense of the absurd are indispensable relational processes when the therapy moves close to the heart of human distress and our clients are entering their own "dark night of the soul." On the other hand, trickster energies and mischievousness can be extremely destructive if not tempered with respect, love, and a recognition of the basic seriousness that underlies the curiosity and play integral to all therapeutic relationships. Here again we see clearly how these archetypal energies are integral to the therapeutic relationship as a self-relational process.

Finally, the archetype of the King/Queen embodies the principle of just rule. The King and Queen stand for legitimate authority and represent the higher values and impulses of the community. They often speak in the royal "We" and assume the right to name, codify, and speak out about the higher values of the community. Their role is often ceremonial — they feel a call to mentor, champion, and bless their loyal subjects. They expect, in turn, loyalty, veneration, and respect. The shadow of the King/Queen is found in the tyrant who has lost sight of the higher values of the community. In the shadow form the King and Queen place themselves

above the laws and rules they represent and demand loyalty and veneration for its own sake. They do not respect and if need be will use, enslave, or betray their loyal subjects.

As I have reflected on the King/Queen archetypes as they are embodied in self-relations, I have come to see them as representing the essential attitude and process of sponsorship itself. Although the latter archetypes do not seem as well articulated in describing Self-Relations processes as the Warrior, Lover, and Magician, they are extremely important in integrating and sustaining the flow and balance of the mature forms of the latter three archetypes. As one of the older or "senior" practitioners of Self-Relations, I have developed a keen interest in and appreciation for the process of sponsorship and how the energies of King/Queen are integral to it. This is not only due to my experience of working with the dead King related above, but it is also due to a growing interest in learning how to gracefully integrate the process of sponsorship as an embodiment of the wisdom and dignity that come with maturity and old age. If human sponsorship means that the energies of fierceness, tenderness and mischievousness are touched by human presence allowing them to be integrated into the relational self (Gilligan, 1997, p. 161), it is important that we learn how to model these energies in a mature, fluid and integrated way as therapists. To me that is the essential skill and indispensable gift that comes in channeling King/Queen energies in therapeutic relationships.

Archetypal Knowledge and Experience

One of the central tasks of Self-Relations (or any therapeutic approach for that matter) is to sponsor experiences that make the process of therapy directly relevant to the immediate challenges our clients are facing in their lives. It is one thing to experience the Warrior, Lover, Magician or King/Queen as an exercise or topic of discussion in therapy, it is quite another to see how such images and processes translate directly into our client's lived experience. I have found it useful to talk explicitly with clients about the places where they will most directly experience these archetypal energies flowing in their lives. In my experience, such discussions often bring the concept of archetype "home" and make it

more immediately relevant and visible in the immediacy of clients' lives. Below are a few of the things I have recognized about these archetypal energies as they touch my life. I have found in general that my clients know immediately what I am talking about when I share my understanding of archetypal knowledge and experience in this way. Such discussions make any experience or exercise I use to awaken these energies in therapy more immediately relevant and real to my clients.

First, the Warrior. In the face of war or natural disaster, the divisions of class, race, or circumstance tend to dissolve as people pull together against a common threat or common enemy. Once the crisis is over, the same people quickly fall back into mutual separation, mistrust, and even hatred. The archetypal realm involved here is the experience of a powerful threat that tends to pull us out of our mundane lives and into contact with something greater than ourselves. Driven by a great sense of urgency and necessity, we "lose" or "sacrifice" ourselves to participate in a great historical drama. Paradoxically, as we lose ourselves in this drama, we find meaning and a deeper sense of our connection to ourselves, other people, and to history. This sense of history, necessity, and drama stands out on the horizon of our life. We look back on such times and circumstances with a sense of nostalgia, longing, and regret. We often attempt to recapture the immediacy, vividness, and meaning of such experiences even though they were filled with pain, sacrifice and personal suffering. These times give us a direct experience of the Warrior archetype and remind us that life still often requires that we channel this kind of archaic energy.

Under the right conditions the experience of love and sexuality can similarly connect us to a timeless and universal order of experience within which we "lose" ourselves and find a greater self. The boundaries separating us from others tend to dissolve and we become lost in a physical experience of exquisite sensitivity and mutuality. As the expression goes, "the earth moves." In this powerful juxtaposition of biological immediacy and mutuality, sensitivity, and intersubjectivity, we find the context where we are most likely to have direct contact with the archetype of the Lover. Love, like war, can transport us beyond the mundane into a greater, more universal, order of experience. This is why love and war

are so often woven together, adding depth, drama and a sense of historical inevitability to many of the great love stories, myths, and dramas of history.

People of different backgrounds and life circumstances tend to forget themselves and respond in a very similar and distinct way when they are brought face to face with the smile of an infant or very young child. Young children have the ability to draw people together who otherwise would feel distinct and quite separate. Why is this? Although we may not recognize it, under such circumstances we are under the influence of the archetype of the Magician. Infants and young children cast a particular kind of "spell" that makes us forget ourselves and connects us directly to experience unmediated by language, custom, or a categorical attitude. At first glance this would seem a contradiction with everything we know about the Magician. The Magician, among other things, is the master of language. He or she uses words to cast spells. He or she is able to collapse boundaries, shift shape, move in and out of ordinary experience through the use of esoteric knowledge and magic. Yet, the infant, because he or she doesn't have language, enchants us by reminding us that there is a more immediately experienced reality that lies underneath and beyond language. Infants collapse boundaries and make us forget ourselves, just as war and lovemaking does, but through a very different mechanism. They cast a spell that pulls us out of ourselves and into the immediacy of experience — funny faces, funny noises, imitation, mirroring, communication without words, all of which remind us of our biological roots, and a simplicity and directness that connects past and the future in the immediacy of the present.

One other archetypal experience that connects us with the Magician's realm is knowledge of death. Death represents the obliteration of all boundaries, the ultimate loss of self. In the face of death — our own or that of someone we love — we feel connected to something greater and more powerful than we are, to which we can only surrender. Here too, we encounter directly and singularly the power of a greater reality that lies beyond the immediacy of human experience, but to which all human experience points and culminates. The Magician embodies the fascination with and futile attempt to control this process and master the supernatural world.

What is the experience that most directly gives us access to the archetypal realm of the King/Queen? I have given some hints in presenting the story of my attempt to revive my dead King, but the connection is far from clear. One of the challenges of living in contemporary society is discovering and cultivating the kind of experiences that give us access to the realm of the King/Queen. We have been trained (conditioned), particularly in the United States, to be suspicious of authority. Most traditional institutions and sources of identity within the community have lost a great deal of power and moral authority. Post-modern society has been called a "global village." One of the paradoxes of the age of communication and specialization is that we have very little understanding of or contact with many of the traditional institutional sources of authority, dominion, leadership, and rule. Many writers, in commenting on the male experience, have discussed the lack of ritual, initiatory structures, and mentoring in post-modern society (Campbell, 1949; Moore & Gillette, 1990; Bly, 1990). Others have shown that women face distinct yet similar challenges (Miller, 1976; Belinky, et al., 1986; Bem, 1993; Pipher, 1994). It becomes increasingly difficult to find a distinct community into which each new generation is initiated. King and Queen energy has been supplanted by the expertise of specialized, bureaucratic knowledge. The archetypal process of blessing, mentoring, and initiation has been lost in the segmentation and separation of the generations and in the devaluation of the authority of age and experience. With the eclipse of the community, each new generation is more or less left to fend for itself.

All of these observations are reminders of the pull of the archetypal realm — reminders that there is more going on in and around us than we typically keep track of in the rush of our everyday lives. Just because we are typically not aware of the archetypal realm and our larger selves does not mean that they are not always present in our lives. Our access to or involvement in each of the four archetypes can be in various stages of development. If our access to the archetype is in a developed or mature form, its energy can be life-giving and constructive. On the other hand, if our access is undeveloped or expressed in a shadow form, it can be life-destroying.

When using these archetypes in working with cli-

ents, I have discovered that most people have favorites, ones with whom they feel comfortable, and with whom they are connected deeply and can express intuitively. These are the archetypal energies they channel most of the time and into which they regress when under stress. Other archetypes may feel alien or very unfamiliar and receive little energy that would encourage growth and maturation. These are the archetypal energies I attempt to help my clients develop. These potent energies of the self are readily available to us, providing we have not built up imbalanced patterns in their use. If we favor one over the other, or lack experiences through which a specific archetype matures, inevitably life will bring us experiences (i.e., crises and painful opportunities to learn) out of which new learnings will emerge. The challenge we face is to find and cultivate the kinds of experience that will allow us to develop that particular archetypal energy and bring it more directly in relation to the other forms.

A Case Example

Background

Malia was referred to me by Jean, a therapist at a local home for unwed mothers with whom I had dealt previously on another case. Jean told me that Malia was older than most of the residents in the home — 25 years old — and, because she was extremely bright and more mature than most of the residents in the home, would be extremely rewarding for me to work with. Malia was just emerging from three years of confusion and personal defeat. She had sunk into a deep depression and had become pregnant. Having decided to face the pregnancy alone, she turned to me for support in making the best decision for herself and her baby. Somewhere deep down inside she knew that repairing the wounds to her own fragile psyche was the best path she could follow in reevaluating her life and in making the right decision about the child she was bringing into the world.

As I put Malia's issues together, it seemed to me that she had a number of traumatic experiences that had seriously undermined her sense of her internal resources and personal power. Her questions were basic ones thrust on her quite suddenly and unexpectedly by her pregnancy — questions about self care, the bad choices

she had made in the past, and the general lack of direction in her life. She was torn. On the one hand, she knew the risks and profound isolation of being a single parent. On the other, she felt a strong, instinctive pull toward motherhood — a pull fueled by a realization that she might not have an opportunity to have another child. There was a great deal of shame that required that we work very hard to put her back in touch with her internal resources, build self esteem, and explore the meaning of personal power and responsibility. I wanted to deepen the therapy but wasn't sure what would work best for her. I consulted with colleagues in considering ways I might challenge Malia to deepen the therapy. Several of my female colleagues reminded me that Malia was encountering an experience, pregnancy and motherhood, that drew her in contact with two of the most basic issues women face in their lives. Malia's developing relationship to these issues was a very natural context for productively examining not only her future but her relationship to her deeper archetypal self.

It so happened that Malia had come to me during the period I was working most intensely with my experience of the dead King. I could see the deep connections between the work she was doing and my own struggle. This only served to heighten the relevance of her therapy to me and my motivation to introduce her to the "Journey to the Center of Self" exercise discussed above. Her response to this exercise and incorporation of archetypal knowledge into her developing sense of self became a central theme in the therapy.

Malia's Relationship to the Archetypes

Malia had assumed up to the very moment of his birth that she was going to give her baby up for adoption and was increasingly reconciled with this idea as the therapy progressed. When he arrived, as is often the case in such matters, a powerful instinct took over and there was no way she could give him up. This became a major point of decision in her life. It also represented the birth of a significant new relationship with herself — an event which propelled her into an identity as a mother and a lifetime commitment to the privileges, responsibilities and heartaches of parenthood. Like it or not, these privileges, responsibilities and heartaches would become defining forces in her life for some time to

come, and serve as a crucible for testing the quality of our work and the emergence of her relationship with a deep archetypal self and archetypal knowledge.

When Malia and I talked about her therapy later, this moment of birth in the hospital emerged as one in which her understanding of the archetypes crystallized — not as an abstract concept but as a lived reality. As she said:

The most significant way in which our therapy helped me was it prepared me to make the best and right decision; and it gave me the self confidence to make that decision on my own. Without the powerful influence of our therapy, I don't know what would have happened. I recall the moment of clarity that I had when the answer came over me. I was lying back in the hospital bed, metal stitches across my abdomen, dizzy with lack of food, the after-effects of the general anesthesia, but still, it was clear. I felt the most basic primal instinct a woman can have — the maternal instinct. It washed over me like a flood. My son is what matters, the bond between us. I entered an area of life where I became acutely sensitive to the fragility of it. Everything became translucent, the day-to-day concerns settled down clearly, as just a small part of existence.

Here we see the emergence of archetypal awareness. Malia participated in an experience through which things seemed more "translucent," through which she was able to see her life as "just a small part of existence," where she could see more fully into the heart of things.

She continued:

My awareness opened up. I felt as though I was a mother bear — and the protection and care of my cub was predominant. This child is manifest in my life. Nothing is more powerful than that. I became in touch with a part of myself that knows I can give him the care he needs. I became aware of a stronger me. It is that age-old ancient eternal connection.

That connection she made was the expansion and deepening of her relationship with herself as she fully accepted the responsibility of her new identity as a nurturer of life. It seems to me that it was also an elegant integration "*in vivo*" of the work that she had done in the therapy with those powerful archetypal resources. She had fully internalized a connection with an "age-old, ancient, [and] eternal" source of power, meaning, and self knowledge.

The Test

I was able to see Malia only a couple of sessions after the delivery. She decided to move back to her hometown, and distance made it difficult for her to travel to Burlington to see me. We maintained some phone contact occasionally but it was not the same as seeing her in my office. Gradually Malia became more involved in her life with her son, the phone contacts became less and less frequent and eventually stopped. She occasionally contacted me when an emergency or a milestone, like her son's birthday, came up. I thus knew that she continued to think about and apply the things she had learned in therapy.

The first year after her son's birth was hard. She lived by herself with her infant son in a small apartment. Her description of that year strikes me as a real test of her learning and an ongoing challenge to deepen it. Here is the way she described that year:

I spent a year in a fairly reclusive manner. I did a lot of therapy — in my solitude — a lot of writing and reaching inward. I nurtured my son and myself. Sometimes I would pretend I was talking to you. I would sit there and have a conversation with your imaginary persona.

Continuing in the playful spirit Malia had evoked, I asked, "And what were some of the brilliant ideas I shared with you."

"Gee, I don't remember," Malia answered, laughing.

When I was able to draw her back to the question of things that sustained her during those first difficult months, Malia provided an interesting answer:

My subconscious mind continued to be that 40,000-year-old woman [an archetypal image Stephen Gilligan had shared with participants at a workshop I had attended previously and shared with her]. I continued to remember that. I painted and wrote poems, based on that part of myself. And I think keeping that alive was one of the things that was so prominent — keeping that inner space, my soul, alive and keeping it speaking. You told me it was O.K. to listen to that part of myself. To have that license, the authority, to say, this is O.K., this is good. That's what enables me to feel deeply who I am inside. If I don't know who I am deep inside, then it would be a lot harder to respect myself, listen to myself, and appreciate myself.

Birth and Rebirth

When I asked Malia if there were other things she did to keep the image of that 40,000 year old woman alive, she reminded me of the "Journey to Center of Self" exercise we did. She said, of all the experiences created during the therapy — and there were many — this was the one that was most memorable to her and the one she continued to make the most use of after the therapy was over.

When we first did the exercise, she had a strong and vividly felt encounter with the Warrior — a tall and very strong female fully dressed in battle regalia who seemed eager to welcome Malia into her room. Her room was sparsely decorated and entirely of gray stone. Her armor was "bent" and dented, showing that she had been in many battles. There were no words but Malia felt a strong sense of connection and felt she had the Warrior's blessing. She felt her strength and resolve and knew those inner resources would be available for her whenever she needed them.

Her Lover was a very young princess. Malia described her as "soft, sweet, dreamy, and somewhat naive." She was lying in a large canopy bed with royal yellow covers and drapes. One could see a lovely formal garden outside. She stared vacantly outside the window at the garden. She was very sad and crying over a lost

love and mending a bright red heart-shaped pillow.

The magician was tall, and strong, like the Warrior, and dressed in dark robes. She seemed closely allied to the Warrior and was similar in certain ways, as if she were a sister. She said something in a language Malia could not understand. But Malia understood it to be an invitation to observe the power of her magic. Soon the room began to change shape and began turning. Malia was impressed by the display, but not particularly frightened. The walls changed places with each other and everything seemed "fluid." Malia experienced this scene as a demonstration of her own power and an invitation to become more comfortable with it.

Malia's initial connection with the Queen was not a strong one. Though she was there, the Queen seemed resistant to the idea of meeting Malia and there was no audience. Malia had the impression that the Warrior, Lover, and Magician were the Queen's daughters. Later, after the therapy was over, Malia's sense of connection to her Queen became stronger. She wrote poems about her and kept her image alive in her mind. We can be curious about how Malia's relationship with her Queen will change as she grows older and finds herself more involved in mentoring and championing others and in roles and situations where the resources and qualities of the Queen are needed and more in evidence.

Malia had a clear impression of the relationship between all of these archetypal figures. She saw them sitting around a large circular table where they could interact with her and each other. There was a sense of seriousness and high purpose when they met.

When, several years later, I asked Malia to describe her ongoing relationship to these archetypal figures, here is what she said:

The strongest part of me is the Warrior. She is powerful and she is not afraid. She doesn't say much. I wouldn't imagine her coming to me and talking to me. But I feel like her. Especially that first year. I would walk around the house and I would feel like I was a warrior, a noble warrior, because of a need for protection and strength. I have to protect my son and I have to bring my son up in the world, and I have to be strong. I guess that is

why the Warrior is so prominent. It was the time in my life to be strong. Not to be fearful. She is still very much with me.

"What about the other archetypes?" I asked.

The Queen is kind of laid back. She knows what is going on, and she doesn't say much. The Princess [Lover] has kinda faded a bit. She is dreamy eyed and the Warrior has no time for that.

We both laughed, recognizing how that imaginary relationship reflected the truth of her life. Then I asked, "But how has the Lover changed?"

The Lover has been healed. Which has been a long time coming. And the Magician feels strong but a little stifled. It is awfully hard to allow yourself to feel like a Magician in the society we live in. It is not understood. The Warrior we understand.

"How do they get along? Do they work together?" I asked.

I often see them sitting in a room and they are all sitting around a table and communicating fairly evenly — pretty much in harmony. There are times when one of them has to get up from the table and go in the other room and do whatever they do. The Magician has to go in the room and make some potions. The Warrior has to go sharpen her sword. The Lover has to go in the other room and lie down on her bed and be peaceful. I think of the apartment I stayed in that first year I would wake up and I would feel amazed because I was where I was in my life. And I would look over at my son and say, 'Wow, how did I get here?' The acknowledgement that I'm a mother now, and the change in my life that represents took me about six months. From the time I brought him home, I had re-arranged my identity. It took me all that time.

There still are those times when I look over, and say to myself, 'It's not a dream. It's really real!' Everything, like I said before, seemed so 'lucid.' And that was really an incredible time. And now it seems so much more concrete. I know I'm a good mom and I've known that for three years and it is comfortable.

Summary

Malia's description of her ongoing relationship with these archetypal figures shows the imaginative way she continued to incorporate the therapy into her life, long after therapy was officially over. The therapy and her use of archetypal knowledge enabled Malia to use the experience of crisis in her life and her pregnancy as the foundation for "rearranging" her identity. Her strong sense of connection with a deeper archetypal self occurred in therapy, and was put to test in that first year when she was essentially alone with her newborn son. Everything seemed "lucid," like a dream and reality at the same time. In that year she tested her new-found relationship with herself and kept discovering new internal resources to draw upon that enabled her to deepen the relationship she had with herself and her son.

Malia wrote several poems that capture, more clearly than I could ever express, the distress that brought her into therapy and the gradual emergence of a developing relationship with a larger archetypal self.

The first poem, called "Enemy Escape," was written three weeks before conceiving her son. It shows her depression at its height and the powerful feeling of inertia that permeated everything she did. The themes touched in the poem also show her great sensitivity to archetypal knowledge. The specific archetypes of the King, Queen, Warrior and Princess are used in the poem to express her depression and emotional paralysis. It is amazing to me how well the imagery anticipates all the issues we later explore in therapy.

Enemy Escape

Warriors — you beg me.
You say their ship is drawing near
well, I have not yet had my morning tea

The crisis lies in your hands
keep them outside the gate
fight them, push them back
do what you will

Ask the baroness to suffice a way of means
my silk robe is still asleep
and I am not ready for the day

If you must, ask the king,
he will get his slippers
I am not awake to see the doom

The princess and I will be combing our hair
so don't you barge or knock upon our room.

The next poem, "Forty Thousand Year Old Woman," was written while Malia was in therapy with me, in response to our first visit with the archetypes. Here again, we see Malia's archetypal knowledge, and the way she evokes her relationship to this larger self in powerful imagery capturing the Warrior, Magician, Queen, and Lover.

Forty Thousand Year Old Woman

Come into my laughter den
we can reunite again

We are just like melting pots of ancient battles
brewing
stone archaic ruins still living over time
left for dust in one world
still standing in the other

Come into my small dark room
hold the armor, bent, misshapen, warped by might

We are twisting, turning cyclones — looping
swirling out of sight
My walls can shake and move you,
have you gifts for the queen?

The garden off my room peaks with life and
hedge rows green

as we stand so we speak
 We can grow into the sunlight of the decade.

The final poem, "This Little Boy," was written when Malia was fresh out of therapy, and living alone in her little apartment. This poem shows how having her son to nurture and care for strengthened Malia and gave her a strong and necessary sense of purpose.

This Little Boy

This little boy brings me marbles from
 imagination sea
 makes me pearls in his soft little hands
 He is me inside out
 He makes me grow from my roots, so I can lift
 him up with my branches
 He has more warmth than the sun
 He knows more of my love than does anyone.

Looking to the Future

Malia's life now not only involves her relationship with her son, it involves school and many other involvements. As of this writing, she has graduated from college with high honors and has married a young man she met there. She told me the first semester she enrolled she got a couple of B's. From that point on it was all A's. She plans to apply for graduate school, get her Master's degree, and prepare for a career in commercial art. She hopes to combine a knowledge of computers, desktop publishing, art, and graphic design to create children's books, while developing a lucrative way of supporting herself and her son. Knowing Malia, it seems highly likely that she will do it, and do it with style.

Conclusion

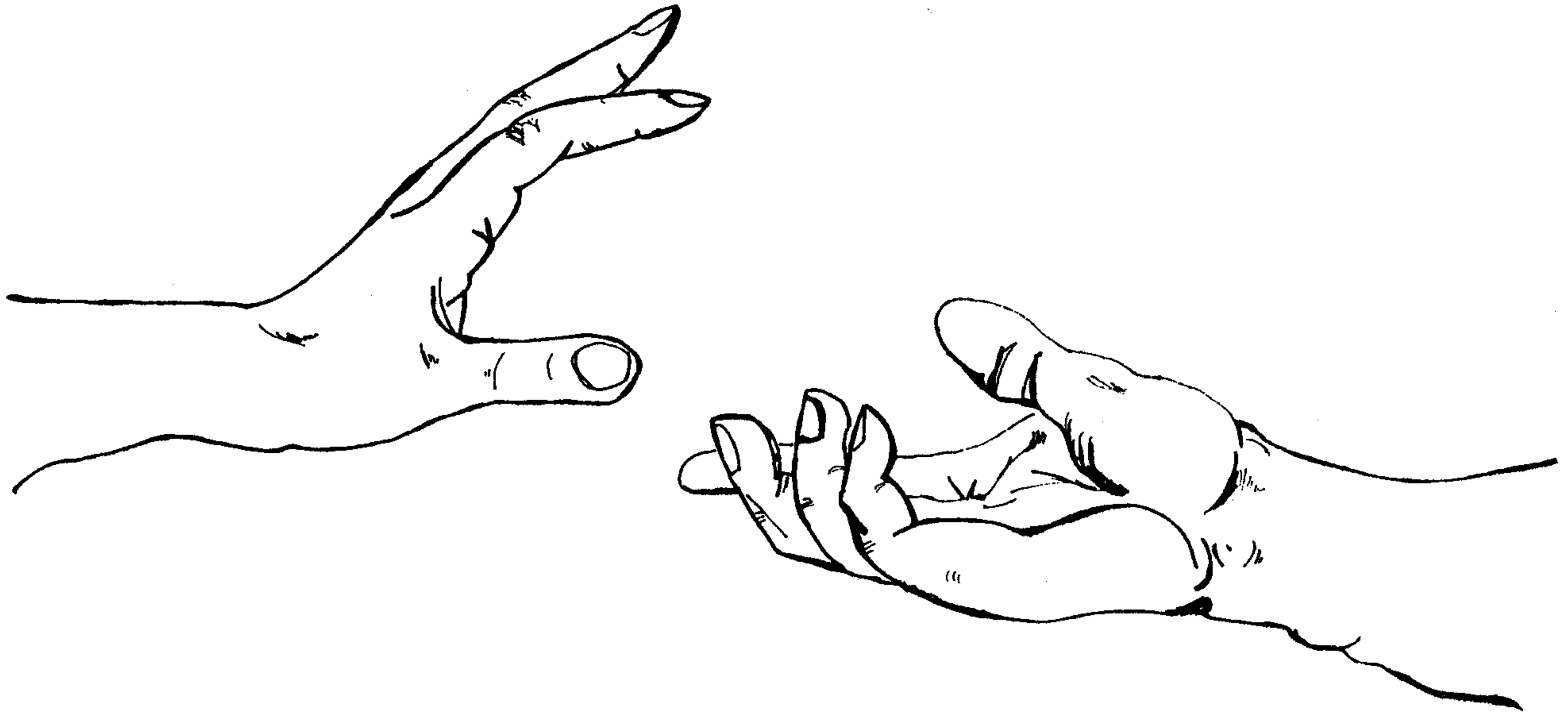
Malia's story shows a powerful and developing connection with her larger self. Archetypal knowledge,

more than an abstract idea, more than even a vividly experienced visualization, is an embodied reality developed through meeting life's challenges creatively and awarely. Malia's life, like her narrative, shows the poetry and depth of an embodied awareness that flows out of the ongoing development of her relationship with herself. Her incorporation of archetypes into her experience of herself sponsored a freeing up of her identity and allowed her to tap into deep biological currents flowing within her and in the relational field that connected her deeply to other women and her new identity as a mother.

In this chapter we have examined how a Self-Relations exercise focusing on deep archetypal energies was incorporated in one client's experience of restructuring her identity. Malia's journey is an important reminder that in Self-Relations we are interested in sponsoring processes that promote self-transformation not so much as a literal place as an energetic process. Reifying or "literalizing" the archetypal figures we hallucinate in any exercise or trance experience has the potential of shutting down what best should be considered an open-ended and dynamic process. Archetypes connect the utterly personal with the sublimely universal. The archetypes are what the sociologist Max Weber (1963) called "ideal types" — universal images or icons to be reflected upon and sensed with a body awareness but never literalized or treated as things-in-themselves. This is not to say that they aren't "real" and have no relevance to our everyday lives. It is to say that with archetypal awareness, the particularity of our everyday lives is rooted in universal experience and to basic challenges and human themes that connect us deeply to all other historical times, all other peoples, and all other cultures. Archetypal experience and awareness is vitally important in giving us a sense of depth in life and in overcoming all the artificial divisions that freeze our process and prevent us from being open to new possibilities on the horizon of our experience.

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*A Journey Towards Awakening: Self-Relations
and Mindfulness*

Ray Cicetti, L.C.S.W., is a psychotherapist in private practice and a dharma holder in the White Plum Zen lineage. His practice is located in Morristown, New Jersey, where he practices the Self-Relations approach with an emphasis on weaving together the psychological and spiritual dimensions in the service of therapeutic change. He is also a husband and grandfather.

A JOURNEY TOWARDS AWAKENING: SELF-RELATIONS AND MINDFULNESS

If you look for the truth outside yourself, it gets farther and farther away. Today walking alone I meet him everywhere I step. He is the same as me, yet I am not him. Only if you understand it in this way will you merge with the way things are.

— Tung-Shan (1989, p. 37)

After a number of years working as a psychotherapist with families and couples at a local mental health clinic, I became increasingly aware that something was not right with the way I was working with clients. I began questioning myself and doubting what I was doing in sessions. I felt a lack of personal authenticity and purpose and an inability to connect with who my clients were beyond their symptoms. One supervisor was always asking me: "Other than their presenting issue, who are they?" I had to admit I did not know.

As I looked more closely at my therapeutic style of relationship, my world began to collapse. My beliefs about how to work therapeutically, deciding on a course of treatment based on diagnosis, keeping an objective distance and having a pocketful of interventions for each problem was falling apart. The image of my self that I was portraying in sessions was unraveling before my eyes. Who I was inside and how I related as a therapist were disconnected, and I began to ask an important question: "Who am I?" I felt split rather than whole, overly intel-

lectual and wooden in how I presented myself. My feelings were different from my words, presentation and language. I became keenly aware that the sessions felt empty and boring. I had to change something. The sense that I was missing something important gnawed at me. In response, I turned my attention to the increasingly popular esoteric teachings coming from the East.

I became interested in the writings of Chogyam Trungpa (*The Myth of Freedom*), Alan Watts (*Psychotherapy East and West*), D. T. Suzuki, and Zen master Shunryu Suzuki (*Zen Mind, Beginners Mind*). I found myself drawn to their teachings, which spoke of the possibility of working with people toward inner realization of their basic goodness beyond their ills and complaints. I realized that the place to begin was to look at myself to see where I was cut off from that basic goodness.

In his book *Shambala, The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, Chogyam Trungpa (1978) wrote, "When we speak of basic goodness, we are not talking about having allegiance to good and rejecting bad. Basic goodness is good because it is unconditional, or fundamental" (p. 20).

From these teachings and others on meditation practice and psychotherapy I learned that the experience of falling apart was an essential part of change, growth, and being able to take an unbiased look to discover the "ground of goodness." All these teachings spoke of heading towards rather than away from the empty feelings

inside and treating them with compassion. Just as sand is important in forming the oyster pearl, the "grit" or symptoms in our life can show us where we are cut off from life, from basic goodness, so that we don't ignore it but rather, tend to it.

Seeing Things as They Are

This possibility of experiencing basic goodness, not as a concept but as a direct experience, led me to the practice of Zen meditation. Zen practice for me became about experiencing life fully and directly rather than through ideas or concepts. Instead of being consumed with fear that these changes meant a loss of meaning in my life, and therefore suppressing them, I realized that the anxiety of losing my way was both the end of something and the beginning of an expanded understanding of myself.

In this matter I was particularly drawn to the notion of satori, described by D. T. Suzuki (1969) as "seeing into one's Self-nature" (p. 27). Satori, he says, means seeing beyond or through our personal boundaries and self-descriptions, and seeing, as well, that the self is empty. Self or self-image is a construction or empty apparatus and is not in itself a particular thing. And self being no particular thing, means that Self is everything. This seeing into one's Self-nature is the recognition of seeing ourselves as holding multiple realities or truths. Zen teachings point to the possibility of being free from the suffering that comes from attachment to a particular point of view and learned way of perceiving ourselves. They teach, as well, that we are afraid of losing this idea of self; therefore we hold back from immersing ourselves fully into life that is beyond the constructed "I." "The world is not some entity apart from us; the world is where we function. Everything we encounter is our life" (Uchiyama, 1983, p. 43).

Zen points to a direct realization that we have always been connected to life and that it is only our self-constructed ideas and concepts that create the boundaries that keep us from experiencing it. We are, in a sense, shape-shifters, changing and transforming as life experiences move through us. And we will not be able to hold onto one specific state of mind or way of being in the face of life's challenges. In other words, what we define as normality is a fragile state, always ready to break into something new.

D. T. Suzuki (1969) writes in *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*: "The whole system of Zen discipline may be said to be nothing but a series of attempts to set us absolutely free from all forms of bondage" (p. 27). Zen points us to the very ground of being, a direct connection to life beyond our notions of reality, self-image, and personality. The study of Zen prompts us to realize for ourselves our habitual tendency to create divisions and dichotomize life. If we can get beyond the intellectual constructs that organize our reality by separating and dividing, we can experience this connection with what is around us and discover our underlying basic unity and goodness.

The first time I experienced this kind of connection was on a three-day meditation retreat in rural New York state. Every morning I would go out into a nearby field, walking the paths, feeling a wonderful connection to my own body. Between meditation sessions one day, I watched the sun come up, showering the summer fields with light. Every leaf and bit of grass was illuminated and clear. The sky was orange and still and the sound of a mockingbird pierced the air. At that moment, in that field, and in each breath that morning, I felt that I was a part of life beyond all my self references and points of view. My body was alive with feeling and all the chatter in my head died down. I was astounded that incredible life was all around me and that it had always been that way. I just hadn't paid attention to it. I underwent an experiential shift, of breaking through beyond my own self-image and ideas, past my thinking mind to something much deeper, open, and vast. I was still present, but my sense of self, the construction of ideas named "me" was altered somehow. I felt relaxed and incredibly alive in that field, and the aliveness extended through me, out into everything that was around me. I was not alone; I could feel and see everything as part of me. I was all right just as I was.

I began studying Zen with a teacher not far from my home. He asked me why I wanted to go more into Zen meditation. I told him I wanted to get rid of my ego, for it was in the way of my feeling a connection with life. He smiled and said my ego was not the problem; the problem was that I stopped there. I was much more than my ego, he continued, and Zen was a wonderful practice to bring me into my body and into the world. Zen meditation also offered the possibility of losing myself without being lost. In other words, I discov-

ered a practice where I could create a space to re-discover myself. That self, as my teacher stated, was much more than just self-image and conceptual understanding; it was "a container that holds all life experience" (private communication).

I realized that I had been living and defining myself mostly out of only one source of awareness, that of my intellect and ego. Meditation taught me how to drop down into my body and listen to what was being felt, or as my teacher said, to see that I hold all life experience, much like the feeling of body connection that day in the field. Getting more into my body, my own center of experience, felt like the door to a more direct connection to life. It was a physical relationship to body intelligence other than my cognitive mind, and it spoke to the empty, disconnected feeling I experienced in my therapy sessions.

I continued a practice of meditation, observing what sensations and feelings occurred. As a result I began to feel more physically present. Meditation provided me a kind of holding environment in which to be in touch with awareness that was more than intellectual or verbal. In meditation I came into contact with parts of myself I did not know existed or that I had not wanted to acknowledge. What I was learning felt important, and seemed like the beginning of the answer to that emptiness I had been feeling in my work as a therapist.

I began to search for psychotherapies that would allow me to apply this kind of mind/body awareness in my therapeutic work to assist others. At the same time, I began to question the epistemological position I had previously learned in graduate school through training in cognitive/behavioral models that taught that treatment is about discovering causal conditions and problems and that symptoms stem from childhood issues or social conditions. I also questioned what I had been taught about the relationship between the therapist and the client, e.g., that the therapist should maintain a distant and objective stance and that clients are to be treated primarily from a diagnostic and pathological point of view, with the therapist relating to them as an authority who holds the proper view of what is "normal."

Everything I was learning and discovering about the underlying unity and relationship of all things began to transform my perspective. I became more curious about approaches that were more interested in the development of human potential and self-actualization. I read

and became interested in the gestalt therapy work of Fritz Perls (1969), and the psychodrama work of J. L. Moreno (Greenberg, 1974). I was excited to find in them therapeutic ideas teaching that we construct or are authors of our own reality. They also taught the importance of healing by working experientially rather than the psychodynamically-based interpretation and analysis that focuses on the past.

But however valuable and effective these approaches were to me, they did not address an important concept that I had learned through my experience in that field at the meditation retreat, and that I wanted to bring into my psychotherapy practice: how we can hold multiple truths rather than a single position or absolute truth. This concept had important implications for psychotherapy: as we move through life, our experience of who we are evolves and is multifaceted. We have many different aspects and identities about us. Symptoms develop due to isolating a particular truth or viewing ourselves in a fixed role or self image, or as Zen teacher Kosho Uchiyama (1983) writes, "The actuality of the world that we live in and experience is not merely a conglomeration of ideas or abstraction" (p. 26). I was finding out that the world conceived of in my head was not the only reality. But a question remained, how could I bring these insights into my psychotherapy practice?

Opening to a Larger Frame

In 1996 I attended a workshop on Ericksonian hypnosis given by Stephen Gilligan. Surprisingly, his talk was not primarily about the technique of hypnosis but about the heart of Milton Erickson's work, which he described as recognizing each person as unique and multifaceted. The corollary of this premise is that each individual coming to psychotherapy needs a therapeutic theory that fits them. He said that to connect with the distinct, authentic self in each client we had to create a space of non-judgmental, open-ended attention, holding an attitude of not knowing instead of being quick to categorize and diagnose. In this way, we as therapists could resonate to and touch the inner, distinct parts of clients. Gilligan said that Erickson was always looking for that undiscovered distinct core of clients, so essential to their healing, rather than getting caught up in their story.

He spoke of doing this by bringing our attention into the body, doing deep non-judgmental listening, and

looking at what our body or symptoms were telling us rather than trying to reason it out logically — in effect, listening with the “third ear.” Doing this was an effective way of making conscious aspects of ourselves that were unconscious.

Hearing Gilligan speak this way was thrilling. It all started coming together. “He’s talking about meditation practice, this is applied Zen!” I shouted to myself. Here I was at a hypnosis seminar, listening to a method to apply the principles of meditation to my therapeutic work. This is what I had been looking for.

We all worked with each other that day practicing how to relate to our stated problems and symptoms by listening with open attention to that distinct presence in us without judging or repressing. We paid attention, in a meditation-like fashion, to how to look at experience as not just a conglomeration of our own notions and concepts, but with an intuitive presence. This experiential practice confirmed even more that what Gilligan was teaching was a way for me to bring together what I had learned in my Zen studies with my work as a psychotherapist. I decided I wanted to explore this road in deepening my work.

I knew that meditation allowed me to observe my deepest experience and touch an inner core or part of myself that is both unique and connected to life in a loving and non-critical way. But meditation is basically a solitary experience. Now I could add what Gilligan would later call the Self-Relations approach to extend this method into the therapeutic relationships. In my relationship with clients, as in meditation, I could be like a container that could hold and acknowledge every experience without dissociation or suppression of it. Self-Relations provided a therapeutic language and rigorous method of applying the esoteric philosophy of Zen practice into my life and work as a therapist.

In his book *The Courage to Love*, Stephen Gilligan (1997) writes, “A major goal of a poetic approach is to reconnect language with felt experience and to liberate meaning from fixed assumptions. This is the goal of Self-Relations work. The interest is in examining practices that cultivate the relational self, one that holds differences and creates harmonies. The hope is that it will encourage a heart-based discipline rather than the disappointment of a dogma-based approach” (xviii). For me this central operating principle in Self-Relations was

unique and exciting. It was an essential element that seemed lacking or not as clearly applied in other therapeutic approaches I had explored.

I began to look at how problems related to clients’ fixed assumptions and beliefs in my therapy sessions. According to the Self-Relations approach (and congruent with what I had learned in Zen philosophy), life will present itself or move through us in endless ways, including illness, pain, trauma or fear. If we are alive, these parts of life will visit us. Self-Relations teaches us to utilize the problem or symptom. The symptom, in addition to causing discomfort, is like a calling or a flare to return or to reconnect to our core self. And our core self is not a singular identity but a variety of presences. Much like the pain of giving birth, some new aspect or identity we are out of touch with may be unfolding or needing to resurface in our life. An important part of any healing is recognizing, opening and validating what the symptom is pointing us to rather than turning away from it.

Mary was getting a divorce after 20 years of marriage. Her presenting problem was severe anxiety which began after being informed that her husband was having an affair. She felt isolated and numb. Among other issues, we looked at the role and singular belief she held about herself as mostly mother and caregiver in her marriage. She believed that once married this was her role, and to be loved and accepted she had to turn away from what she called “frivolous” parts of her. We discussed what value these other parts of her were in her life, like the playful lover and dancer she had once been. The responsibility of mother and caregiver were so singularly stitched into the way she saw herself she believed she had to push down other wonderful parts of herself. As a result of our discussions, she began to acknowledge rather than banish her feelings, and reclaimed aspects of herself that had been numbed.

Making It Mine

My practice of psychotherapy was evolving; I was looking at and beginning to work more fully with all aspects of my clients, and enjoying and getting good results from the work I was doing. At the same time, I was keenly aware that I needed to look more clearly at own core self in relationship. How connected was I with my own core issues? How would I work when my

own wounds were touched in sessions? What aspects of this authentic self was I not feeling or neglecting to address? These questions were of great importance if I was to have an authentic connection with those I worked with. I began to meditate on the idea of what Zen scholar and teacher Dogen Zenji in his treatise *Shobogenzo* called Big Mind, or Magnanimous Mind (Uchiyama, 1983, p. 18). Big Mind or Magnanimous Mind is a stable mind with a firm foundation to receive whatever arises, a mind that holds both sides of an issue or dichotomy as valuable and empty because both sides are expressions of the underlying transience and unity of life.

Cultivating this attitude in my meditation, I began to view everything from the perspective of an endless ocean that contained all my feelings without discrimination. As best I could in sessions, I watched and acknowledged my thoughts, whether violent or peaceful, come and go without critique. I could see that there was an energy or pattern of a stubborn, angry young man in me as well as a compassionate adult. I came in contact with parts of myself I did not know were there. But however much I learned about the emptiness of the self and surrendering to life as it is in meditation, I needed help to see where I was holding back, or clinging to some particular idea about myself and afraid to let go.

Riding the Razor's Edge

I had read Stephen Gilligan's (1997) book, *The Courage to Love*, and decided to attend one of his four-day Self-Relations training sessions. These workshops are intensive and very experiential and I was nervous and excited. Although it was my first time there and I knew very little about Self-Relations work, I was asked to take part by working as a therapist with a woman who wanted to explore her explosive relationship with her daughter Lisa.

In the role-play, with Gilligan in the consulting role, mother and daughter began to immediately yell and scream at each other. I as the therapist was ignored and shut out from their angry, intense dance. I became anxious and tense and could not get a word in to even ask a question. All kinds of self criticism and judgments were going through my mind, when Gilligan leaned over to me and said, "Relax, drop into your body, and breathe." I had not noticed how tight and constricted my body had become. I watched silently as their arguing

continued in front of me. Angry and confused, I knew I had to find some way to intervene.

I weakly attempted to validate the daughter so she would listen to me. But her mother interrupted. I asked the mother about the history between them and her daughter screamed in protest. Stephen turned to me again. "You've got to break into this relationship, get out of your head, words won't do it, be creative, and listen to your body."

I stood up, took a deep breath and began walking between them. Listening to what was rising from the wisdom in my belly I began to walk between and around them, first slowly and then more quickly. From the side Stephen commented, "It's not working, so see what else your body tells you." Calming myself, relaxing, and listening to what energy was moving in me, I began to sing! I sang a song of possible reconciliation to both mother and daughter, spontaneously making the words up as I went along. And for the first time they hesitated arguing.

While watching Stephen and the other participants in the room laughing with appreciative surprise at my efforts, I learned something important that day about how to break through my own fears into the creative flow of life energy and wisdom. In the next few months I began to feel and work with a tremendous freedom and spontaneity. I paid attention to what I called my belly wisdom. I improvised more in therapy sessions and felt less self conscious in my life.

I could see that I usually related with a part of myself that was anxious and wanted to help others, hoping to prop up my own insecurity. Yet at the same time, through my meditation and work in therapeutic training, I saw that I was most present and connected when "I" got out of the way and just let myself be. Then, I believed, I could touch the core or essential self of who I worked with. I wanted to continue to deepen this ability in my work and life.

Holding the Felt Connection

I began to reorganize my way of relating to clients by first trying to listen intuitively to what was going on in my body. I practiced slow breathing at the beginning of sessions, centered myself as I would in meditation, and extended my energy and full attention without analysis out to my clients. I focused on being curious

about them, watching their physical and emotional presentations. Remembering the intelligence of the body, I paid attention to not just what their story was but to their breathing and body stance. I kept in mind that what I was seeing was not all they were. Most important was continuing to stay in touch with my core self and then to extend out, validate, and accept people as they were with direct attention.

A few months later, I was working with a very depressed client named Tom. One day he said, "I do not want to go on living, I want to die." My mind jumped to every intervention I could think of. I was very afraid. I turned pale and felt anxious. My breathing stopped. How could I stop him? What was my responsibility? Had I missed the proper diagnosis and why did I not see this coming?

I noticed I had left my connection with him. My attention was on my own anxiety. I breathed deeply into my belly for a few moments, which helped me to relax my body and find my own center. I observed the fear; I felt my body tighten in reaction to my self-judgment of not being a good enough therapist and then, remembering Stephen's encouraging words at the training session, I relaxed. Calming my fear and bringing relaxed attention to my body, I looked and reconnected with him. I thought about all the losses my client suffered and the pain he had gone through that brought him to this moment. "As things are for you now," I said "I can understand your feeling of wanting to die."

He nodded and said "yes." Months later as he improved he let me know how important and supportive those words were to him. "I felt like you saw me," he said. This seeing was based first on recognizing my own fear and insecurity, my own disturbance. I could see that as I had calmed and validated this for myself, I could stay in contact with his pain, rather than move due to my discomfort into a theoretical discussion about it.

As I continued to work with other clients, I reminded myself in sessions that people are more than the self-image they present and that, just like me, they have an inner core, a cornucopia of possibilities and gifts in addition to what they present. While respecting the pain and persona I saw in front of me I knew that, as my Zen teacher had said, the problem was stopping at the ego idea rather than "being a container holding all

possibilities." I wanted the therapeutic encounter to be a holding, healing space, like the field in which I had experienced such beauty long ago, where all possibilities and inner truths could be acknowledged and recovered.

When a break in the field of connection occurs within us or in the therapeutic conversation, there is a split between cognitive thinking on the one hand and emotional feelings and expressions in the body on the other. We end up relating to our own ideas or having an internal monologue about the person in front of us. We are thinking about the client rather than seeing what they are telling us directly. We become passive listeners trying to figure them out instead of extending our attention out to them, trying to feel in our body/mind what their pain and longings are underneath their persona. As John Daido Looi, Abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery, said once in a public talk about the disconnection of mind and body, "We look but we don't see, we touch but we don't feel, we listen but we don't hear, we are present but we are not there."

Several years ago I was working with a young woman who had been sexually abused. She was not able to express verbally any emotion regarding the abuse. I was sure the core feeling was anger and I told her this. She sat quietly without saying a word, bringing her palms to her eyes, head down. Sure of the correctness of my evaluation I told her again with no response, "You are very angry." Something was off. Taking a step back I realized there was a break between my thoughts and feelings and the connection between us. I breathed down into my belly, re-centered myself, and realized I was the one that was angry about what happened to her. Looking at her more clearly, I saw her posture. Her shoulders slumped, her hands still cupping her eyes. I asked if she was feeling shame. She immediately nodded her head and began to sob. I had not seen what she had been showing me all the time but could not yet put into words.

Our relationship to our natural state, or as Zen would say, our true nature beyond our ordinary ego state, is of vital importance to being alive and free. But I have discovered that realization of this natural state is easier than actualizing it, living it out fully in my life and work. During meditation retreats and for a short

time afterwards, I would feel free and realize my innate connection with all things, but that did not mean instant transformation in all relationships. I realized that to experience an authentic connection to myself and then others means paying attention, working to keep my heart open and being willing to come back to myself over and over again. Finding Self-Relations therapy, with its philosophy, learning exercises, and practices, gave me ways to keep remembering to do this.

Summary

The term I use now to reflect what I have been seeking all along as a person and therapist is what Chogyam Trungpa called authentic presence (1978, p. 131). Authentic presence means being an honest and decent person but beyond that, "one that is aware and connected to the realization of primordial space and egolessness. Inner authentic presence comes from exchanging yourself with others, from being able to regard other people as yourself, generously and without fixation." We are more than our symptom or storyline. We are, I learned, the very universe itself. It is only our thoughts that create divisions and boundaries.

Zen meditation practice was the vehicle to my realization of the dynamic emptiness of all things, the vast, oneness of life manifest in endless ways. It opened a door to living my life with a great sense of joy and gratitude. I could see I was so much more than my self-image and ideas. While being incredibly valuable how-

ever, it was deficient in rooting out my blocked or unconscious psychological issues that kept me stuck. I could meditate all day, rest in pure being, and know the emptiness and joy of self, but it still left me with the question of how to function in a healthier way with my old insecurities and anger.

As a psychotherapist I saw immense value in sharing these possibilities and working at core levels with clients that meditation alone could not reach. The Self-Relations model was a bridge between my spiritual insights and the integration of them in healing my own emotional turmoil and those of clients. Self-Relations principles and practices were essential to me by offering a way to apply the teachings of Zen, that we are one in an absolute sense while acknowledging the fact of our differentiation as well.

We all have hidden and neglected conflicts and traumas that prevent us from seeing who we are beyond our fixed identity. Self-Relations points to effective ways to resolve conflicts by seeing that we hold many roles, truths, and positions in our life. My work as I see it now is being a midwife to clients; a guide or sponsor, energetically creating a healing space for them to give birth to their capabilities, keeping in mind they are more than their self-image, presentation and problems. As we learn to accept what prevents us from knowing ourselves at our deepest being we are able to move a bit closer to authentic presence, reconnecting to our resources and that "unbiased basic goodness" that is at our core.

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Aliens and the Neglected Self

Carol A. Fitzsimons, M.S., L.P.C., has a private psychotherapy practice in New York City where she works with adults, adolescents, individuals, and couples. She is a creative and well-trained psychotherapist with over 30 years of experience. Carol teaches and supervises therapists in their work with Self-Relations psychotherapy and Ericksonian psychotherapy and hypnosis. She is co-director of the Connecticut Society for Ericksonian Psychotherapy and Hypnosis. Carol is currently completing a doctoral program in clinical psychology studying the experiences of high-profile women and the meaning they make of their lives during their menopausal years. She is also conducting workshops for women in their menopausal years.

ALIENS AND THE NEGLECTED SELF

Self-Relations therapy is a comprehensive approach that addresses the cognitive, the emotional, the spiritual; it includes the brain in the head, the brain in the heart, and the brain in the belly. Self-Relations provides a way of thinking, a way of intuiting, and a way of experiencing myself with my client.

In this chapter I will focus on how I use Self-Relations psychotherapy with my clients. I have worked as a counselor in a high school, as well as a therapist in a private practice. My challenge is to help all my clients fall in love with themselves, to develop a relationship with themselves, to find compassion for themselves, and ultimately, to feel good about who they are and to live their lives out in the world. It is my responsibility to create a safe container in which clients can explore their issues and find inner freedom as they move from where they are in life to where they want to be. I am here to witness and sponsor that movement.

As I move through some cases I will point out where I see areas of alienation with self and others and how I work to help my clients recognize and connect with their own process. I look to introduce and expand the possibility of loving oneself through the journey through life.

Sam

As a therapist, I truly believe that each person has a basic core of goodness (Gilligan, 1997), regardless of

how tough, guarded, and troublesome they want to appear. What happens when I name that part or acknowledge its existence is amazing. The approach is very powerful and can best be illustrated with the work I did with a young adolescent whom I will call Sam.

Sam was one of my high school students. He was arrested for possession of pot. He was also on probation because he had stolen a car from the school parking lot and was caught driving away in it. The principal called me to his office as a consult and to also meet with the probation officer. Sam and I have a good relationship. I have known him just a couple of months. He was a special education student assigned to me and had been sitting with the principal prior to my arrival. When I walked in, Sam was shouting at the principal, telling him to “f---in” mind his own business. Sam looked at me; he calmed down a bit. I sat down across from Sam. He was very upset and angry. The principal asked if he should leave, and Sam shrugged his shoulders. The principal stayed, and pushed his chair back. I just sat with Sam for awhile, feeling the rhythm of the conversation, waiting for an opening. He rambled on a bit about how stupid the world was, and how awful school was. After a few minutes, he calmed down and began to breathe. I told him I could hold whatever he wanted to say . . . that he didn’t have to worry that it would be too much for me, or that I would judge him. He said, “Thanks,” and calmed down a little more. His eyes softened and

his jaw relaxed, and I said, "You know, Sam, we have only known each other a short time and in spite of how angry you are right now, I would just like to tell you how much I love your incredible soft spot."

C: What?

Th: Your incredible soft spot . . . you know the part of you that is so sincere and loving . . .

C: Yo, you see that in me?

Th: Yes I do . . . it is right there (*pointing to his heart*).

C: (*pause, then with a twinkle in his eye*) How did you find it?

Th: Through your eyes. (*He has the most beautiful eyes.*)

C: You can see my heart through my eyes? . . . right! (*staring defiantly at me*).

Th: Yes, I can. Can you see my heart through my eyes?

C: (*smiling*) Yes, I can . . . you have a big heart.

He began to breathe more easily. The tightness in my throat went away. He began to talk about what he did, how a certain friend was not good for him, how he was such a follower, and just plain stupid. He whispered about how angry he was with his mother and his father, how disappointed he was with himself, how he disappointed everyone who cared about him, and that he was a big nothing.

I told him a story about a student I worked with a long time ago. He did everything to impress his friends. He was rarely himself and hardly even knew who he was. He never thought about what it was he wanted to do, he thought only about how others would approve of him or not. He was not even sure if he had a self. He was very stubborn and said he had a lot of pride. He did what he did to impress others.

Sam said to me, "My ego is involved in everything I do. I get in trouble because of my ego and I always feel bad after I do something." I asked him to touch his heart this time and repeat what he said. He did, and he welled up, trying to hold back the tears. Then he just sobbed, saying how tired he was of screwing up his life. How he could really be someone good and do something with his life. My heart ached for Sam as I felt his pain in my heart.

"Breathe," I said. "Breathe . . ." We both breathed, and the session continued.

In SR we learn to pay attention to our bodies, pay attention to what we pick up from our clients and to use it in the session. I told Sam I could feel his pain in my heart and I was wondering where in his body he felt the pain. He touched his heart, "Right here."

It is important for me to remember that when a person goes so quickly into that place of deep emotional memory, I need to bring him back to the now, or to a lighter place so that he does not get lost in the past. It is also important to balance the conversation so he can hold all realities, past/present, problem/resources etc. at the same time. I talked about where he felt it in his body, what he thought, and what his heart of hearts told him. I told him about the brain in his head, the brain in his heart, and the brain in his belly. The discussion moved from how and where he felt the pain to what he thought about it.

I asked Sam at what age he first heard all of these messages about himself. He said 4. I asked whose voices he heard. He said his mother's and he thought his father's, even though his parents were divorced when he was very young. He said his teachers too. Kids used to tell him how skinny he was and not tough at all. His mother always told him how much he looked like his father and every time she looks at him he reminds her of his father. Sam said, "I know how much my mother hates my father so I figured she hates me too if I remind her of him." I asked Sam when his mother's voice became his own voice.

C: I don't remember . . . but now I hear it from teachers, cops, my probation officer, and everybody . . . and look at all the trouble I do get into.

Th: When did all these voices become your own?

C: What do you mean?

Th: All those things you said about yourself about how stupid you are and that you are just a too skinny big nothing, that you can't do anything right . . .

C: Oh, those things . . . I don't know . . . I never thought about it that way.

The session ended, the bell rang. I asked Sam if he was okay to go back to class. He said, "I'm cool. I need a job to keep me out of trouble. Any ideas?" I said I would give it some thought. It was fine for Sam to end there; not everything has to be done at one time. It is important to determine how much your client can handle before he goes back to class or back to work.

Later on that day the principal said, "I cannot believe the way you worked with Sam. He was furious with me . . . telling me to go "F" myself, and there I am, trying not to get defensive . . . He has such a bad reputation. I was a little nervous and wondered if he would really fly off the handle. Then you mentioned his incredible soft spot and Sam's whole demeanor shifted. And when you asked him to touch his heart, I couldn't believe how open he became, even with me there."

That is the beauty of Self-Relations psychotherapy. That is how we begin to help a person like Sam to get to know himself and to fall in love with himself.

Aliens and the Neglected Self

We all at times fall under the influence of those negative sponsors that SR calls "aliens." We usually get cursed by them in our early years and they stay with us at some level for most of our lives. How we get them varies, but mostly from people we trust or depend upon who were mean, thoughtless, or abusive to us. To me, aliens are the voices of significant others who have invaded the natural boundaries of our being and shocked us with hurtful actions or words. These cursing voices alienate us from ourselves and from others. After awhile, they get wired into our system and we then take these messages on as if they were our own.

- "I am so stupid."
- "If only I didn't care about what she said."
- "I am not good enough."
- "I am not worthy."
- "If only I didn't have red hair."

- "I could never please my father."
- "I am a piece of shit."

The neglected self is that part of us that holds the voice of the aliens, and feels the original hurt over and over again. These hurtful messages have not been healed by our caretakers or by us. We continue to recycle the negative conversations, hurting ourselves over and over again, being vulnerable over and over again. For instance, when we are unsure of ourselves, frightened, feeling as though we are less than others are, we may also have a sensation somewhere in our bodies, usually an uncomfortable somatic experience. The neglected self turns up as a knot in our stomach, stiffness in our shoulders, lump in our throat, depression, digestive disorders, back pain, etc. This distress is often connected to the negative inner voices of alienation.

How do young children defend themselves against the moods and words of those they trust? What do children say or do when their feelings are ignored or minimized by people they trust? Children are blamed for feeling hurt when they are hurt. And then they hide, and maybe act out. They even become good little girls or boys. Either way, the true self becomes neglected and hidden.

Consider adolescents who wear the wrong clothes, say the wrong things, have acne, weigh too much or too little, do not have any friends and just do not fit in. Even those who do fit in feel insecure, afraid to just be, or to do anything different. Even the teacher who overlooks a student sends the message that he or she doesn't count. Sometimes these messages are sent without malice, sometimes with the intention to hurt or control another person. Either way, the wounds can become the basis for persistent negative self-identity.

How we all yearn to be accepted, to be included, to be appreciated, to be recognized. How we all want to have lunch with others, to laugh during lunch, to have a community. It is the difference from feeling okay about your self some of the time and not feeling okay at all.

This poem I wrote says it another way.

And so the voice yearns to be heard
Whose voice is it so small, so tender
What is she saying?

I can't hear her
She suffers deep inside
Muffled sounds, pleading eyes, hear me she says

You are not important, you have nothing to say
Nobody hears you
Nobody respects you
What do you want, what do you wish?
Feeling guilty whenever you ask
Feeling guilty when you get your way
Giving in

Not wanting to hurt
Not wanting to have the other person mad at you
Keep the peace
I can't hear you

Who are you with no voice?
Angry voice, reactive voice
Threatening voice
Loud voice
No voice

Mom helps
Do what is best for you . . . she says
I wonder what that means

What promises do you keep?
Whose promises do you keep?
How can you please everybody?

I can't hear you,
I don't see you,
Who are you?

What do you want?
Whose voice is it feeling stronger?

It is my voice . . . it is my voice
Little girl growing up
Finding her voice
Hearing her voice . . . without judgment

And then, the other voice
Do not speak your truth
She will betray you
You are stupid
You are unlovable
It is not safe

Do I have rights?
Is it important?
Do I really care?

Will I be punished
If I voice my voice

I am scared
I'm sad
I give in
I am quiet

I can't hear you
And so the voice yearns to be heard.

Self-Relations opens up the conversation with those parts of us whose voices have not been heard. The voices we drown out, smother, ignore, just as the others did. A goal in SR is to feel those parts, feel where they manifest in your body, tend to them, hold them, hear them, nurture them, and integrate them. The role of the SR therapist is to help clients transform from critic to sponsor. When the neglected self is sponsored and cared for, it transforms and the self becomes more whole, fully present, centered, loved. The experience is one of understanding and acceptance. The sensations are in the body. The body is not calling out for attention.

We may ask who ultimately takes care of the neglected self. Ultimately, the client does. The SR therapist teaches the client how to do that, creates a safe container in which to do it, sponsors their clients in their work, and witnesses their growth and progress.

I spoke with a teacher in the school system who organized an after-school program for middle school students who were identified as needing special education services. She hired Sam, and he is fabulous with the kids. He is no longer getting into trouble and is doing well in school. In a recent conversation he told me he really loves working with these kids and that they really like him. I told him how proud I was of him and he said, "Well, somebody has to be a good role model for these kids."

The Very Dark Alien: The Story of Ann

Sometimes alien voices seem bigger than life. Sometimes the voice is so loud that that is all there is to life. For example, Ann is a woman in her 40s, and an artist in New York. Her early life was horrific. She came to see me because my friend, her therapist, was dying. We were both grieving.

She gave me a folder of her self-journal writings and told me she was a piece of shit, and no matter what she accomplished in life, she was still a piece of shit. I have chosen to include some of these writings, with her permission, so as to illustrate the birth of a very dark and debilitating alien. Please notice what you are feeling in your body as you read.

My Daddy Loves Me

My Daddy shows me he loves me in several ways. Sometimes he wakes me up in the morning by ripping the covers off and pulling really hard on my big toe. Other times he just pours cold water on my face. At night when he comes home from work he likes to give me whisker burns. At dinner he presses his fork into my elbow explaining how good it will feel when he stops. As he smokes his after dinner cigarette he shows me how a match will burn twice; first as it is lit and then again when the match head is pressed on my arm. Later in the evening he might knock me down, sit on my face so that I can hardly breathe, and fart. My Daddy shows me he loves me in several ways, but they all make me feel bad.

Pinky

I am in the backyard playing with our dog Pinky. I am 4 years old and have known Pinky my whole life. Pinky lived with my Mom and Dad even before I was born. We are playing with a stick and she bites my hand. More out of fear and surprise than out of pain (it's not even bleeding) I begin to cry and run into the house. My Father explodes into a rage, retrieves his rifle from the bedroom, and says, "This is because Daddy loves you." He ties Pinky to the clothesline. BANG !!

Sorry, Pinky. Guess I cried too hard.

Lint

I have been taught to take a bath on Wednesday and Saturday nights. On Wednesday nights, after I have washed everything in the correct order; face, torso, legs, underarms, ears, feet, and crotch; my Mother checks my pubic hair for lint. Usually she finds one or two matted masses the size of a small marble. Sometimes she pulls them out with her finger nails while other times she must use a scissors. I have never had this problem as an adult and often wonder why I did as an adolescent.

Bo

I am standing in front of the bathroom mirror, naked from the waist up, hands clasped behind my head, enduring the weekly underarm ritual. The sink is full of water and first I am washed up with soap and water, then cold shaving cream is applied, and then I am shaved. When all the hair is removed, I am scrubbed again with soap and water and dried with a towel. As she applies the special solution my mother again explains to me that I perspire much more than what is normal and that my smell is much more offensive than most people. Humiliated, I resign myself to the facts: I am ugly. I am too big for a girl my age. I am clumsy. I have no attention span; I must be hit in order to pay attention. Someone should shit in my ear and give me some brains. My body odor is abnormal. These are the facts and there is nothing I can do about them.

Ears ringing. Body pulsating.

Holding my breath

His eyes have become narrow slits and his head is angled like a bull preparing to charge. The veins near his temples are swollen, his face is red, his breathing noisy and heavy. His tongue is curled under itself and he is digging into it with his upper teeth. His hand and arm rise. I look nonchalant and prepare myself for the blow. I don't duck, flinch or even blink because that makes Daddy really angry. All of this happens in slow motion like moving through Jell-O. I am acutely aware and strangely blank. I feel nothing.

Ears ringing, body pulsating, holding my breath.

It is not difficult to sense how Ann's self-alienating processes developed. She lived with these voices every day. She escaped by running to the basement of her school with her alto saxophone in hand, and played and played. She tolerated the abuse by taking on the tough role and

she never, never cried when she was beaten. She even took the beatings for her younger brother who cried and prolonged the agony.

I, as her therapist, said to myself: Ann has a past, she also has the present. She has resources, a voice, goals, and a future. But she does not know that yet. How do I tap in? I waited for the openings that I felt in the field, the space between us, and the heartfelt sense of our connection. I utilized trance and SR to help her open and move forward in our work together. Ann writes:

In the past I used therapy to help me cope with day-to-day living. This time I view therapy as my last chance to search for, uncover, and breathe life back into the part of me that died in order to survive. The journey is painful, confusing and made difficult by the very mechanisms I created to protect and hide the part that I have to believe exists as I stumble through the darkness of paranoia, doubt and self hatred desperately clinging to the memory of the path that is occasionally illuminated by flashes of light and understanding. Each small step is a leap of faith and I am as afraid of what I might find, as I am afraid of what might not be there. I am calling upon strength and courage that I am not sure I possess, constantly fearful that both will suddenly run out. I am committed to this journey. I have come too far to turn around. Time is running out. It is essential that I find the me that God made and discard the distorted me made by my Mother and Father.

As I worked with Ann, using Ericksonian hypnotherapy, SR, Gestalt therapy, and Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing, she steadily grew more comfortable with herself. But at first she considered herself a worthless piece of shit. Ann's complete belief and knowledge of that was so debilitating. To function at even a small level required so much effort. Everything drained her. She could barely get dressed, or undressed, for that matter. It was not that she had no desire to live; she did not know how to live. Her music was all that

made sense to her and even there she devalued herself. She is an amazing saxophone teacher and teaches master classes throughout the world. She played lead sax with all the great jazz bands. And as a master musician and teacher of the saxophone, she had the expectation that she should know how to improvise and since she did not, she was worthless.

Ericksonian Hypnosis integrated with SR creates an opportunity to open up the field and expand possibilities for growth. In an induction I did with Ann, I used metaphors which focused on creativity, playing without risk, enjoying yet to be known interests, and improvising as she cooks. One week later Ann comes into the office so excited about this pottery course she registered for. She said she never did anything like that before and could not understand how that idea even came to her.

I was excited about the pottery class and her passion for it. She was so happy she could be creative without restrictions. She said, "I am having so much fun not really knowing, making small things, large things, just experimenting with whatever comes through my fingers and my hands." I was curious about the transfer through her fingers onto her saxophone, for her to find her creative path of improvisation. She said, "I am spending too much time in the pottery studio, not enough time practicing." I replied, "Respect your internal process. You have an amazing internal process. You will find the balance." She said, "You just plant these seeds and let me grow."

Ann has grown in so many ways over a 9-month period. However, her father's voice remains deep inside of her. The voice sometimes shouts, "You are a nobody, and no matter what you do, you will never be better than I am." In our work, I help her have a new relationship to that voice. I take on her father's voice and coach and support her in generating new conversations with it.

In my work as a therapist, the role of the very dark alien is the most difficult role I have taken. I try to hold a space of therapeutic compassion even as I take on and speak the voice. The purpose is to externalize the voice, so the client can differentiate from it, and thus begin to relate to it in new ways. With Ann, I played her father and said to her all the horrible things he said to her throughout her life. I am serious as I say them, my heart

is pounding and I am feeling evil. She gets flustered and begins to well up. She is overwhelmed by the alienating messages I speak. I stay connected with her; encouraging her to answer me, to speak her heart and her rage to me. This dialogue went on for almost an hour until Ann, sobbing, her whole body shaking, finally told me she didn't care what I thought, that she was a grown woman now and I didn't matter any more. She was furious, frustrated, crying, and then determined that no one would stand in her way any longer. She reclaimed herself. I held her, hugged her, and congratulated her on her work. Much later Ann told me that this session created a major shift in her, opening a door for her to become human.

I caution therapists that if they choose to take on the role of the alien voice, they must have a well developed, trusting relationship with their client. They must be grounded in SR psychotherapy, and must allow for sufficient time for the session. This process is the other side of the nurturing, heartfelt therapist role. The therapist needs to be able to hold the client's dark side. The therapist needs to hold on to both realities at the same time. This process allows for the dark alien voice to challenge and to be challenged until the client takes charge of herself, her life.

Ann and I continued our work together and she moved forward with her life and her music. She said to me one day, "You know, this pottery is really helping me to be more creative with my music, I am feeling more free. I cut down on my drinking and I am going swimming every day now. She told me about how she was beginning to value herself as she ran a master class at a conference in Texas in front of 200 saxophone players. She said, "I was shocked that all these people came to hear me when they could have taken a master class from the truly great artists that were there. I really felt great presenting, very happy with myself for the first time, and I don't even know how this happened." She continued, "How do you do this? We talk about neglected voices; you plant seeds and let me grow. I feel so safe with you."

As we continued to work, she connected more and more with the voices of her neglected selves, talked to them, and wrote this poem.

Hmmm

Who are you?
 You saboteur.
 How can I reach you?
 Do you have a name?
 How can I calm you?
 Do you need a name?
 What are your fears?
 Do they have a name?
 Why do you fight so fiercely?
 You are so very strong.
 How can you be so afraid?
 Maybe it's anger.
 Does your anger have a name?
 And at what?
 Do you need help?
 Should I come for you?
 Where?
 Should I leave you alone?
 How?

She is now curious about her neglected self and commits to really listening to the voices of the little girl, of the one who has been quieted for so long.

She wrote:

If you allow me to give you a voice
 You can speak only where and when
 You feel safe.
 Let me learn the language of listening.
 I need you to release your voice to me.
 To hear you
 To feel you
 Reveal yourself to me.
 I can protect you.

Ann continued with her passion for pottery and added beading, embroidery, and making jewelry to her practice. She came to a session excited because she found a wonderful music teacher. She was ready to learn to improvise, to learn to compose. She finally believed that she could do it, that she was out of the box. Ann took a beautiful jazz composition and wrote an out-

standing arrangement for the strings. A highly respected orchestra in another state played the arrangement.

And, the process continues. Ann continues to learn to be a positive sponsor for the young ones inside. She nurtures them, loves them, and appreciates them. She wrote recently:

I'm in a place that I never thought I could get to. I am still finding out the ways in which my thinking and my feelings are tainted by experience. How what I view as reality, what I held on to as being reality keeps changing and surprising me; oh, oh . . . that's not true either . . . oh, that's not true either, and wondering how many other ways that can change and will. What else is not true that I believe?

After reading it to me, we engaged in the following exchange:

I ask her, "What is not true?"

Ann responds, "That I am a piece of shit."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "That I am not creative."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "That people don't like me."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "That I can't learn anything."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "That I am stupid."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "That I don't care about anybody."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "That I don't like children."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "That I can't play."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "That I can't lose weight."

I ask, "What else is not true?"

Ann responds, "I think I am going to stop here for now. I continue to find the me that God made and intended for me to be."



SR psychotherapy offers the therapist an honest, natural way to include self in the therapeutic process. It makes space for the therapeutic relationship. It makes room for the times the alien voices revisit and there is the temptation to retreat into the old ways of believing.

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*Voices from a Field: The Transformative Presence
of the Self-Relations Community*

Mary Massaro, M.S., has practiced mind–body therapy for more than 25 years. The founding director of the Pain Management Program at St. Clare’s Hospital, Mary is the Director of the Stress Management and Wellness Institute at Long Island University where she holds graduate and undergraduate faculty appointments. Mary is an advanced candidate at the Academy of Clinical and Applied Psychoanalysis and has a private practice in mind–body therapy incorporating Self-Relations therapy in the greater New York–New Jersey area and in Florida. A Fellow of the American Academy of Pain Management, Mary holds certifications in RET, NLP, Ericksonian hypnotherapy, and she has studied with Stephen Gilligan for more than 14 years.

VOICES FROM A FIELD: THE TRANSFORMATIVE PRESENCE OF THE SELF-RELATIONS COMMUNITY

*Each year I return,
like those California birds,
the swallows of Capistrano.
They must know something primal
about internal rhythm,
the vibrations of placesongs and
the power of their calling.*

*The call to drink from the well,
deep, deeper below the surface
leading me,
like the monarch butterflies
eager for their renewal
on the journey south,
to return each year, full of thirst.*

— Abbe Miller, Connecticut

Self-Relations therapy is more than a set of theories and practices. SR asks the question: How do we live and hold differences, appreciate other-ness, and experience other presence's both within ourselves and in others without doing violence to either? Applying SR in a clinical or professional practice requires us to integrate those principles which effectively answer this essential question. This chapter illustrates how the SR community provides its members with a living container, a space in which such learning takes place.

While walking on a North Carolina beach at sunset with four fellow SR therapists during a break at a residential supervision session, I was struck by the richness of our conversation. I experienced the support and compassion of my colleagues as I listened to a sampling of the voices of the SR community. The practice of Self-Relations creates a place for all voices to be heard. As a soulful, artistic therapy, SR makes room for the silence that binds the soul, and the many different voices that arise when the soul is touched.

I realized on that evening walk that the collective consciousness of SR practitioners needed to be heard and appreciated. So I reached out to my colleagues from across the world to gather their voices and weave them into a tapestry to tell the story of what it means to belong to this special community. The responses from my colleagues highlight four important themes: 1. What it means to be a part of the SR community; 2. Why and how the Internet-facilitated SR community is important; 3. Why therapists return to SR-related gatherings; and 4. How SR therapists bring this connection into their work and family communities.

The Forms of the Self-Relations Community

The SR community takes shape in a variety of forms. Participants come together in 3- or 4-day workshops, ongoing 4- or 5-day supervision groups with

Stephen held in various places throughout the world, in self-sponsored monthly support groups, and in an annual 3-week immersion experience called "Trance Camp," which invites practitioners from around the world to learn Ericksonian hypnosis while at the same time joining in a deep experience of community. Members also have the opportunity to stay connected emotionally, intellectually and spiritually through ongoing participation in an Internet discussion group called the S-R List. These forums are overlapping circles of communities who understand that Self-Relations is a therapy that must be lived. It is the profound respect and deep listening for the unique gifts of the individual and the strong interest in holding the diversity of positions that gives rise to the living container that is the Self-Relations community.

Supervision Groups

One of our original hopes was to form an intentional community of folks who would be able to meet year after year in a very safe and loving environment. Our goal was to provide a setting unlike any that was available anywhere. I think we were very successful at it and the residential model has grown. In other words, what I'm sponsoring sometimes seems like it has less to do with Self-Relations in any technical sense and more to do with my own personal desire to convene a community in which something unique and special can happen. A couple of years ago, I had the image of our spring residential as a vernal pool — you know one of those spring puddles that form in and around wetlands and then after a few weeks they disappear only to reappear the following spring. These are the pools in which certain salamanders (along with other species of creatures) have their annual get together in order to breed and perpetuate their species. The Spring Milton, Massachusetts, Vernal Pool provides for me an annual gathering where I congregate with folks who are of the same very familiar species as me. Folks I would never get to "breed" with if the pool dried up. Being a sponsor gives me a head start with the

supervision. I'm already connected with the group before we actually come face to face. I wonder will the "feeling" arrive again as we gather at the vernal waters of the pool?

— Bill Beckett, Massachusetts

Since the theory of Self-Relations is "relational" at its core, it is best learned in the context of community. Supervision groups are a primary vehicle for learning the practice of Self-Relations psychotherapy. They are ongoing learning communities that allow therapists to experience the living principles of Self-Relations while training directly with Stephen Gilligan. There is balance between the articulation of a framework and principles/methods for doing effective therapy, and the very experiential and intensive exploration of therapeutic process itself. As Gilligan (personal communication) has emphasized, much of the development of SR has come from these supervision groups. Doing very intense work in safe communities, where participants move between roles of therapists, clients, and group members, a strong ritual space typically results. In this ritual space, deep healing and extraordinary learning are possible.

Supervision groups typically run four or five days. They vary in size from 10–20 participants, and are held in various locations throughout the world. Many groups have been meeting for more than a decade, once or twice a year. Many are residential, e.g., a house on a beach is rented and all members work, play, cook together, and sleep there. They typically begin and end with formal rituals of connection to cultivate safety and respect for the community and for each person as a part of the whole. In this context, a space is prepared in which the self is invited to "show up" in all of its uniqueness and authenticity.

The supervision work is primarily centered around pieces of therapy work done in the middle of the circle. The working group consists of a therapist, a client (a member of the group, or sometimes someone's client brought in from outside), and Gilligan as the supervisor/co-therapist. A session may last 1–3 hours, during which time the rest of the group is "holding the space" in a supportive way. The work is typically intense, with a full range of feeling. After the work, members of the group are invited to share their own reflections and processes. This is often one of the most helpful parts of

the process for the client, as people describe how they were moved and helped by the client's work.

At my first such gathering, I felt at times like I was in the middle of this intense connection. It was frightening and challenging, because there was a "pull" for me and for others to be in close touch with some of our most vulnerable spots, the places where for many of us our long-term wounds were stored. The group participation made me feel surprisingly safe to experience some of the deep emotional pain that many of us acknowledged. It gets cultivated in the group participants as caring and a respect for the common struggles and wounds that everyone shares.

— Tom Blackburn, North Carolina

In Self-Relations, we touch our own suffering by opening up to the suffering of the other. We open a space for the strengths of the client to be recognized as the therapist learns to sit in her own strength. We learn how to speak from belly to belly, heart to heart, rather than from an authority-based therapist's role. This form gives rise to the feeling of the equality of each member. There is a uniqueness that emerges in each supervision. Each member is encouraged to utilize the principles of Self-Relations while not abandoning her own style, staying true to her authentic self. This respect for individuality prevents cloning, guru worship, and promotes the integrity inherent in our differences while strengthening the sense of community.

For therapists to be able provide a healing and nurturing environment for their clients, the therapist's own self-sponsorship and self-healing is an essential, ongoing commitment. The supervisions provide a place and a vital reminder for each therapist to practice the principles of self-sponsorship. The ability to be active listeners for our clients, to witness their neglected selves, and to help them challenge their "alien voices" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 66) can only come to fruition when therapists too have a forum for their own healing.

I have participated in several supervisions a year for the past 14 years, meeting in various locations from New York to San Diego. Throughout that time I have learned to utilize and practice the principles of SR more

comfortably and, most importantly, have come to know these supervisions as a place where I can stretch and challenge myself. The various situations I encountered have been provocative, supportive, challenging and rewarding. Each has expanded my curiosity and fostered my ability to continue to explore and integrate the variety of mind/body interventions I utilize, allowing me to reach a deeper understanding in my capacity to employ an effective therapeutic regime.

The Self-Relations community feels like a safe place. I felt very much at home, very appreciated for who I am and what I bring. Rather than a system that I was required to absorb and parrot, I found a framework that welcomed the work I've been doing for years. I was invited in, not as a blank slate ready to imprint dogma, but as a new resource with skills and gifts to offer to the evolving field.

— Selene Vega, California

My first supervision experience was a residential session in West Virginia. It felt familiar and had qualities similar to a family gathering where one might experience deep feelings of connection that allowed defenses to melt. Over four intense days of personal and group work, I learned a great deal about SR therapy. I was deeply impressed with the experience of community that developed. Within this safe context there was space for us to change, to explore new ways of being.

Other supervision groups brought very different experiences. For example, the first time I attended the New York City supervision group, I struggled mightily with my insecurities. I sat in judgment of myself, questioned my intellect, ran from my demons, and hid from the parts of myself that I did not understand. It was a rather difficult time and I did not experience a feeling of comfort. What I had perceived as unconditional love from the previous group was missing. (I guess that's New York for you!) I did, however, have a strong belief in SR and Gilligan as a means to stay the course and within which to navigate my journey. Most importantly, I realized very deeply that SR therapy starts with the self. I first had to be open to and learn how I could create the safety within myself, to accept all of the parts of me in order to remain whole within the community.

Conditions of safety also give rise to challenges. In supervision groups I have allowed myself to go into my own dark nether worlds, to come face to face with my personal demons, to enter conversations with them, and to speak them out into the witnessing, holding space of the community. Each time I have emerged more whole, less bound by shame and despair. This essential work of self-sponsorship continues to be a challenge; support for finding this courage comes from the core SR teaching of the importance of maintaining one's personal center while being open to the larger field(s). This complementary connection enables the productive and honest exchange of ideas and experiences. If either self or community is ignored, the possibilities of deeper learning are lost.

One of the great things about being in the SR community is to experience how both the theory and the community continue to evolve over time. Both within the relatively short space of a 4-day supervision, and the longer period of years of supervisions, it is amazing to palpably sense the living system become deeper, stronger, more rich. Over time, the work in the middle gets deeper, more archetypal, and more transformative. While part of this is due to Gilligan's capacity to enter deep spaces with clients during the work, at least an equal part comes from the larger therapeutic community working together in a mysterious, wonderful way.

Unlike some other advanced therapy settings I have participated in, SR supervisions are not competitive shows where clinicians gather to impress their colleagues with their erudition or skill. Nor are they forums where master teachers descend from insular peaks/towers to dispense their knowledge to adoring students. Instead, colleagues with varying years of experience gather to witness each other's growth and development, to share helpful perspectives and insights with one another and to support each other in the advancement of common values and in the practice of a therapeutic philosophy inherently healing for themselves and their clients.

I come home from each supervision with a greater connection to myself and to the group. The feeling I have is one of a balance: of being with and without, bound and free, close and detached, connected with no strings attached. During supervisions we can speak our most intimate thoughts, share openly our mistrusts, our disappointments, our fears, angers, weaknesses while

having a sense that in this community we are honored for all that we are and are not. We agree and disagree; we hold each other with respect as our selves emerge with dignity. We return home as more nurturing, alive people. We bring with us a sense of community, support, and possibility.

I am reminded that I'm not alone in the room with the client, there are others there with me, helping me, guiding me, working through me. It is as though I'm channeling the energy of the group and it's flowing through me to this particular client and it is often just what they seem to need.

— Bill Beckett, Massachusetts

Trance Camp

Another opportunity for experiencing community while learning the therapeutic vehicle of hypnosis and the principles of self-relations is Trance Camp. This 3-week immersion experience is sponsored annually by Stephen Gilligan in San Diego, and brings together practitioners from across the country and around the world. Here, old and new students alike come together to study therapeutic hypnosis with Stephen, at both personal and professional levels. The experience is intense and unique, with aikido-related classes early in the morning, hypnosis classes all day, and nightly special events like drumming, dancing, presentations on special topics (e.g., pain control, family constellations).

I entered trance camp in order to enhance my professional skills as a business coach. When I left after two weeks, I had learned and experienced that any real change, maturation, or growth is basically the confrontation with your personal inner self and the integration of neglected parts of personal biography and identity. So instead of skills, Stephen Gilligan and the Self-Relations community gave me an unforgettable lesson on compassionate understanding and mutual respect. When you share your deepest longings and your greatest fears with people from all over the world, from different cultural, social, educational and profes-

sional backgrounds, you are able to see the beauty of differences while you feel communalities at the same time. And you have the great opportunity to make real good friends.

— Barbara Lemke, Germany

The work is both didactic and experiential, with Stephen offering group inductions, demonstrating a technique with a volunteer before the group, and practitioners working with one another in pairs or small groups. Stephen's teachings and the participants' work with one another are supported by 6 or 7 experienced assistants who also bring a variety of skills and perspectives on applications of hypnosis and Self-Relations in diverse fields.

As the weeks progress, the safety and bonding within the group combined with increasingly deep trance work create an extraordinary opportunity for learning and healing. Many participants return year after year to renew and deepen their practice and to bathe again in the deep waters of community.

Experiencing community while learning the therapeutic vehicle of hypnosis and the principles of Self-Relations is affectionately called Trance Camp. It was extraordinary to feel a connection on a very deep, almost soul level, with people from all over the planet. Now when I think of Stephen's voice saying "relax, deeper, wider," I picture myself connecting to kindred spirits in Australia, Hong Kong, England, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and across the United States. This has radically transformed my sense of what having a wide base of community support and connection means to me, not figuratively but in actuality.

— Mary Ann Giorgio, New York

I have had the luxury and inspiration to attend a number of Trance Camps. Part of what keeps me coming back is the observation that we each have gifts and inner energies that require certain circumstances to seize them and in so doing, we find out how to release into them fully. I believe for myself, this is found in community. I am reminded of the expres-

sion, "It takes a village (community) to raise a child."
— Bill Burns, Canada

The Virtual Sangha: The SR Discussion List

Staying connected after leaving Self-Relations trainings can be a challenge; the time between connecting to a like-minded community can feel very long. Created by Leonard Bohanon, a psychologist from Houston, Texas, the S-R List is an internet-based Self-Relations psychotherapy discussion group that has made worldwide, 24-hour connection a possibility.

I loved the conversations with my Self-Relations colleagues. I wanted to create a forum for more ongoing conversation. We are now at 225 members from all over the world. We have a community predominated respectful discussion by people who genuinely care for each other and our community.

— Leonard Bohanon, Texas

Many people on the S-R List have signed up after workshop trainings; others have developed an interest in SR from books or other sources. The list is an ongoing, open conversation of principles and practices of Self-Relations, poetry, thought-provoking book passages, personal reflections, commentary on current events, and comfort seeking. It is as common to hear from a colleague in Australia or Hawaii as someone in your own town.

I have found that there are innumerable ways in which the list provides positive sponsorship in my life. I have frequently found myself posting about things that I would ordinarily be too shy about, self-conscious to bring out in a group. Some examples that come to mind are writing a kind of poetic prose and talking about my spirituality. The positive acknowledgement I have received in doing this has provided me with so much sustenance. Amazingly enough, it doesn't really take much; sometimes it is only the sense that my words are read and held in a place of permission, respect, and love.

— Irene Michon, Washington

A few years ago my youngest son's 30-year-old friend died of a stroke. I sat at the funeral in much pain, watching my 25-year-old eulogize his best friend. I admired his strength, and at the same time I was feeling deep sorrow for his loss. I turned to the virtual community for solace. As I put my words down on my computer, sending what developed into a poem, I remember the great fear I felt before hitting send. How would the Self-Relations community receive this? I was flooded by heartfelt responses; it was just what I needed to ease my soul.

Such torrents of incredible writing on this list. No one piece standing alone. As I try to learn to bear witness to my own life and collapse often in the process, I read sometimes from that place of crazy sorrow, some of what I read seems upside down. And I read. And I read . . . To not turn away from myself, to not have to turn away. I am in awe of the knowledge, depth and wisdom of the people who write here. — Cynthia Coyle, Canada

The list helps me to open my broken heart for others and for myself.
— Ulrich Hoenig, Germany

The Self-Relations list is a model of Self-Relations itself. It offers people in the SR field an opportunity to explore the principles of SR in a living community. We get to experience a wide range of our own emotions, judgments, and thought patterns by interacting with others on the list. We can experience frustration, confusion, annoyance, like-minded fellowship, and a real sense of belonging and not belonging to a community that we are a part of. We can take a chance at communicating our longings, needs, fierceness, and tenderness with the heartfelt knowledge that although we might not be fully supported by each and every member of the list at any given moment, that indeed we will be fully supported by the list as a whole. It is as if the list as one complete unit is a living sentient being. Support is always there, along with the knowledge that our per-

ception of reality is always somehow incomplete and limited. We are afforded this opportunity to explore ourselves, knowing that our voice is valued, not because we are right, but simply because we choose to be here and remain open to new information. Within this supportive framework, we get to extend our concepts of "self" and "other" and take what we learn out into our professional and personal lives, having gained a new perspective.

— Charlie Badenhop, Japan

Characteristics of the SR Community

At the beginning of each day in Zen retreat we chant:

I take refuge in Buddha (the enlightened one, teacher)

I take refuge in Dharma (the teachings)

I take refuge in Sangha (the community)

The Self-Relations communities are indeed sanghas where we take refuge.

— Laine Gifford, Massachusetts

All of these overlapping circles of community have a number of aspects in common. All are living, evolving, flexible containers that offer safety, challenge, attention, the opportunity to be and be seen in complete authenticity, and the opportunity for resonance among their members. They are places of refuge and retreat, places to be healed and recharged, and places to enhance one's functioning in the world. I think they work so extraordinarily well for many reasons. Here are the main ones.

The Community as a Generative Self

In many ways, an ongoing supervision group is like a family. If the family is going to stay healthy, something has to stay the same and some things must change. This seems to be integral for the dynamic generativity of the group, as it seems to allow for people to be who they are, not just what they are expected to be based on who they were last year. What has developed for me is a place where I both have an incredible unconditional positive regard for the people who attend and uncondi-

tional commitment to myself to be there in a way best for myself. I go now because this is my "other family." I talk to them between supervisions even if it is only in my head. I seek spiritual and human guidance from them.

— Stephen Beck, Oregon

An aspect of this community that is particularly intriguing to me is the flexible, changing nature of roles that people occupy. For example, it would not be unusual in the course of a supervision day for a person to move from being a therapist to a client to a supportive group member to a silly person making music, to a cook making dinner, to a person sharing their poetry or creative writing, and so forth. This rotation of roles within the same community provides a powerful model of a Generative Self, well aware that "the Kingdom of God is within" each of us. Indeed, a major idea in SR is that Self is the field or context that holds all experienced distinctions and roles. By moving so deeply and freely through multiple roles with the same community, a person is released from a rigid identification with a role and allowed to experience a deeper, wider sense of Self.

Also, I earlier noted how the community itself really changes and transforms over time. A major reason many people give for returning to Gilligan's trainings is that he continues to evolve and change. Indeed, SR began when Gilligan felt a need to let go of his teacher Milton Erickson and begin to find his own voice. That journey has led him through aikido, Buddhism, multiple psychological theories, performance arts, poetry and literature, and Eastern disciplines. In a similar way, the group has evolved organically, absorbing and integrating the many influences and gifts of its members.

When I come home after supervision, in my work with my clients, the feeling of the "field" comes with me. This helps me create a healing environment in my office. Sitting here today, I find myself wondering how much of the change in my experience of supervision is my own evolution and how much is the evolution of the field. And isn't it nice to know that it could be both at the same time . . . (laughter) . . . and so much more.

— Jim November, Florida

The SR Community as a Place of Both Safety and Challenge

How does the practice of Self-Relations help to create a safe container? What makes any one of us feel safe? Can we feel safe in community if we are experiencing fear within ourselves? Through the years, I have experienced varying degrees of safety in working with different supervision groups across the country. I have come to understand that Self-Relations psychotherapy starts with the self; the community relationship is then a byproduct. I first had to learn how to create safety within myself, to accept all of the parts of me in order to remain whole in the face of community. This essential work of self-sponsorship continues to be a challenge; support for finding this courage comes from the core Self-Relations teaching of the importance of maintaining individuality within the context of the larger community.

The combination of vulnerability and safety at the same time was nothing I had ever experienced before. The groups were a wonderful opportunity to learn about joining, working to be understood and seen for who you really are, and for shedding layers of defensiveness that no longer serve, or that never worked anyway! For me, the emphasis has shifted from wanting to learn, wanting to grow, to wanting to contribute. We have had the opportunity to watch Self-Relations develop and bloom. It always seemed as though the new exercises fit into my practice so well that they were developed specifically for it. It seems to be more a way of living and a way of being, for my patients and myself. It is about safe expression — being vulnerable and functional at the same time, and about exploring depths of archetypal existence that require love and sponsorship. After being in community, I love reentering my home community and my practice, empowered in new ways to perpetuate safety and functionality around me.

— Jeanne Hernandez, North Carolina

Attention and First Attention

We come together again and again with the intention of being fully attentive to ourselves and each other in the present moment, bearing witness to each person's story, taking it in, allowing it to touch our own, and then offering back the learning.

I have come to understand that the key to this healing process lies in the breath (and breadth) of sponsorship. When each member begins his individual journey to bless what he has come to believe are the worst parts of him and sees the valuable learning that is possible, there is a reconnect within him. Being attended to by the community at this moment, at the moment of awakening, creates group sponsorship and a kind of second birth of the whole person into the community.

Involvement with the SR community has taught me to shift my focus from taking care of others to the exclusion of myself, to shifting attention down through my center and out into the world. The SR idea of "first attention" (Gilligan, 1997) asks where a person's primary or first focus is given — to others, to a concept, to an image of the past, or to one's somatic center. It then encourages one to give "first attention" to the center as a way of quieting, stabilizing, grounding, and unifying awareness. SR has helped me to "center" wherever I am — in my office doing therapy, while arguing with a friend, in a staff meeting, while considering a new challenge, etc. I especially find it helpful when I'm working. I frequently tell students that one of my guiding principles for doing therapy is to say or do nothing in the way of an intervention unless centered. If not centered, I work on being centered: breathing, relaxing, extending attention, letting go, ready to receive and respond.

My connection to the experience of "center" precedes my work in Self-Relations. As a former dancer, no move was possible without maintaining one's center. A vortex that allowed freedom to spring forth, the connection to our center gives way to movement in all directions. So the knowledge of one's center is vital in being able to reach out without giving yourself away, maintaining one's balance in order to be there for another with integrity and purpose.

Transparency and Resonance

SR community members have the opportunity to be and to be seen, heard, and appreciated in complete authenticity. There is a kind of exposure or transparency which, when received with complete acceptance and support by the community, is inherently healing. Choosing to sit in the role of therapist in supervision is a good example of this phenomenon. Thoughts of not wanting to fail before one's peers, questions regarding one's professional adequacy, fears of being judged or found out as an "imposter" are common. Gilligan often brings these out in the beginning with his "Irish twinkle," asking how many people come with such concerns. When the whole group raises their hands, laughter and relief typically replace anxiety. Gilligan then asks, again with an Irish twinkle, whether the group would prefer to be competitive with each other, hiding these fears, and acting out; or instead a cooperative group where both weaknesses and strengths are seen and supported, both connection and vulnerability valued. Of course, people prefer the latter choice, and this becomes a guiding principle for the group process. This idea that the practice of SR is not primarily about performance or cookbook techniques, but more about connecting with another human being from one's center, is reinforced throughout the trainings. Practicing from this position heals both therapist and client.

Healing also occurs for the witnesses. Whether in supervision, Trance Camp, or tuning into the List, as the community holds the space for deep conversation with respect and reverence, there is a resonance, which takes form within the observing participants. After each piece of work is completed, there is always time for participants to share how they have been touched. This process reinforces the healing connection both for those who have worked and for those who have held the space for the work to take place.

At Trance Camp, one of the participants did a piece of work related to losing her breast. My mother had a mastectomy when I was 7 years old. For the first time in 35 years, I really felt the place where the pain of that experience resided in me. I was very grateful for

being able to feel it and for the support I received to begin to heal it.

— Mary Ann Giorgio, New York City

A Place of Refuge and Retreat

Supervisions have become critically important parts of my system of self-care and growth in relationship. They nourish me and are places where I can be challenged and stretched in safety. They have become vitally important centers of community where I can experience awakening in relationship with other people I have come to care about deeply.

— Rob Rossel, Vermont

I use the supervisions as a personal retreat where I have more time to be contemplative and attend to my inner self in ways that the rigors of daily life do not allow.

— Bill Beckett, Massachusetts

There are so many commitments in life — to spouse, children, extended family, social and professional responsibilities, and so on. For the committed therapist, the yearning for personal and professional growth is an undeniable calling. It is a journey back to regain one's center.

So now I go back every year to bear witness to myself in the company of "ones most trusted." Every year life pulls us a little bit farther apart, and to this point every year life holds us closer together. The group has matured from a magical group into one now that is very human — and within those double descriptions it moves into the spiritual realm.

— Stephen Beck, Oregon

Enhancing One's Presence in the World

In our own small way, we must try to rekindle the sparks of self-love, to invite acceptance and curiosity where rejection and control have been, to encourage a reawakening of self-in-community. (Gilligan, 1997, p. xv)

The practice of Self-Relations and the support of this loving community have contributed greatly to the personal and professional presence of its members in the world. The following statements express this clearly:

When I returned from the workshop, my children said to me, "We don't know what you have done but keep on doing it." They had noticed the change; I was more playful and light-hearted. People at work even notice the difference. I have learned to connect to my core self. Through this openness and tenderness, the love flows to others, and healing occurs.

— Angela Scherma, Australia

Since I have learned about self-relations and hypnosis, my ways have changed greatly. With each client, I learn more and more to find the place he is at in myself, stay with myself, with the client, and the both of us in the larger field. I do not judge, and I go a lot more slowly. I take what is there, and each time I am so grateful that there is this community on this planet, because it is like a crutch when you have a broken leg, like a supporting hand on my back, someone giving me a handkerchief when I cry, and someone to roll on the floor laughing. I just can't get enough.

— Kirsten Hinrichsen, Germany

The core of my interest is how to develop mature love for all others and myself. It is really the middle way in Buddhism. This is why I return to supervisions. I go inside myself in supervisions to discover more of who I am, and return to apply it in my life and relationships.

— Ray Cicetti, New Jersey

Ritual Space and Archetypal Process

One of the most fascinating and mysterious parts of the SR training experiences is the development of a ritual space where archetypal process is active. Gilligan often emphasizes that in any intense experience — whether it is the dark world of a symptom, or the brilliance of an artistic expression — two levels of conscious-

ness are simultaneously active: (1) the personal level, where an experience is unique and expressive of a particular individual; and (2) the archetypal level, where the same experience manifests a deeper pattern of human being, something in the collective consciousness of the human species. For example, a great piece of art not only reveals the unique genius of the artist (and some corresponding place in the receiver), it also shows something transcendent about human beauty or consciousness. Similarly, a depression may express certain losses of a person, but it may also show something about the general human condition at the same time. (In this sense, psychology in general and psychotherapy in particular too often make the mistake of emphasizing the personal while ignoring the archetypal.) Gilligan emphasizes that the simultaneous experience of both the individual (personal) and the collective (archetypal) level is what allows transformative experience.

Indeed, this is an interesting aspect of the SR group experience. Not all the time, but on those occasions when resonance and attunement have developed, an experience can unfold in amazing ways. For example, as a person working in the middle of a supervision group moves through some core experience (of, say, betrayal), others in the group begin to discover that same experience within them. The group Self is then matching the individual Self, and a certain enhanced field is present.

Relatedly, over a 4-day period, where maybe 10 pieces of core work have been done, it seems that the different pieces together make a beautiful poem of a complete life. That is, the different pieces might include loss of a child, violence from a parent, connection with a spouse, relationship to one's body, integrating a dissociated emotional part, claiming one's fierceness, being silly, and so forth. When each person in the group relates significantly to each piece of work, a special non-linear logic of a complete life seems to develop, leaving a beautiful sense of somehow the group Self making a life poem for each individual Self. This logic seems strange and quantum-like, but it remains one of the most interesting parts of the group process.

I think the thing that makes Self-Relations unique in this regard is the emphasis on the "field" and archetypal energies that flow through it as we work with our clients. Per-

sonally I am grateful for the availability of this additional dimension of depth of the work. It is a relief to know it and to grow in my ability to trust it, knowing that the energies I am sensing and working with are NOT ME but that I am implicated in their presence in the relational field. It is a relief because it takes some of the pressure off me to feel the waves and participate in holding and challenging energies that transcend my knowledge and experience. Learning to trust in one's ability to be with those energies is one of the key dimensions of Self-Relations for both therapists and their clients. It is something that is there that we can learn and grow to trust as our clients learn about it and grow to trust it. But to learn it, one has to be able to notice it, appreciate it, name it, and eventually sponsor it. We might call this the development of "relational trust," a growing trust in one's ability to be open to archetypal energies flowing in and around the relational field. The development of "relational trust," I think, is the process that defines what makes Self-Relations residential so powerful and special to participants. As one develops "relational trust" and an appreciation of these greater-than-self energies, the work naturally tends to be "deep" because we recognize that we are talking about and experiencing something larger than the self. Words become "full," experience is connected to the archetypal plain, the sense of love and beauty in the presence of the other self becomes awesome and perhaps at times a bit overwhelming. May we all find and create more and more opportunities to develop "relational trust" in our work. In my view, there is nothing more vitally important that we can do.

— Rob Rossel, Vermont

Group Leadership

While I have primarily focused on the group characteristics of the SR community, it would be a mistake to not at least mention that what makes much of this work is the leadership of Stephen Gilligan. In many

ways, the process of the SR community is life on the edge, pushing through normal limits and exploring deeper possibilities of connection and aliveness. It is a perilous task with many risks, and it takes a very sensitive person to lead and navigate some of the spaces. Gilligan has a special ability to get a group to focus, attune, get real, and do good work. His therapeutic abilities to see, touch, challenge, and evoke are very special. How he does this is the topic of another paper, but the fact that such groups need leaders should be mentioned here. Not so much to adulate Gilligan, but to emphasize that without others stepping forward to develop comparable leadership skills, the community will not continue to grow. I feel this is happening slowly but surely, and I believe it will be helped by continued discussion of how group leaders may operate to help create and guide similar communities. The world certainly could use them about now.

No Magic, A Journey

As I write and reflect upon each community I have connected with throughout the years, I am able to visualize, feel, and sense what each member has given to me. I can see them helping me learn to be both with my emptiness and with my gifts. This process is not magical, nor has it been a quick fix. It has been a difficult journey. Over and over again, I have found myself dancing with my demons, but also being touched by angels.

As the years passed, however, I have experienced a shift in myself. I began to let myself feel the community hold the sleeping parts of me, challenging my voice to become stronger while learning to trust in myself. I began to sense its love and energy giving me the ability to connect more deeply with the essence of SR. The relationship with the SR community that developed over the years fostered the relationship I was able to have with myself. I began to see my rage for the first time and understood that I could both be with that rage and wrestle with it comfortably. I did not have to wear my habitual mask, my most comfortable identity, "Little Mary Sunshine." I realized my dark side was not evil, but rather a complement to my lightness; my dark sides

did not make me less of a person, but rather more whole. The masks now are gone, giving me choices, teaching me that I am not stuck in any one way.

The long-hidden parts of myself are finding ways to express themselves. I can remember when I felt insecure with my voice. What did I know? I now speak out, knowing there are many things I do and do not know. I continue to learn that I will be listened to, challenged, accepted, occasionally rejected, and maybe admired. I have developed the courage to see what I once hid from; something I believed if revealed would crush my soul or, worse, the soul of others. I waiver still from time to time wanting to hide, moving off and on center, returning again to my ability to blend all my energies in a way that allows me to trust who I am in each moment. What I have noticed is when I begin to abandon myself, the community stays with me. This has encouraged me to stay with myself and allowed me to continue to feel the subtle healing.

Over the years, I have been able to take a step back and look at the ways in which the supervisions have been a learning laboratory for Self-Relations. The key lies in the breadth of community sponsorship and the premise of self-sponsorship. When each member of the group begins their individual journey to bless what they have come to believe is the very worst part of them and see the valuable learning that is possible, they inevitably experience a reconnect within themselves. Because the group is the sum of its parts, the community rallies in support of each individual's efforts. The image of an atom comes to mind and I imagine the supervision group creating a pattern of energy in space that loops around and out as each person's center holds the integrity of the group.

My own experience and the voices of our Self-Relations community speak to the profound impact on their personal and professional lives of being seen and accepted by this loving community. The conditions of safety, support, respect, attention, connection, and freedom to be one's authentic self have played vital roles in the formation of a community that sponsors the courage to love.

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*Change and Non-Change in the Field:
From Either/Or to Both/And Relationships*

Ulrich Hoenig works as a consultant and trainer in Munich, Germany. His main focus is Self-Relations and related approaches for personal change — less as a method of solving specific issues, but more as a general way of approaching life and its challenges (issues). His background is in Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) as a method that helped him to let go of the focus on states and to approach Self-Relations as a way of focus on processes. Nothing lasts: neither pain, nor joy — and life is a wonderful journey!

CHANGE AND NON-CHANGE IN THE FIELD: FROM EITHER/OR TO BOTH/AND RELATIONSHIPS

Nothing that I can do will change the structure of the universe. But maybe, by raising my voice I can help the greatest of all causes — goodwill among men and peace on earth.

— Albert Einstein

I work as a therapist, trainer, and business consultant in Munich, Germany. My initial start in therapeutic work was naturopathy. Then I came across NLP and later Self-Relations, both of which moved me in the direction of psychotherapeutic work, which is my main focus now. Many of my clients have challenging diseases, such as cancer or MS. There are other people coming to see me as well.

Two things fascinated me about SR from the very beginning. The first was the acceptance of a client's fear and desperation, rather than immediately offering solutions or trying to "fix" the person. This led to an awareness of how both "change" and "non-change" are important aspects of the therapeutic process. The second was the SR idea of the intelligence of unitary fields of consciousness. These collective fields were sensed as being deeper than "states" of mind, and the importance of "both/and" thinking as a requisite for sensing and utilizing these fields seemed especially important. Taken together, these ideas really revolutionized my way of thinking and acting with clients. What I'd like to do in

this paper is elaborate a bit on my understanding of these SR ideas, in hopes that the reader might be similarly helped.

Change in the Changeless: The Problem With Problems

Years ago, when I first started out, people came to me with problems they were encountering in their work, with their friends and families — in short, everywhere. They felt insecure, wanted more love or self-respect, desired more intimacy, and other essentials. So I began, more or less successfully, to bring in my two cents worth of advice. I seemed to help many people, much to their relief and mine! But after a while some clients would come again, with the same goal or interests. They expressed satisfaction regarding our previous work, but now wanted more. I was startled and haunted by doubts. Had I done a poor job? Not enough? Had I only offered temporary help?

For a while I could live with the idea that the particular details related to a specific core issue (e.g., security) might change, even if the core issue remained the same. If, for instance, the problem had been about security in personal relationships, it might now be about security in decisions concerning the future. So while the content may have changed, the basic core issue had not. Those thoughts helped me for a while. But it sometimes

happened that years later the same client appeared for a third time, and with the same problem. And each time, they said that the previous work had really helped them to change, but now they wanted to change again, in a different area but around the same issue. Hence: Something had changed and at the same time nothing had changed!

How is such a contradiction possible? Do we grow and change OR do we not grow and not change? Or is it possible that BOTH are true at the same time? That we change and don't change. We're different and the same. The problem may remain exactly the same, but it is no longer considered a problem. Is this possible?

Personally, I believe that the difficulties we face — whether it is an illness, a relationship problem, or an unlucky experience — are given to us as learning challenges. Without these difficulties, most of us wouldn't learn much; we would continue to operate in the same old way. But when we are faced with problems, especially recurrent ones, we have to find a new relationship with ourselves, a new understanding about life, a new way of responding. So even though the external situation may not change, our inner consciousness does change. And sometimes that is enough to make the difference.

We might also say that most significant challenges demand that we both accept something AND at the same time let go of it. For example, in a relationship problem, we may need to accept that we love someone AND at the same time let go of loving that person, so that what needs to happen can happen. BOTH not changing the problem AND allowing changes to occur seem basic patterns of reconciliation within ourselves and with others as well.

An interesting example of this comes from John Gottman's (1994) finding that most married couples, whether happy or unhappy, seem to have about the same handful of recurrent "core issues" with each other. These "core issues" — e.g., he's a slob, she's a neatnik, they argue about it — do not change or go away over the course of a long-term relationship, even with efforts to change them. What differentiates happy vs. unhappy couples is that happy couples find ways to get around, or not be defined by, the core struggles. They may use humor, find ways to quickly repair any disconnections, or agree to disagree. But they change. . . . and don't change. . . . at the same time.

Part of most "problems" is an assumption that some "right way" needs to be realized and practiced. But what is right? Years ago there was an exposition in my hometown of Munich, Germany, arranged by the artist, Frederic Vester. It was titled "Our World — a Network-System." In the exhibit, there was a relatively small, round picture of fish. Three white fish were swimming to the right; four black fish were swimming to the left. The viewer was to decide in which direction the majority of the fish were swimming. The answer was easy, of course: More fish were swimming to the left! Then the onlooker was asked to press a button, which caused the picture's diameter to expand to make visible more fish. Now there were eight white ones and still four black ones. Accordingly, the first answer was "wrong." Evidently more fish were swimming to the right. What is then correct, good or bad, fostering or restrictive? How can I know what is right? Am I learning the right thing, accepting the right thing, or letting go, in connection with my destiny?

Well, probably we know at first by way of results. Because if I actually have learned something, there will be change. My disease will have diminished, the relationship with my partner will have become more agreeable, irritations will have disappeared. *The state will have changed.* But if nothing significant changes in the state, we can conclude that no new learning has occurred; in which case, life will continue to present the same challenge, one way or another, until some important learning has been realized. This means, at least in retrospect, that we may understand what actually has helped us — or is that the case? Well, as I see it, that depends on the distance in time from where I look back on it. Maybe you know the strange feeling of thinking that you have settled something once and forever. You are happy, you enjoy this situation — but Bang! Here it is again, as if nothing had ever happened, as if you had never done anything for or against it.

On the other hand, there are certainly things that clinch a matter. They don't arise again. Or do they? Only in another shape? Who knows? Life is an adventure!

The Unitary Field Versus The Dynamic State

So what shall we do with this dilemma of something changing and not changing? One SR idea that may help regards the distinction between a relational

field and a *state*. The *state* is the pattern we can see; it has parts, form, and dynamic action. It is what the mind can focus on, see, and rearrange. The *field*, on the other hand, is a deeper unitary context that holds that structural pattern. It is the space that gives meaning, additional (invisible) information, and space for the structure to play out. The field is a whole; the state is a patterned piece of the whole. The field is the context, the state is the text. The field is the deeper unconscious; the state is the conscious mind. The state can be explicated; the field is always implicit (always "much more" than the explicit). In a state, something is EITHER true OR false; in a field, something can be BOTH true AND false (and much more) AT THE SAME TIME. The state can be sensed from a single perspective; a field can only be apprehended by holding multiple points of view simultaneously.

The field emerges the moment we focus on two things at the same time. For example, I saw a strange movie some years back. In one scene, an old man repeatedly raised the four fingers of one of his hands to different people, asking them how many fingers they could see. Each time, the person would report seeing four fingers, and each time the man would ask the person to look again. Finally, the hero of the film was introduced to the old man, and the same task met with the same answer. They then had some hypnotic-like conversation, something to the effect of seeing beyond the surface of things, and the task was repeated. This time, however, the old man placed his fingers halfway between the two of them, and asked the hero to look equally at the fingers and the old man's face AT THE SAME TIME. Suddenly, the hero saw not four fingers but eight! By looking beyond the structure, an additional pattern began to emerge. This is sort of like the 3-D pictures that were popular a few years back, where by focusing with soft eyes on some point in a pattern, a depth dimension opened to reveal a hidden pattern. I have used the example from the movie a number of times with friends and clients. Once people are focused on the field beyond the pattern, a different type of "seeing" occurs.

The movie scene demonstrates the difference between a field and a state very well. If I focus only on the fingers *or* the face, it is like a state — if, on the other hand, I focus my attention on the fingers *and* the

face, it moves me beyond the state into the field. Stephen Gilligan has emphasized that in the martial art of aikido, much attention is given to developing "soft eyes," wherein a person does not "lock in" and focus tensely on the attacker but rather opens attention "beyond" the attacker to the larger field. He has used this practice in training therapists, emphasizing that in therapy it is important to see beyond the presenting form of the client, to sense hidden resources and identity patterns. These are all examples of field-based perception — seeing a whole beyond the parts of the explicit state. The state does not disappear, but is rather held in a deeper space that provides additional dimensions and possibilities of response.

What does any of this have to do with problems? Well, we might say that there are two aspects to consider in a stuck state — the state and the field. A state may be too rigid, a bad fit, not sufficiently developed, inappropriate for the challenge at hand. In this case, a change of state — what some might consider a second order change (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974) — may be very helpful to remedying the problem, at least for the time being.

But the deeper field in which the state is held may be open or closed, fluid or frozen. A person may generate an open field of consciousness via relaxation, consciousness attunement, centering, practice, etc. Conversely, a frozen field may be developed via fear, rigidity, greed, etc. — in effect, all the ancient "seven deadly sins."

If the person changes their state but remains in a frozen field, the deeper energy/pattern is maintained and further versions of the problem are generated. Something changes, something doesn't change. The problem keeps returning, and is felt as a problem.

In a similar way, the state may not change but the field may deeply shift. A common report of my clients is that while the old problem seems to have not changed, it is no longer sensed as a problem. They seem a bit chagrined yet happy in reporting this. For example, one client complained bitterly of his wife's critical attitude. After a bit of work, he (and she too!) laughed in reporting that while his wife still seemed to be critical at times, it really didn't seem to bother him. Nothing changed and something changed AT THE SAME TIME.

The More Expansive Space of the Field

In my opinion, many problems are on their way to resolution when a person gives up rigid ideas of right vs. wrong, opening the possibility of being with “things as they are,” curious about how to best relate with them. When we identify with a state, this is hard to do — we have a single perspective that implicitly or explicitly defines a narrow range of “correct” possibilities. The experience of a field allows us to give up pigeonholing our thoughts into various boxes of so-called understanding. If I understand something, does that not mean that I have packed this “X” — whatever “X” might be — into the “right” box that cognitively classifies it in a way that makes “sense”? To do so would be to restrict myself, trying to cement within me what cannot be cemented: Life. A good number of my clients have devoted themselves to such “understanding,” just as in fairy tales someone may sell his soul to the devil. Here is a little Chassidic tale that makes this point quite well:

Once, a big and a small devil were following a man in the street. Suddenly the man stopped and picked up a small piece of Truth. Seeing that, the little devil anxiously turned to the big devil and said: “We are lost! This man has found the Truth!” But the big devil calmed him with a slight smile: “Don’t worry! This man did find a piece of Truth, that is right. Now we shall help him organize it . . .”

Whenever we organize a “truth,” that is, pigeon-hole it cognitively, we commit ourselves more or less to a state. And in most of the cases such commitment leads to an “either/or,” right or wrong, etc. I suspect, at least in part, that this has something to do with striving for security. At last we have something in this ever-changing life that we can put a name on, something reliable. That may, of course, result in our committing ourselves to something that may be just the opposite of what we were trying to obtain — namely, growth and change.

Thinking and Feeling: Enemies or Allies?

This attitude of clinging to a rigid but certain cognitive state can especially be seen in how we relate to the river of our subjective feelings. Many countless hours

have been wasted in an effort to analyze or control the deep feelings that run through our lives. But alas, explicit understanding is always beyond our reach. Our understanding of feelings is always implicit, not explicit. In other words, they extend beyond any bounded state into the deeper field of consciousness. We can describe them, express them in song or dance or poem or story, recognize their presence; but we cannot define them, totally understand them via cognition. If you don’t believe me, spend 5 minutes in an intimate relationship.

This inherent uncertainty of this type of knowing can be frustrating, and very often results in people trying to control their feelings; because what they cannot classify by way of cognition is mostly experienced as uncanny and alarming. Continuing to cling to cognition will either lead to a suppression of feelings or to an outburst, because, in the long run they cannot be suppressed.

Conversely, there are people whose favored “playground” is their feelings. To almost everything they react with massive feelings, which dominate them. You may know such people yourselves. It is difficult to have a relationship with them. Who wants to live near a volcano that is about to erupt? I think there is more pleasant company.

In both these cases, the two worlds of somatic feeling and cognitive knowing are placed in a mutually exclusive relationship. EITHER one OR the other is valid, and the other is invalid. A central point of SR is that this either/or relationship will invariably produce misery in the long run, and that a both/and relationship where feeling and thinking are part of a deeper unity will produce reasonable happiness and effectiveness in a person’s life.

I once heard Stephen Gilligan say that the relation between a horse and a rider might be compared to the relation between the cognitive self and the somatic self. Each has its own intelligence, *and* there are things they can do only in cooperation with each other. A good rider will not dominate a horse, but rather work in cooperation with it. Naturally, brain-controlled people — to continue the metaphor — also have a horse. But it has been in the pasture and has run wild for so long that the rider has no idea of how it is doing.

Jung used to say that the unconscious always compensates for the conscious mind’s bias, so that a symptom can be seen as the field’s attempt to balance the im-

balanced view of the cognitive state. In today's culture, that usually means that non-rational processes, such as out-of-control feelings, are attempts to balance the intellectual control bias of the conscious state. But unfortunately, many people try to relate to this field-balancing "symptom" with more of the same, i.e., greater intellectual control and "understanding." Or the person may try other approaches that continue to pit thinking against feeling, the cognitive self against the somatic self. The result is almost always a vicious cycle. (We always have a problem when we find we are going around in circles.)

For example, consider the previously mentioned clients who return time after time with different versions of the same problem. They have changed a state, but the underlying field remains locked and negative. So whenever their dominant conscious state is challenged (i.e., made unstable), the underlying field of "feeling unsafe" is encountered. In a sense, this is what hypnotic work attempts to do: have a person release their identification with conscious states so that their deeper identity fields may be sensed and renewed in generative, open ways.

The Both/And Nature of the Relational Self

Having dealt with "either/or" relationships, it seems time to consider the possibilities of "both/and" relationships. For example, what happens if we live and experience mind and heart *at the same time*? When we move to such a "both/and" relationship, we find everything takes on a more Zen quality of greater clarity and directness. *We move from identification with a conscious state to connection with a deeper field.* Our strange premise that we are in complete control of life gives way to a more secure sense of being in connection and interdependence with everything. Stephen Gilligan quotes a rule from the Japanese Budo: "One who focuses upon the attacker's weapon has lost." This phrase holds true with every kind of fighting. The fighter who focuses on the opponent's sword (or his/her own) has lost; the person who gives primary focus to their problem is similarly lost. The same, of course, is true if one forgets about the sword, or the problem. A person facing a challenge must do both *at the same time* — open his or her focus to the extent that he or she "sees the attacker and the surroundings — as well as the sword."

If desired, one may put the principle to the test: If someone points a finger relatively close to my eye and I fix my view on it, he or she may touch me anywhere outside my field of vision — I will not perceive it before he or she has touched me. But if let my eyes both soften and widen their focus, I can sense peripheral information much more readily.

In expanding to self-as-a-field, our relationship to "problems" changes dramatically. The relational connection to the "problem" starts flowing, the negative state dissolves, and change happens. What practical implications does this have? If we manage to accept and express feelings in such a way — in particular feelings we are afraid of — we bring them home from their isolation and start becoming their sponsors.

Some years ago, in an SR seminar with Gilligan, I experienced in various respects what that means. I learned that being what SR calls a *sponsor* — that is, one who helps awaken awareness of the goodness and gifts of a person — entails considerably more than offering only advice. Another meaning of the word comprises profound obligation. We were asked to identify in our lives examples of positive sponsors. I volunteered that one of my clients was a sponsor, and Gilligan asked me to explain in what way. I reported that she had been abused by her grandfather for many years, and that during one of my seminars — in a demonstration which I performed with her — she had reconciled with herself and, in part, with her grandfather. This had been a very special moment for me, that an individual hurt in such a profound way could heal her relationship with her abuser.

So far so good. But what was totally surprising to me was that as I told the story, I cried my eyes out. This I could not understand at all. Why was that happening? Was it not a pleasant feeling? And, after all, it was not I but my client who had been abused. I was entirely at a loss to understand. By and by, in the course of the following weeks and months, I began realizing what had happened: In me the description of this situation had activated, had brought to light, a "hidden feeling."

Unpleasant but also pleasant feelings out of the past are "buried" in our memory. Nobody likes to have an unpleasant feeling — fear, sorrow, or grief. As a rule, we try to keep clear of such feelings. We may even try

to separate ourselves from intensely positive feelings, as cultural inhibitions regarding strong emotions may prevail. When we dissociate from any feeling-toned experiences, we “freeze” them in our nervous systems as incomplete experiences. They remain exactly as they are! If they have been frozen long enough we are careful not to thaw them out, if only because we do not really know what then will happen. Will we be able to control ourselves? What will others think? As a rule, the longer the feelings are “buried” — that is, banished from the conscious state but ever present in the deeper field — the more uncanny they become to us, because a consequence of such “burying” is that emotionally this “part” of us does not grow in harmony with the rest of us. It remains at the age in which it was isolated. The conscious state is now dissociated from its underlying field, the rider can no longer feel the horse, the intellect is no longer secure in its feeling base. This is the beginning of an estranged form of consciousness, living in exile from one’s homeland, feeling constantly insecure no matter what the external achievement.

The freezing of a field and then dissociating it from one’s conscious state can be found in the German fairy tale of “Sleeping Beauty.” The princess does something that is not allowed — and is punished by falling into a deep sleep, together with the whole court. The court stands for the field. What is interesting here is that not only the princess but also all her entourage “freeze up.” In the process of time, a tight thorn-hedge grows around the castle. It is quite dangerous: Many princes die in it when they attempt to rescue the princess. I think the thorn-hedge is a symbol of fear, perhaps also fear of fear. Only the right prince can successfully pass through the thorn-hedge and rescue her with a kiss (= change of a state). And at the same time the whole court wakes up (= change of a field).

It is worth noting that the shift is engendered via a kiss — something connected with love and feeling. Without that love, it is hard to unfreeze the field of human consciousness to allow real satisfaction in life. For example, I had a dying client who was enormously successful in the outside world. He was CEO of a huge multi-national corporation, with all the material trappings of fast cars, multiple houses, and lots of “friends.” He had “made it,” achieving what he thought was his

ultimate goal. But as he faced death, he realized that none of it had really fed his inner field. It was frozen with fear, overrun by thorn bushes, atrophying from not being fed. Luckily, he softened on his deathbed, and felt the poignant feelings of realizing, a bit too late perhaps, that a successful “state” does mean a happy field of being.

We are like that poor rich man in so many ways. We develop images of who we think we are, who we should be, who we want to be; but these images get disconnected from the deeper underlying energy (field) of who we really are. So often we confuse ourselves with the image, try to contort ourselves to fit the image, and ignore the underlying field of our being. No wonder we feel anxious, empty, depressed, angry, lacking confidence. SR emphasizes that by finding and feeling the field underneath the state, we can both shift the state but also shift the deeper field of our being. In doing so, what we accomplish in the world is connected with how we feel as human beings. In other words, we walk simultaneously in the two worlds of the relational self.

Of course, the main question is how to do this. I think that one of the major contributions of SR is that it proposes specific methods and practices for generating and sustaining states of happiness and creativity. In terms of thinking and feeling, this especially means the self-sponsorship of ongoing feelings. I have emphasized the central importance of the reciprocal relationship between these two worlds, how each helps the other. Thus, the deeper self is identified with neither thinking nor feeling, but the ongoing connection between them. The relational self that arises each moment this is achieved is both skillful and compassionate. It is grounded in both field and state, feeling and thinking, self and other, inner and outer worlds. . . . It is, indeed a creative force to be reckoned with!

Summary

Life is unstable and brings changes. We are continuously trying to cling to things, beliefs, and people to obtain security. But when we do this, we move from the both/and generativity of a field consciousness to the either/or rigidity of a state identity. We come to fear letting go, openness, emptiness, not knowing, feeling — many of the qualities of a creative field. Clinging to the false security of a state, we don’t allow it to

naturally change. More importantly, we don't allow ourselves to change, and unhappiness and ineffectiveness soon follow.

Only if we learn, and accept, indeed that nothing is stable, not even the best of our intentions, shall we have a chance. No guarantees! But if we commit to accepting life, sponsoring ourselves and others, good things will happen. By moving from an either/or relational approach to a both/and process that includes opposites, living becomes creative and dynamic. By moving beyond opposites to the underlying field of consciousness, we return to a felt sense of "being" that provides deep satisfaction and direct knowing.

In this way, states are not fixed; they are constantly being constructed by a dance between two worlds with-

in a deeper unitary field of consciousness. Accordingly, the point is not to reach this state once and for all, but to reach it again and again. It calls to mind the Japanese Zen principle of treating each moment as the first and the last. Accepting what's there, being fully committed to giving and receiving, feeling gratitude for each moment. The age-old Tao circle of yin/yang is a beautiful symbol of this: Each side contains the other, each becoming its opposite with each passing moment, then becoming itself again. If we hold on to one side or the other, problems appear. But each moment we find the unitary field that allows the both/and connection, a relational self is born that allows new possibilities, new solutions, and new experiences. And this, to me, is the heart and mind of Self-Relations.

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POETIC INTERLUDE 4

Four

(Dvorah Simon)

God is not listening.

The priest who slammed the wafer into
Lorraine's mouth, in brutal acclamation
of divinity,

The sermon turned to hate against "those others" and Bill saw, and he
couldn't believe it, no, he couldn't
believe, anymore, and

The day she started to understand
what Hitler did to the Jews,

That is the day
that it can only be (so it seems, so it so
convincingly seems)
that God is not listening.

The choices are four:

One: Ignore the moment. Affirm doctrine. Heaven and hell and the
prophets and the laws. Perfect. World without end.

Two: Put it in a box. On Sunday go to church and on Monday return to
the real, grimy, dirty, untrustworthy world.

Three: Declare the deafness of the heavens. Smirk at faith, at the
simple believers. Rant against the religion machine.

Four. Believe. And don't. Hold it all in your hands. The anger and
the pain and the betrayal and the glimmer and the hope and the irony and
the glory and a new way of
believing,

Not *in* God but in all of it —
God's tears and your own fury and it's all there and it's all for real
this time and it all comes together, darkness and light
in your heart.

In your own lonely
and precious heart.

After Four (A Blessing)

(Charles Holton)

Without proper naming,
the injury flourishes in the dark.

During proper naming,
the injury barks and growls, testing
your resolve.

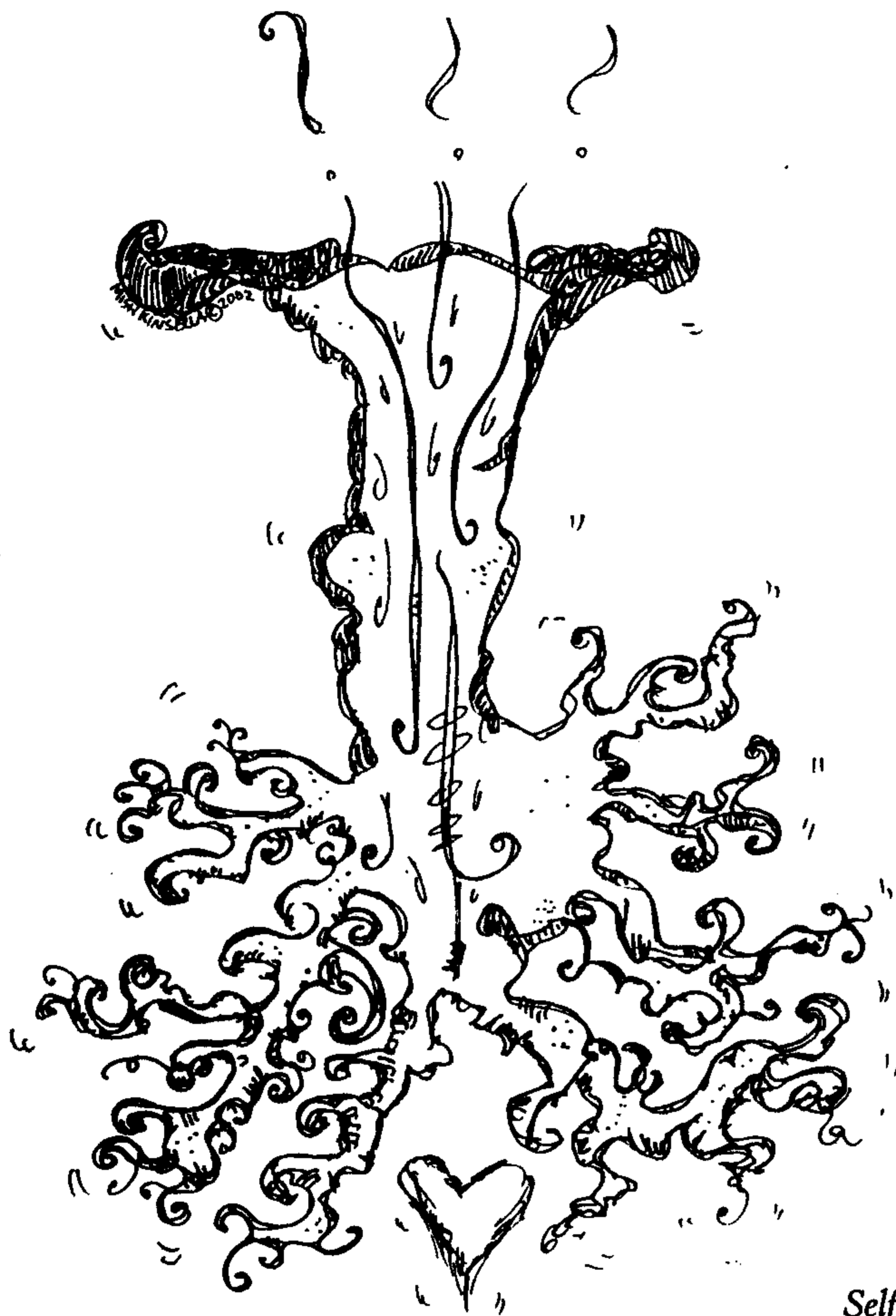
After proper naming,
the injury submits: the crying
is yours, at last, and true.

The choices did not exist before.
Their birth was occasioned by a celestial event.

Choosing brings new worlds into being:
this light has not landed on anyone's face before today.

SECTION V

**SELF-RELATIONS AND
EXPRESSIVE AND SOMATIC APPROACHES**



*Self-Relations in Holotropic States of Consciousness:
Articulating the Therapeutic Relationship
in Holotropic Breathwork*

Kylea Taylor, M.S., M.F.T., is a staff trainer for the Grof Transpersonal Training in Mill Valley, California, and a certified Holotropic Breathwork Practitioner. She has written *The Ethics of Caring*, *The Breathwork Experience*, *The Holotropic Breathwork Workshop: A Manual for Trained Facilitators*, and a book of poetry, *Water Marks*. She has been an officer of the Board of the Association for Holotropic Breathwork International and editor of its newsletter, *The Inner Door*, since 1991. Kylea is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with a consulting practice in Santa Cruz, California. Her website is www.hanfordmead.com

SELF-RELATIONS IN HOLOTROPIC STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS: ARTICULATING THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP IN HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK™

*The tao that can be told
Is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be named
Is not the eternal Name. . . .
Yet mystery and manifestations
arise from the same source.*

— Lao Tzu (1989)

Stephen Gilligan has a gift for relationship and for bringing words into relationship with the Mystery. Naming is part of manifesting and facilitating a state of relationship between our personal selves and the Mystery. What Gilligan has learned in practicing his art, he has also been able to articulate with fresh and apt terminology. He conceived Self-Relations, at least in part, from his experiences with hypnotic trance, but I believe his “proper naming” of terms and concepts is applicable to other modes of deep personal and transpersonal work. For example, I read *The Courage to Love* having no prior experience with hypnosis *per se*, but I found the concepts and terminology in Gilligan’s book ringing true when I fit them to my experience facilitating another context for deep work with clients, Holotropic Breathwork™.

When I was younger and studying spiritual theory — the mystical branches of religion from yoga to sha-

manism — a metaphor came to me of those old, pre-hard-drive computer cards. I imagined each card containing all ‘truths’ of one spiritual system or cosmology, and a stack of cards with those little rectangular holes punched uniquely in each for many spiritual systems. We could find out what concepts qualified as Universal Truth (as opposed to system-centered truth, doctrine, or dogma). We could hold up the stack of cards to the light to see where the holes went all the way through!

Somewhere along the way, I lost my youthful need to find ultimate answers, but I was still curious to compare the principles and terms of Self-Relations with those of Holotropic Breathwork. I wanted to see if and where the holes go all the way through in these two “cards.” I felt instinctively that many of the Self-Relations terms would articulate those techniques, responses, and states for which Holotropic Breathwork as yet had no concise description. In other words, Self-Relations might provide more language for what we were already doing in Holotropic Breathwork. This in turn, I believed, would help us facilitate and teach it more effectively. Self-Relations’ terms and theories, which focus on inter-and intra-therapeutic relationship, the therapeutic effect *between* people and between parts of ourselves and the universe, seemed to complement Stanislav

Grof's cartography of the psyche, which describes so well the types of intra-therapeutic and transpersonal experiences of deep inner work.

A Description of Holotropic Breathwork

A description of Holotropic Breathwork will probably help the reader with the subsequent discussion. Stanislav Grof, M.D., and his wife, Christina Grof, developed this powerful and natural technique in the mid-1970s from modern consciousness research and their study of ancient spiritual systems. Stanislav Grof had researched the healing potential of nonordinary states of consciousness as a psychiatrist using LSD and other psychedelics while in Prague and later at John's Hopkins University. They also studied shamanism and yogic philosophy and practices. Christina was an art and yoga teacher and brought her love of music to the development of the work as well. The result was Holotropic Breathwork, which uses the breath to induce holotropic states of consciousness, provides a ritual structure to contain them, and creates a safe set and setting to facilitate their integration. We call the states of consciousness that produce deep work *holotropic* or *nonordinary states of consciousness* (these are similar to trance states and also used to be called "altered states"). The name *holotropic* is derived from Greek roots meaning *oriented toward* or *moving toward wholeness*.

Holotropic Breathwork supports a very broad spectrum of experiences which may emerge in the participant, or breather. The experiences often have the effect of re-connecting self with self, others, the natural world, and spirit. This is the purpose of the technique — re-connection with and reclamation of those parts of self from which we have become cut off through birth and the experiences of our lives. The breath is the key to the technique. I wrote (1994) that the breath is invisible, yet it affects the visible. The Greek word "pneuma" means "spirit" as well as "breath." Through the breath we can connect our consciousness to our unconscious thoughts, our bodies, our emotions, and our spirits. Because breathing is both voluntary and involuntary, we can bridge these parts of us by controlling the breath. Controlled breathing has been used for centuries as a technique for psychological and spiritual development. *Breathwork* is the modern term for a system using the breath combined with a variety of supportive techniques

to mobilize our bodies, minds, and spirits for spontaneous healing (p. 3).

Holotropic Breathwork is most often done in a group setting. Participants work in partnership so that one is the breather for one session and the other is the sitter. In the second session there is reciprocity and the roles reverse. Thus, there is one-on-one supervision of the breather at all times. Holotropic Breathwork facilitators are certified by the Grof Transpersonal Training only after at least two years in training and 600 hours of experiential, practical, and theoretical transpersonal psychology. These thoroughly trained facilitators are responsible for overseeing the whole group and working with anyone who needs or requests assistance. The technique incorporates a pre-session theoretical orientation to the work, two sessions of breathwork, which include a guided relaxation, continuous and deep breathing, music, art, and a particular form of focused energy release work. There is a group sharing session at the end of the workshop for integrating the holotropic experience with ordinary life. A spacious and open-ended time period is essential for this work, and the Holotropic Breathwork session averages between two and three hours, often continuing even longer.

Participants in Holotropic Breathwork may have emotionally charged visual images, sense energy moving through their bodies, receive intuitive insights, and clarify troublesome issues in their lives. Often participants report that they feel relief from accumulated stress, release emotions from old traumas, gain an increased trust in themselves and their bodies, and feel that they understand and can now transcend old patterns of behavior that brought unwanted results. They often feel they have found a context in which to reconnect with self, others, the natural world, and spirit. Transpersonal experiences include out-of-body experiences, contact with archetypes, deep states of meditation, and identification with entities in other places and times. One woman had an experience of "becoming" a mother wolf and suckling her cubs. She was deeply moved by feeling within her that protective mother instinct, although she had not yet had a child in her life. A 58-year-old man wrote about his transpersonal experience in *The Breathwork Experience*, "My breathing grew very still and I entered a series of states of samadhi where I almost stopped breathing completely. Continuing the breathing, I ex-

perienced powerful energy flows through my hands, which I was able to pass on to my body. I stayed in this high energy ecstatic state for a long time, playing with the energy and moving the music and energy together" (Taylor, 1994, p. 75).

Ritual Structure Versus "Technique"

I have called Holotropic Breathwork a technique, but it is better described as a ritual structure that provides a safe set and setting — a container for whatever wants to happen when breathing into a holotropic state of consciousness. *Self-Relations* also stresses the need for ritual and tradition. Stephen Gilligan (1997) describes the characteristics of ritual including, "... a predetermined behavioral sequence. ... special symbols mark ritual space. ... pre- and post-phases are used as inductions into and exits out of ritual space. And binding commitments are secured to promote involvement and heighten the drama and significance of the event" (p. 180). All these elements are included in the structure of a Holotropic Breathwork workshop. According to Gilligan, ritual is designed in part to eliminate the need for cognitive decision-making, allowing the participant to drop deeper into non-analytical experience. In Holotropic Breathwork, the deeper and more rapid breathing adds to that effect. The breathwork brings most people more closely in touch with somatic and emotional experience. The "censor" and "analyzer" parts of ourselves bow and retreat to allow feelings and sensations to move to center stage.

Holotropic Breathwork facilitators are more like midwives than therapists. If they have come to the work as therapeutic professionals, they often have to un-learn the reflex to intervene, direct, or even guide. At any rate they are trained to be curious and expectant, rather than attached to any particular result.

Many experiences arise in the process of this work, but having experiences per se, or any particular experience, such as rebirth or ecstasy, is not the purpose. The goals are very broad in scope — wholeness, healing, and wisdom. Experiences are the means to these goals. When the body and mind enter a holotropic state through controlled breathing, an innate force arises, similar to the way our bodies enlist forces when we are injured. In *The Breathwork Experience*, I describe this concept of an "Inner Healer" in this way. "We do not have to think

about or direct the healing. The body just goes to work spontaneously, sending more white cells to the injured area, repairing tissue, and bringing wholeness and healing to the body again. The psyche also has this ability. When the body and mind enter a state of nonordinary consciousness through controlled breathing, our inner wisdom uses the opportunity to work toward physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual healing, and even developmental change" (Taylor, 1994, p. 4).

The Inner Healer uses the opportunity of breathwork to work toward physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual healing, and developmental change. The Holotropic Breathwork experience is, for the most part, internal and largely nonverbal, without outside interventions, unless they are requested or needed for safety. Holotropic Breathwork operates under the principle that we are our own best healers.

At the same time, healing any particular symptom is not the focus of the work. Symptoms are looked at "homeopathically." That is to say, as in *Self-Relations*, the problem is the solution. The understanding is that symptoms are an attempt to heal a problem, and the proper response to a symptom is to amplify (sponsor) it so it can get the attention it needs. Stephen Gilligan (1997) writes that, "a major focus of *Self-Relations* is to help the person satisfy her attempt to return to the field, but through self-loving rather than destructive means" (p. 58). He says further that much of this involves nonverbal bodymind practices. In Holotropic Breathwork we have seen that self-loving and returning to the field can take many forms. These can include expression and amplification of energies that have been unwelcomed and unloved in any previous context. These kinds of energies might in *Self-Relations* terms be "fressen" energies or symptoms in need of sponsorship and ritual context. Stanislav Grof (1985) writes of such symptoms, acted out in ordinary life: "The fundamental mistake behind all impulse activities is the exteriorization of the inner process, acting it out in a concrete way. The only solution is to approach these problems as internal processes and complete them on a symbolic level" (p. 270).

Points on the Map of Relationship

In *The Courage to Love*, Gilligan (1997) has given us both a description of the essence of healing relationship

and a vocabulary that can act as a guidebook in that land of therapeutic relationship. The words and phrases on the map are there to point and anchor us as we negotiate the actual territory of relationship. What follows is how some of those terms can be applied to Holotropic Breathwork.

Sponsorship of the Neglected Self

Sponsorship — the idea of sponsoring a person, a personality part, a particular energy, an emerging process — feels to me one of the best examples of “proper naming” in Self-Relations. In Holotropic Breathwork we sponsor a person’s “process” — encouraging and supporting the whole emerging enactment of what has, to this point, not been able to emerge. One metaphor of the neglected self in Grof’s teaching is a kind of a warehouse of ‘unexperienced experience,’ a term coined by Ivor Browne (1990). In this metaphor the Inner Healer moves through our inner huge, dark warehouse, shining a light. The light finally focuses on and brightens some neglected corner where is found the perfect piece of unintegrated material to bring forward at this time. Our job as facilitators and sitters for the breather is to trust the Inner Healer’s choice of material, to witness what is coming forward and, as appropriate, to encourage expression and integration of the material.

Self-Relations warns that trance alone discourages self-sponsorship. In Holotropic Breathwork the holotropic state often spontaneously includes a bi-modal consciousness. At the same time that one is deeply in the experience, one also usually has a witness present to the reliving of trauma, cosmic unity, or other experience. The breather’s sitter, witnessing the breather’s experience, also sponsors the inner witness by modeling (being an outer representation of) the witness function.

What comes forward in a Holotropic Breathwork session probably went underground long ago from lack of sponsorship. “Positive” or “negative,” the experience probably was buried in the unconscious and until now never has had another human presence and a ritual setting to sponsor it. Somehow the Inner Healer recognizes proper conditions, and the material comes forward. At that point our task as breather, and as facilitator if we are involved in the breather’s process, is to sponsor the material so that it can be embodied and integrated. For example, I was working with a man who had a history

of childhood trauma. In his breathwork sessions, his inner healer seemed to be leading him to contact parts of that abuse, to re-live and integrate it, but he was terrorized by it. He had been in therapy for a long time and had been doing breathwork for several years. As I worked with him during four sessions within two weeks, I saw a pattern to his process.

He was very motivated to do breathwork and to heal a number of dysfunctional symptoms, including severe social withdrawal. After entering the holotropic state from the breathwork, he would begin to re-experience parts of the abuse. As soon as he did so, he became so frightened that he would lose consciousness of where he was. Although it is unusual in Holotropic Breathwork, the witness and bi-modal consciousness was not available to him at those times. It seemed as if the experiential memories had been almost entirely dissociated. He would enter the experiential state so totally that he was not able to remember he was in a breathwork session re-experiencing the trauma. He experienced himself actually experiencing, not re-experiencing, it.

His reflex reaction at the point of terror would be to try to get away from the experience by flinging himself away from the mat (sometimes almost into a wall), or trying to run from the room. We had to be alert to keep him safe. There was a “push-pull” quality to the relationship between him and his sitters also. Sometimes he wanted closeness and support, but when he shifted into that place of terror, he pushed us away frantically. We would protect and hold him in that terror and offer him the choice to leave the room or continue. Coming back to consciousness of the room and the support available to him, he always chose to continue.

After three sessions, I had a conversation with him about his needs. He said that he needed closeness, but was not able to ask for it. This, combined with his specific symptoms in his life, gave me a clue about what needed sponsoring. The dynamic in his life was that he would push away out of fear that which he most wanted. He was positioned between deep longing for closeness and fearful, self-protective abandonment. We made an agreement. In the next session, if he encountered the terror, he could choose to pull us toward him, expressing his terror with the force of a physical “pull” towards rather than a “push” away. At the same time we would return his “pull” providing an embrace of safety for his struggle.

When he did choose to experiment with the pull towards us, we encouraged him to express the terror with even more sound and struggle. If he wanted not to be touched, we let go immediately, staying nearby and providing verbal contact. If he expressed ambiguity, we reminded him of his freedom of choice. Sometimes he would pull away and regroup. In the end, he squeezed me while screaming in terror until the energy shifted spontaneously into a profound experience of feeling loved and connected (not abandoned). Both the sitter and I spent a long time after the session holding him close and anchoring that experience of safe connection and intimacy.

Gilligan (1997) warns that both client and therapist may experience difficulties in connecting and staying connected with the neglected self. In Holotropic Breathwork, the holotropic state activates the Inner Healer which shows both breather and facilitator the trajectory of the energy. Neither has to know where it is going, or what will be the outcome. They need only cooperate with it as it reveals itself moment by moment. In the case above, the neglected self showed itself in the "push-pull" symptom and in the shuttling between states as the need to experience choice and safety in intimacy. Making an aware choice to change the pattern of "push" into "pull" seemed to make a bridge of awareness between two dissociated states (the "push" state and the "pull" state). In experiencing both at the same time, both were transcended and the breather became conscious (not dissociated) in the terror state. Once the breather was fully conscious of the terror and the terrorizing material, the energy had fulfilled its purpose and the session was complete.

Both/And

One of the most useful concepts in sponsoring deep experiences is the Grof (2000) perinatal cartography (pp. 29-56). Joseph Campbell (1949) revealed the Hero's Journey, a cross-cultural myth, representing the universal human experience of major passage. The hero receives the call to adventure, sets out across the threshold, faces adversaries and adversities, and ultimately returns to his community and himself bearing the wisdom and gifts he has received from the journey. Stanislav Grof (1985) made this concept intensely personal by describing The Hero's Journey of each individual's birth experience (pp.

102-127). In his books *Beyond the Brain* and *Psychology of the Future*, especially, he has described the stages of birth and linked each to very particular qualities and content of holotropic experiences. The birth cartography is relevant not only to trance and breathwork and other holotropic methods, but also to anyone in transition or a life passage. I have found it useful many times in talk therapy to describe the birth stages. The stage that most often needs sponsorship is what we call Basic Perinatal Matrix II (BPM II). This is the stage at which labor has begun, sending strange chemicals and powerful crushing forces into play, yet the cervix has not dilated sufficiently for the fetus to move through. BPM II turns the comfortable womb into a hell with no exit. The qualities of this stage are hopelessness, helplessness, betrayal, and timelessness. One feels that the suffering will never end.

Sponsorship of people experiencing BPM II is one example of how Holotropic Breathwork employs the "both/and" concept of Self-Relations. On the one hand, the only way through the suffering is to surrender to the timelessness of it and feel whatever is emerging to be felt. Both the facilitator (or therapist) and the experiencer enter the field of suffering with no sense of trying to fix it or end it. On the other hand, paradoxically, BPM II is one stage in a process. Just becoming aware of the larger map (BPM I, II, III, and IV) is to know that one is in a passage, that there will be an end to this part of suffering, and that change is possible. To remember the map is to remember that one is bigger than the particular worldview inherent in experiencing BPM II (depression, hopelessness, and trapped victimization).

Stephen Gilligan uses the phrase "all the time in the world" in hypnotic trance. Trance time co-exists with clock time in the both/and world. In Holotropic Breathwork we do a similar thing. Although workshops are scheduled with plenty of time to allow for the average and even longer session, there are times in which we as facilitators are working toward closure, while at the same time staying open to whatever needs to happen to sponsor a breather's experience. Often there is shuttling at the end of the session. There is a way in which facilitator and breather begin to tune into a perspective *about* the experience while at the same time being *in* the experience together inquiring of the Mystery what needs to happen next.

It is interesting that both Stanislav Grof and Ste-

phen Gilligan had the opportunity for extensive time in relationship and dialogue with Gregory Bateson. In *The Courage to Love*, Stephen Gilligan (1997) formulated one of Bateson's great insights into the following Self-Relations principle: "To generate a nonrational state of consciousness (love, intimacy, humor, pathology, trance, symptoms, play, etc.) activates two seemingly contradictory truths or experiences simultaneously" (p. 45).

Similarly, in his book *Psychology of the Future*, Grof writes, "in our everyday state of consciousness we identify with only a small fraction of who we really are. In holotropic states, we can transcend the narrow boundaries of the body ego and reclaim our full identity. They are deep states in which we experience simultaneously two very different realities, 'have each foot in a different world'" (2000, p. 2). Many techniques can induce holotropic states (e.g., hypnosis, breathwork, drumming, fasting), or holotropic states can occur spontaneously in the midst of ordinary life or in profound moments of therapy.

Mischievousness, Tenderness, and Fierceness and Proper Conditions

Breathers often dance between mischievousness, tenderness, and fierceness in a wonderful, spontaneous way during the integration and closure of a session. Laughter, sorrow, and firm resolve from insight all flow through the experiencer in the openness of the moment. Often laughter arises as the breather becomes aware of holding two paradoxical feelings or thoughts simultaneously. "I want to be done with this session. I am not done." "I am so sad and so happy." During this period, the facilitator simply, and with minimal talking and no analyzing, listens, and laughs with the breather. As necessary, the facilitator assists the breather to normalize, validate, and fully experience the full range of feeling and expression.

Facilitator fierceness is used, as it is in Self-Relations therapy, to bring seriousness and focus to balance levity and to help a person honor his Inner Healer by staying with the material that has arisen. It is often fierceness that gives power to both permission and protection. In Holotropic Breathwork the facilitator gives permission to access deep unknown places. Protection must be commensurate with permission. The balance of both creates safe set and setting (proper conditions) that allow one to go beyond where he or she knows the way. The

facilitator protects the breather fiercely from intrusion (e.g., by sitter or environment) and from self-harm (e.g., by bumping into the wall or others).

Tenderness, both emotional and physical, is a major part of corrective experience in a Holotropic Breathwork session. When breathers are reliving birth, or early childhood, they often feel the trauma of omission. They did not get the sponsoring they needed at those early times. The regression allows, to some degree, a corrective experience of being well-nurtured and re-parented. Because of the group context, there is a feeling of safety in receiving physical touch that would be difficult to achieve in a one-on-one therapy session. People have had significant realignments in self-concept from such nurturing contact, feeling at long last, *I am touchable, I am wanted, I am seen, and it is okay to be here (be born, be alive)*. Tenderness can also balance the experience of reliving trauma. A kind witness who sees and is empathic, and who is willing to feel into the pain the breather is experiencing, can make the experience tolerable. Not only that, as in Self-Relations theory, tender response can model and evoke the compassionate part of the breather for his or her own experience.

Not Too Loose, Not Too Tight

This Self-Relations concept is linked to the concepts of permission and protection. In Holotropic Breathwork this can be literal and physical, as in how firmly do you "contain" someone expressing an emotion. Very firmly if they need to feel safe to express rage — always with their permission. Very gently but with consistent connection after a birth experience. Facilitators try to be very attentive to the need to change between loose and tight as in the case of the man described above who experienced "push-pull" energies.

Interventions in breathwork are often intuitive. In most cases no one intervenes unless there is a need to keep the breather, or others near her, safe. But sometimes, there is a sense that someone should check-in or experiment with touching a hand to see if the person responds or pulls away. "Too loose" might be experienced if a breather is feeling alone and not cared for. For example, someone may be reliving a post-natal incubator experience, and feeling isolate and desolate when no one contacts him. An example of "too tight" is Stanislav Grof's description of an "Earth Mother"

sitter who had a great need to express her nurturing energies and so was trying to rock and comfort her breather. The breather was in fact experiencing himself as a Viking warrior and struggling to free himself from her "tenderness." "Too tight" also applies to the over-solicitous facilitator who (perhaps because of a personal need to be useful) checks in too often and does not let the breather have her space.

In the close personal contact of focused energy release work or nurturing, eye contact is another area that can create a condition of "too tight" or "too loose." We know from accounts of LSD therapy sessions that the experiencer often projects faces and scenarios from her inner material onto the therapist. The group context and the reciprocity of the sitter/breather roles in Holotropic Breathwork mitigate against too much personal transference. People seem, for the most part, to accept nurturing contact as corrective parenting during the session. They appreciate the offering of body contact during a session without the kind of transference that carries over into ordinary life. But prolonged eye contact between breather and sitter or breather and facilitator seems to be one of those "too tight" situations in which a breather might be encouraged to think "I am feeling this way because of this particular person," rather than "I am being supported in my inner experience."

Movement between Archetypal Self and Personal Self

Both Self-Relations and Holotropic Breathwork recognize the presence of archetypal energies and the role of these in healing. Gilligan (1997) writes, "the primary function of an archetype is to help a person develop as a human being" (p. 15) and goes on to describe how this might be done within a therapy context. In the Holotropic Breathwork archetypal energies often appear spontaneously, quite unbidden and unruly, and are embodied and expressed in ways external and physical as well as internal and intuitive. Some of these energies manifest as quite powerful sounds and movements, and take considerable time to process. It would be difficult to sponsor expression of these energies in talk therapy or in the container of most therapy offices.

Some therapists have questioned the wisdom of allowing these energies to "take over" in this way. I co-presented at a workshop in Europe with quite a few

Jungian psychiatrists and psychologists who themselves had had a few experiences with Holotropic Breathwork. They were concerned with the intersection between talk therapy and Holotropic Breathwork experiential sessions. They raised their burning question, "How do you handle inflation of the archetype, i.e., when an archetypal presence seems to overwhelm and obscure the individual person?"

It is an interesting question, but one with which, in 11 years of facilitating Holotropic Breathwork, I have seen little problem. What we have found is that the holotropic state itself often offers either the prevention or healing not only of inflation, but also of various symptoms of lack of self-worth which can be found at the root of inflation. Archetypal, transpersonal experiences usually provide insight into the archetype, and often bestow enough personal self-confidence in some cases to begin work with self-esteem issues or archetypal shadow energies. Experiential contact with the archetype expands and deepens the parts of the person that need development.

Usually inflation causes a problematic symptom in ordinary consciousness and interpersonal life because the person does not have a context for sponsorship of the archetypal energies involved. As Gilligan (1997) notes, "the value of the archetype depends on its human sponsorship" (p. 155). In Holotropic Breathwork this human sponsorship is provided both through the awareness and cooperation of the breather with the energy, and through the facilitator acting as witness and midwife to the energy. The breather "becomes" or in some other way (e.g., vision, dialogue) experiences the archetype. The process goal is to allow the energy to complete itself as an internal process, which often can include intense physical expression.

Just as the person through which the archetype expresses needs to feel the transcendent power of the archetype, the archetypal energies themselves seem to require expression, as if they want to make themselves known to the field. They seem to enjoy a channel through which they can enter the field and express themselves. The Holotropic Breathwork workshop offers a context for symbiosis, where there can be rewarding interplay between the personal, the archetypal, the culture, and the field.

Mischievously, I told the European group that the

biggest problem we had in Holotropic Breathwork with inflation of the archetype was not with breathers/participants, but with facilitators who had been taken over by the Great Healer archetype! Almost all of us at some point or other are overcome by the shadow of the Great Healer and can erroneously claim credit for the inner miracles being orchestrated by the Inner Healer of each person.

The dance between the archetypal energies and the personal self is very similar to the dance in and out of the holotropic states of consciousness. The sharing group is a mechanism to begin the integration process after a Holotropic Breathwork session. In the sharing group, the part of the breather who describes what happened is not the part that was deeply inside the experience. In other words, the witness comes forward and demonstrates to the group that a person is not limited to one experience or another, but can be in an experience at one point and describing and finding meaning in it at another point. With increasing numbers of holotropic experiences, we get more practice in making the transition from holotropic to "ordinary consciousness" and in the process we discover that we are bigger than any experience or any one "consciousness." For those who are in the Grof Transpersonal Training, the practice of stepping in and out of holotropic consciousness provides training in the experience of "both/and." Facilitators learn to touch deeply into a breather's profound experience, while "not going into process" themselves. Their many experiences in Holotropic Breathwork often allow long-trapped energies to dissipate so that they are no longer triggered by a breather's process. Facilitators-to-be gain practice in straddling two states of consciousness — keeping awareness of ordinary reality with skills that might be needed close at hand, while at the same time sharing the experience with the breather.

The Field

When a facilitator enters the "field" in Holotropic Breathwork it feels effortless to keep a "foot in both worlds." The facilitator's own history of profound experiences is accessible, but not compelling. Both breather and facilitator are in service to whatever needs to happen. The field is larger than this though, and also includes all the experiences of breathers and sitters in the room (Holotropic Breathwork groups can be made up

of 4 to 400 participants) and all the empathy that comes from the myriad of past experiences and relationships, both personal and transpersonal, of all those persons and all the others in their lives.

Sometimes remarkable synchronicities will occur between breathers. This seems to demonstrate a connecting field. For example, it is not unusual in a workshop that 25–30 percent of the breathers will have drawn the same symbol on their mandala drawings. For example, at any given session, there might be a run of hearts, boats, or stars. Amazingly, in another example of synchronicity and field, one breather will start toning or chanting or growling or screaming, and another breather across the room will find that that sound matches and supports, in some critical way, his own inner process.

Concepts of Holotropic Breathwork That Are Similar in Self-Relations

Stephen Gilligan (1999) conceptualizes a symptom as a "whole frozen family of associations." Stanislov Grof (1985) calls his similar concept a COEX, short for condensed system of experience (pp. 97–98). He says, "A COEX system is a dynamic constellation of memories (and associated fantasy material) from different periods of the individual's life, with the common denominator of a strong emotional charge of the same quality, intense physical sensation of the same kind, or the fact that they share some other important elements" (p. 97). In Self-Relations and Holotropic Breathwork both, we often find that if a client taps into the "frozen family" or the COEX through the door of one experience, many of the other doors or members of that "family" appear too. They announce their presence, release their energy, or clear the way for insight and integration of that complex.

Tav Sparks, who along with Stanislov Grof is a major teacher in the Grof Transpersonal Training, has written a monograph, *Doing, Not Doing*. In it he illustrates the basic concept of Holotropic Breathwork — that the *doer* in this work is not the facilitator, or the breather, but instead, the Inner Healer. Gilligan (1999) says similar things, like "true therapeutic work begins with the failure of the technique" and, "when the space is open, the healing experience will come — your job is to keep it open." He says, we should "distrust mind and trust that the present moment is more powerful than anything else" and that Self-Relations is not about

“mind-reading.” The Grof Transpersonal Training teaches the same thing in different words, “trust the process” and “follow the process.”

In Holotropic Breathwork, we defer to the Inner Healer, and always to the choice and perspective of the breather. In a lecture, Stephen Gilligan (1999) put it this way, “each person comes to know [the relational field] in her own way, and these ways change over time. Thus, the relational field must always be understood in therapy in the way the client understands it.” When there seems to be an apparent conflict between the trajectory of the Inner Healer and the wishes of the breather, we explore the conflict, stress choice, help the breather check-in with the Inner Healer (usually by doing a little more breathing). Ultimately the breather decides whether to go a little further, or to conclude his work for that session. I was very touched in a workshop when Stephen Gilligan quoted T. S. Eliot’s phrase saying that we work with “hints followed by guesses.” It describes how we, too, work with the hints provided by the Inner Healer.

This facilitation at the end of a Holotropic Breathwork session is part inquiry, part protection (both tenderness and fierceness), part permission for various sub-personalities of the breather to express their energies and desires, part mediation between those parts, and part skilled technique with the focused energy release work. Gilligan (1997) teaches in *Self-Relations* that “a negative experience returns until human presence is brought to touch it with love and acceptance and to integrate it” (p. 21).

Where the Holes Go Through

I have typed my way through these thoughts,

punching the holes in those two computer cards I mentioned metaphorically at the beginning, and held *Self-Relations* and *Holotropic Breathwork* up to the light to see where the holes go through and where they overlap a bit and are obscured. Where can I not quite see light coming through? There seem to be some slightly varying ways of working with archetypes between the two systems. There may also be slight differences, perhaps because of the difference between an office setting and a breathwork workshop setting, in defining the role of the Inner Healer versus the role of the facilitator or therapist. The specific suggestions in *Self-Relations* for how to look at various archetypal energies as resources (sponsorship of the Soul), may be very useful in the integration phase of a Holotropic Breathwork experience. Likewise there is much in *Self-Relations* that would contribute to bringing awareness and integration to a COEX, especially after Holotropic Breathwork brought deep somatic and emotional experiential knowledge (the connection between biographical, birth and transpersonal material) to the forefront.

The holes do go all the way through at Stephen Gilligan’s important concept points of sponsorship, the neglected self, “both/and,” “not too loose, not too tight,” the proper naming of the qualities of sponsorship: tenderness, fierceness, mischievousness, the need for ritual in holotropic work, and “the field.” I see the holes go all the way through both systems also at Grof’s concept points of the COEX, and Sparks’ “doing/not doing.” *Self-Relations* terms will make it easier to communicate about these therapeutic concepts in the course of our work and training in Holotropic Breathwork and contribute a new degree of articulation to the elements of effective work in holotropic states of consciousness.

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Doorways to Creativity: Art Therapy from the Center

Abbe Miller, M.S., A.T.R.-L.P.C., practices transformational art psychotherapy with 22 years experience. She has a private practice in South Glastonbury, Connecticut, and is an Adjunct Professor of Art Therapy at Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, CT. Abbe has led multiple workshops teaching Self-Relations, sponsoring the emergence of authentic creative voice as well as exploration of the divine feminine.

DOORWAYS TO CREATIVITY: ART THERAPY FROM THE CENTER

Into the Darkness

*Today, near eventime
I did lead the girl who has no seeing
a little way into the forest
where it was darkness,
and shadows were . . .*

*I led her toward a shadow
that was coming our way.
It did touch her cheek with its
velvety fingers.
And now, she too
does have likings for shadows. And
her fear that was,
is gone*

— Opal Whiteley¹

Following the Creative Path into the Darkness

The essence of creativity is its capacity to transform both the tangible and intangible truths in each moment. At times of change and transformation, there is often a

sense of being pulled into the darkness. The shadows evoke fears of the unknown, and the rhythm of living is slowed or even stalled. Moving through this darkness by utilizing the process of image-making is explored in this chapter. Readers can enter this process as both as witness and journeyer, blending principles of Self-Relations psychotherapy (Gilligan, 1997) with mindfully centered art therapy. Doorways of hope and healing flow out of the well of creativity that is entered during image making. The principles and practices of Self-Relations psychotherapy sponsor movement through these doorways.

The gift of art therapy is that the containing space is often the *image itself*, more fully expressing emotional truth than initially possible with words. Images whether sensed, visioned, and/or created in tangible form then guide each unique journey. This is often experienced as *intuitive process*. In this chapter, the intuitive knowings between therapist, client, and imagery will be addressed. In addition, art therapists will be offered a widened perception of their work by integrating Self-Relations practices, while SR clinicians will be offered a widened perspective by integrating imagery in their work.

¹ From the audiotape, *The Creative Fire*, by Clarissa Pinkola Estes. Sounds True Audio Collections

Centering for Art Therapists, Self-Relations Clinicians, and Clients

Art therapists traditionally enter into relationship with clients from a myriad of psychological frameworks. This chapter will explore entering into the therapeutic relationship guided by the attentions and intentions of Self-Relations psychotherapy (Gilligan, 1997). This model provides the framework for a mind-body-spirit conversation with and through art. A central Self-Relations theme that is, as yet, not stressed in traditional art therapy training is the concept of *centering*. Art therapists will be encouraged to develop and utilize practices of self-centering throughout the work, with a widened attention to Self-Relations concepts.

Self-Relations offers a blend of aesthetic practices that weave beautifully into creative work. Clinicians less familiar with, but curious about integrating some of these art therapy techniques into their work will be given suggestions for blending non-verbal process with verbal therapy. An essential component to this is the core Self-Relations concept of *centering*. Developing practices to facilitate centering *before* suggesting any art therapy technique is key. Attending to the process of continually *returning to the center* of the belly-mind when witnessing imagery will support the power of transformation through creative process. This sense of imbalance, of feeling off-center, can be perceived then as another doorway, guiding us to open to creativity and transformation.

Clients, however, are encouraged to engage in creative process before they have developed skillful means to center themselves. In similar fashion to trancework, simply making art can lead to connection with the center or source. Often a client's image of their center will facilitate their first felt connection to this concept. Connection to this source leads to authentically expressive images that are supported by attention to multiple truths, multiple realities, non-linear seeing, and felt/aesthetic awareness. In this way, the "... darkness and shadows" of Opal Whiteley's exquisite poem, can be transformed into "... velvety fingers ... and likings."

The Relationship between Therapist, Client and Image

A wisdom of learning within the context of Self-Relations and applied in the use of the art therapy techniques in this chapter is the clear blessing for the essence of each therapist to be present with authentic voice. This often occurs through an unfolding of self; that is, it continues over time, as in a journey. Each therapist in turn encourages this awakening journey of authenticity of our clients' selves by not viewing imagery from any fixed perspective and by being open to the essence of source-directed pathways back into life. As no two pieces of art are exactly alike, each journey is unique, though many themes and images are universal across cultures and through generations. The colors, hues, and themes of the work may resonate and inform us of similarities. We are asked to attend to this balance and blending of the unique with the transcendent in the work. The addition of the created image/art work in art therapy offers aesthetic containment, imaginative witnessing, and blending of body, mind and soul that is often impossible to attain in purely verbal conversation. The skillful painting in Figure 1 offers a glimpse of this blending. Personal imagery that is directly related to trauma experience is painted next to and framed with universal symbolism (dolphins and butterflies) that this client found comforting, long before she was consciously aware of their rich archetypal meanings.

Creative Process in Therapy

The organic and alive process of the creative experience is unlike the traditional verbal conversation of psychotherapy. Creating imagery and art offer the possibility for exploration through the experience of shifting one's attention from left-brain linear sequencing, to right-brain non-linear imaging; from concrete to metaphoric conceptualizing; and from conscious awareness to a reaching down to touch the unseen. The relationship to self is explored within the container of the image. When there is a felt sense of safety at this level of communication, interpersonal conversation *extends* into deeper psychic layers. This supports a reconnection outside of oneself and often a felt sense of being seen.



Figure 1

Multiple witnessing in non-verbal conversation between artist (client) and observer (therapist) *widens* the field. As the creator relaxes into exploration of the imagery, he or she can also physically soften, held safely by the *expanded* container of the imagery and the therapist's witnessing. A centered art therapy relationship then supports multiple truths in conversation that can come full circle, into verbal dialogue. If, as in *Self-Relations*, there is "proper naming" (Gilligan, 1997), a completed, *felt* sense of transformation occurs. Deeply witnessing imagery seems to evoke words that spring directly from the core. This is the level of verbal processing that can enrich connection in practicing art therapy from the center.

Throughout this chapter, the words "art" and "image" will be used interchangeably. It is my belief that all humans are capable of creating images from a very

young age. Adults especially may feel less self-conscious when they are encouraged to create images rather than art. My hope is that we can extend creativity into our psychotherapy culture further, by sponsoring the innate creative voice of each client to speak. We are all artists with infinite possibilities to create surrounding us. As Aviva Gold, art medicine woman, shares in *Painting from the Source* (1998): "In Bali, the same word means both "human" and "artist," and making art is as much a part of everyday life as planting rice" (p. 11).

Fluidity of Attention

The experience of being centered is more similar to floating in water than standing on frozen ice. *Self-Relations* recognizes the importance of relating with fluid movement. 'Soft' eyes (relaxed muscles), deep breathing,

and openness to thoughts and feelings allow both therapist and client to flow with the process. While Gilligan (1997) offers three frameworks of attention ("beingness," "relatedness," and "belongingness"), I have found that using the parallel terms of "cognitive-emotional," "physical," and "spiritual" to guide art techniques quite helpful. A fluidity of attention is necessary to recognize the need for exploration in all three frameworks and the techniques offered within each one. Each framework will be explored more fully later under the heading "Guides for Intention and Attention on the Journey."

Compassion

It is from a compassionately centered place that Self-Relations asks the therapist to extend into relationship with his or her client, and it is a focal point of engaging in the art process with the client as well. Often, this will be experienced as a tender, non-sentimental or romantic, feeling of love that is tangibly felt as a softening in relation to the other. This path to intuitive knowings then offers the therapist access to multiple fields of information, and the techniques offered will carry the essence of open-heartedness. Without compassion, any technique will be experienced in isolation, as a deadened, simple directive. As in any aesthetic practice, the experience of doing informs us and brings new light and breath to understandings, so it is essential to try these techniques before asking clients to create with them.

Art Therapy is a relatively young discipline that requires practitioners to integrate a model of psychotherapy with creative process and product. While Self-Relations applied to Art Therapy offers a framework that is similar to Transpersonal Art Therapy (McNiff [1992], Moon [1997], and Allen [1995]), it differs with a focus on parallel process in the moment, between therapist and client. This is attended to with a *unique, simultaneous* blend of solid grounding and profoundly expansive experiential intentions and techniques that Gilligan has developed. Working in hospital and independent private practice settings for the past 20 years with primarily trauma-historied clients, I have always blended the teachings of multiple theoretical frameworks with art and creative process. In developing techniques to guide art therapy process from the center, I continue to look

to Self-Relations as a model of relational communication with attention to multiple fields (cognitive, somatic, and energetic). Art/image based therapy encourages direct experiencing of those fields within the process, by listening to the voices of the imagery, and by speaking directly to the images produced.

Personal and Universal

The flow of process and product, held within the container of a Self-Relations psychotherapy framework, is curious about the personal journey and the universal callings of each being. Centered attention asks for fluidity in sensing multi-layered truths. In the personal, the content of the image may be unique to one's personal history/story, often allowing one to feel more authentically in touch with a sense of self. Simultaneously, the imagery may transcend the personal truth/history and connect to universal/archetypal knowings. In this transcendent experience of creating and witnessing an image that evokes connection to the universal, previously isolated sufferings are transformed within the temenos of connection to something larger than oneself. The gift of the *image itself* is that it is more fully capable of expressing emotional truth through simultaneous multi-dimensional communication: the "both/and" of personal and universal experience are held in awareness at the same time, rather than in the more linear processing of verbal expression.

River of Life/Tree of Life:

Viewing Parts within the Whole

Gilligan offers a poetic naming of energetic fields by speaking about the "River of Life" (1997). Three streams feed into the "River of Life," each stream offering information from perspectives of the cognitive, somatic, and field-based understandings of experience. For art therapists, the image of the tree is an early teaching tool to convey the concept of *gestalt*. This concept requires exploration of individual qualities of the parts, and a viewing of the essence of the whole image as greater than the sum of its parts. A centering guided visualization is offered to the client to engage the belly-mind in the creative process more fully:

Breathe deeply . . . once, then again . . . now slowing . . . drifting into a softening of breath and vision . . . Visualize three streams, flowing into a beautiful river . . . glistening with life . . . flowing waters that move in, through, around any obstacle . . . one stream, rich with blues, holds the essence of cognitions . . . understandings . . . another stream in shades of reds, pulsates with the rhythms of somatic . . . body knowings . . . and the third stream, luminescent with shades of yellow . . . glows with the wisdoms of the universe . . . the field . . . the force. Now picture a giant tree, standing by the edge of the river . . . Each part, the roots, the trunk and the branches, have unique purpose towards maintaining the life of the tree . . . Without all three, the tree's existence would be greatly compromised . . . and perhaps, extinguished. The roots . . . essential for a sense of groundedness, give firm foundation to rest in when the inevitable chaos as changing winds visit one's being . . . cognitive/emotional understandings live in these roots . . . multiple meanings, plans, social understandings, and intellectual formulations . . . rooted in this way of knowing . . . nutrients of the environment will affect its growth. The trunk . . . connecting to the flow of life through archetypal patterns . . . feelings and experiential felt knowings . . . the center of our intuitive knowings and creative well . . . container of the source . . . Energies flow upwards and blend with nourishment from the roots . . . the trunk grows strong . . . The branches sway in a gentle breeze . . . they are moving, yet return to center . . . a connectedness to Self . . . within . . . and outside . . . transcendent . . . All life-force energies, greater than ourselves, directing us to the web of life . . . where there is a place for each one of us — an infinite field of belonging.

Not Knowing What the Product Means

There can be great beauty and great suffering in the

discovery and awakening to all aspects of this "tree of life." Meanings are created and transformed by gracefully weaving the wisdoms of all three streams while also noticing forms that are greater than their parts. True to the Buddhist influences in Self-Relations theory, when practicing art therapy from a centered place, it is important for the therapist to witness from 'beginner's mind' of not knowing. The art product created is a very personal, tangible container for thoughts, images, and emotions that are often in the process of awakening. Dalley, Rifkind, and Terry (1993) write:

Interpretations can be misinterpretations which tend to stay on the surface and do not have any resonance or significance for the person concerned. . . . remaining in a state of 'not knowing' is crucial in the interaction between therapist and client to allow the understandings and symbolism of images and material to emerge in their own time . . . 'live in the question' and not close down possibilities of meaning . . . (p. 114)

I encourage great reverence when verbally processing (rather than interpreting) artwork. Engaging in creative process involves a certain degree of chaos, uncertainty, and vulnerability. To join in the relational field with the client in this process, a therapist needs to be open to sensing within oneself areas of confusion, vulnerability, chaos and agitation. As in Self-Relations, this giving of "first attention" to oneself allows a return to center for the therapist, leading to fuller extension from the rootedness of self. The *image* is an extension of the Self of the client as well.

Directives for the Therapist

Therapists can give permission to themselves and their clients to trust the capacity for transformation of beliefs, of ideas, and of self, in and through creative process. Therapists can ask parts of the picture to animate and speak directly, listening to the voices along with the client, as in Jung's process of "Active Imagination." Clients can be encouraged to embrace even the most hideous forms/shapes/colors as *neglected selves* rather

than alienated others. Therapists and clients can notice intuitive connections in being drawn to certain forms, colors, imagery. Asking the client to write about the art, or create a poem that speaks to it, for it, with it can integrate verbal with non-verbal languaging. The viewing and processing of the image is a part of the journey that can be fresh and new with each gift of a relational space in which to momentarily hold these energetic fields of life.

Transformational imagery need not be complex, or void of humor. A client was making a collage that represented protective imagery for her frightened "neglected self," which felt very childlike. Among the images she chose were a black panther, a lion, and a group of wonderful Marrachi singers! We both broke out into Mexican song and concluded that they were indeed, well placed. Often, it is a simple directive and resulting image that evokes a powerful response:

A 14-year-old client was adopted at a very young age (6 weeks). Nonetheless, this core experience of abandonment and separation has surfaced in her daily life. She had just completed painting with watercolors, two pictures that evoked a feeling of being in-utero (one was watery shades of blue, the other shades of oranges, yellows and reds which she said felt like warmth to her). We were discussing the transition from being in-utero, to actually being born. I gave her some crayola white clay (it's very soft and smooth and looks like marshmallow fluff) to sculpt with (see Figure 2). Out of this emerged a simple heart shape. As she looked at it, she stated that it was cracked, and with a tool, drew in the indentation of a broken line down the middle. The word that was evoked was "separation" and she became tearful as she connected to this painful experience.

In our next session, as she was holding the heart, deciding what would be the next step, we spoke of the heartbreak of her separation at birth from her biological

mother. At that moment, the simple heart in her hands broke in two, along the crack line that she had drawn the previous session. The blending of the emotion, the sculpture, and the tangible experience in bearing witness to her own heartbreak all contributed to creating a moment of profound compassion. My heart was certainly open to her 'shock' at seeing her "heart break," and she was moved to tears in recognizing the heartache of her infant (neglected) self during separation. At the time of writing this chapter, she is still journeying through some of the darkness and pain. Each session, I ask her if she intuitively knows what she is to do with the broken heart . . . mend it, transform it, paint it, break it. . . . we are still waiting to hear.

Symptoms and Sponsorship

A Zen Master said to a monk, "You must see the universe in your cup." The monk looked into his cup, but he didn't see the universe there, so he threw the cup away. The Zen Master said, "Oh, poor cup." We think the cup is too small to hold the universe. Intellectually, we can't see how it could fit. But, wherever we go, the whole universe always appears — in a cup, in a window, in a smile, in a word. — Dainin Katagiri²

In a painting, in a drawing, in a sculpture, in a collage. Art therapy from the center witnesses by seeing through the eyes of the heart, the mind of the soul, and the beliefs of the spirit. As in the practice of Self-Relations psychotherapy, there is a felt/aesthetic awareness that emerges from a belief in not knowing, a listening with the belly-mind, and a visioning with the periphery. After the development of skills for centering, art therapists who will incorporate Self-Relations as their framework look to these six basic premises as further guides for sponsorship:

- Each person is born with an indestructible "tender soft spot" at the Core of his or her being.

² Excerpt from *Body, Mind & Spirit* magazine.



Figure 2

- Life moves through you, except when it doesn't.
- Life is wonderful and sometimes it hurts like hell.
- There are two of you at any given moment ("you" are a relationship).
- An intelligence greater than you exists in the world.
- Your way/path is unique.

Symptoms

In Art Therapy, two basic premises might be that *creating is natural to our species* and that "... every human being is endowed with a creative spirit" (Viktor Lowenfeld; in Rubin, 1987). Human presence bearing witness to creative process and to the imagery produced, especially during times of darkness, offers additional possibilities for *understanding and experiencing symptoms* and for *sponsoring*

in relationship. Symptoms are often creative ways of getting a message across, deciphered after viewing them through the safe distancing of artwork. The sponsoring field widens as the artist sponsors the image into birth, while the therapist sponsors the client/artist by witnessing with compassionate presence.

Two core ideas from Self-Relations that address the healing aspects of working with symptoms are: 1) that problems and symptoms are simultaneously signals of awakening to a person's unique self and a turning away from those messages, and 2) that sponsorship by mature human presence will allow human value to touch and transform experience. Because symptoms are viewed as messengers, we want to encourage curiosity rather than trying to get rid of them. In an art therapy session, it is common to *ask the client to draw/create the "symptom"* so

that the dynamics of the relationship between the self and the symptom can be explored non-verbally. The fear/disgust/hatred of many symptoms can be held in the relational space of the image in a way that encourages creative exploration rather than judgment. A young (12-year-old) anorexic client externalized and visualized her anorexia as a green-faced witch (see Figure 3abc).³ After creating Figure 3a, she was able to enter into less judgmental (more centered) conversations about anger, control and power. As her fear of the witch's power lessened, her openness to non-polarized conceptualizing increased. She was able to feel and express compassion for the witch without allowing its beliefs to rule her life.

Sponsorship

Unique to using imagery in therapy is the potential for sponsorship by the image itself. In Self-Relations, "sponsorship" is a core relational concept between therapist and client. Gilligan shares that the therapist pledges to the client to "awaken the goodness and gifts of the self, awaken awareness of the goodness and gifts of the world, and to develop/model/introduce practices, traditions, methods, and communities that bridge the two — the self in world and world in self."⁴ As mirrors of the self, images uniquely sponsor by expressing hidden multiple meanings to their creators in tangible form. They may be cathartic vehicles for expression, prescient messengers of awakenings, validators of communication, images of communion. By sharing one's art with another, there is opportunity for sponsorship in bearing witness to the core of a being. The language of imagery is closer to the language of the self at its deepest level. James Hillman writes, "the arts engage the soul and its conflicts, directly through the language of the soul."

Creating proper conditions where the frozen energies of unsponsored breaks in relationship can be seen and touched is skillful work. This concept is often labeled as "safety," and may again, carry multiple meanings in relationship. In Self-Relations, many of the conditions sought for clients and therapists to drop judgment, connect in body-mind, and allow life-force energies to flow through them are strikingly similar to the techniques that artists learn (or intuitively know) before attempting to create. Images bubble up from one's core, and creative process flourishes when the tension of opposites are held without the need to immediately understand or resolve them.

The Image

In engaging in non-verbal art therapy, the imagery itself offers some safety in distancing for the client. Previously rejected or dangerous images can be invited into the landscape of canvas, offering them form with boundaries. If proper conditions are attended to, energies that were previously blocked will begin to flow out in imagery, color, sound, movement. Many of my clients were told as children not to *talk about what had happened*, but none of them had been directed *not to draw about what had happened*. The 'proper condition' of non-verbal communicating in art therapy supports an expansion in the perception of safety.

Media

In doing Self-Relations therapy work, the containing spaces are held in relationship between therapist/client, client/self, and therapist/self. In art therapy, creative process is sponsored by having a variety of art supplies available (including a painter's drop cloth to protect your office floor!) to facilitate the making of the containing space, as seen in the experience of making a

³ The conversation among the figures reads: **b) far left** (therapist): "This week it seems that Jess has been able to really hear her OWN voice! That's great. I knew she could do it if she tried her best!!" **middle** (Jess/client): "I just hope I can keep this up! I'll try. I'm going to learn how to hear my own voice and trust it!" **far right** (witch/anorexia): "Oh boy! This hasn't been a good week. She hasn't listened to a word I said! Well, what if she doesn't trust her own voice — I'll get louder" **c) left** (Jess/client): "When you're gone, this is what I'll miss about you: You made me stronger when I was trying to get rid of you!" **right** (witch/anorexia): "When I leave you I will miss talking to you."

⁴ From *The Courage to Love* (1997) and paraphrased in correspondence on Self-Relations Discussion List (1998, January 8).

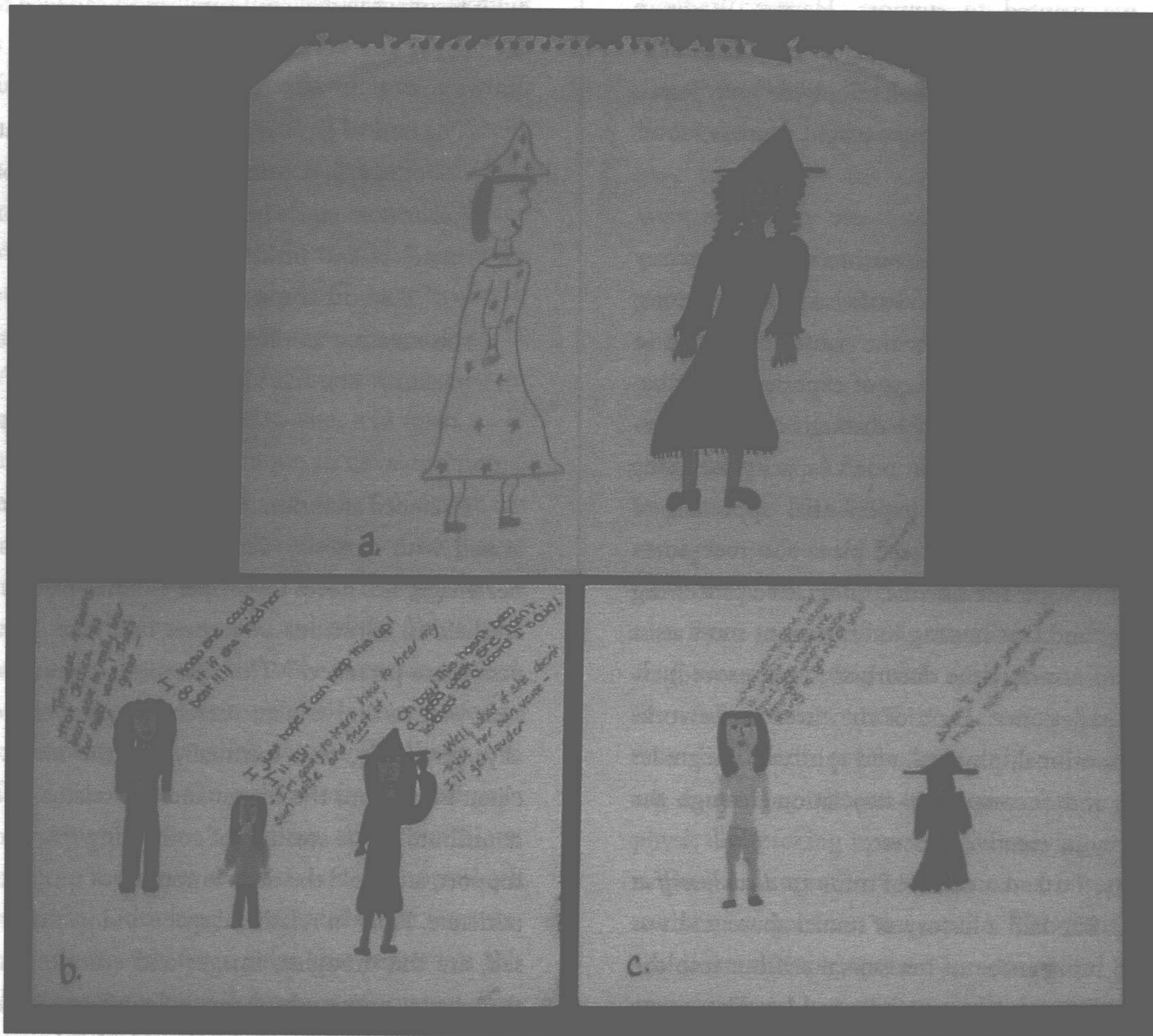


Figure 3

“Safety Box” (see Appendix B). Choosing colors, form, and content allows the client to viscerally and tangibly connect with the concept of safety.

Clients usually need some direct verbal acknowledgment that their art will not be judged, criticized, laughed at, or thrown away. Most carry a very strong internal “self-critic” voice that will be discouraging any attempt at graphic representation. Gentle directives to continue despite these often intense warnings are helpful.

Familiarity with using various art media is also important, given that different media evoke differing emotional reactions. I encourage direct exploration of these reactions by firsthand experimenting with different media. How does it feel to have the watercolors flow into one another in a way that certainly wasn’t planned? What are the different felt sensations when using clay,

pencil, and/or paints? Knowing the different properties of various art media will help to develop skillful practice in sponsorship as an art therapist. Trusting an intuitive voice that one media over another is being called for is a quality of practicing art therapy from the center.

At times, the client will know exactly the media required. Other times, the therapist will be asked to choose. Often, encouraging the use of a certain medium will greatly facilitate a visceral connection to the content and form. I intuitively chose Cray-pas (oil based pastels) for Lourdes to work with (see Physical Frame section). They offer a wonderful blend of vibrant color, can show emotional intensity in stroke quality, and have a smooth, soothing feel when they are blended. Later on, when reviewing the session, I realized that the smooth quality of the cray-pas mirrored the quality of the stomach lining

cells that we wanted to support. Harriet Wadeson (1980), a master art therapist, unknowingly uses Self-Relations vernacular, when she calls wide soft pastels "my 'happy medium' – neither too tight nor too loose" (p. 18).

Guides for Intention and Attention on the Journey

Stephen Gilligan, the midwife of Self-Relations, speaks often in his work about the nature of 'breaks in relationship.' The isolating effects of experience that become frozen in meaning (often through traumatic experiences) can lead to blocks in one's capacity for living fully IN the moment. The experiential approach of doing art therapy from a centered place also recognizes that trauma interrupts the normal, integrative processing of experience, and that healing interventions must assist the client to re-associate the disturbed (unsponsored) aspects of the experience. Each of the three frameworks (cognitive–emotional, physical, and spiritual) are guides for attention and encourage re-association through the use of imagery in creative process.

Recently, I asked a client of mine to *draw herself as a sexual being*. She had a history of sexual abuse and was beginning to bring more of her sexual self out into the world. In her drawing, she created a goddess-like woman, dancing. Her breasts, however, were rigid and outlined in red. In verbal processing, she disclosed without emotion, that at age 18, she had been encouraged by her parents to have a breast reduction (although her breasts were not medically disabling nor aesthetically oversized). Only as she looked at her drawn image did she connect with the felt sensations of betrayal, sadness, and loss. By creating this drawing, she tearfully began the process of re-associating a part of her body that carried deep emotional and physical scarring.

Compassionate Presence

The strategies and techniques in this chapter are intended to assist both client and therapist in developing skillful practices through which they can compassionately open in relationship (see Appendix A and B). Attention is given to interpersonal awareness, intrapersonal awakening and expanded access to internal resources as reflected in imagery. Ultimately, a blending of creativity

with resonant verbal communication can lead to a deeper sense of transformation.

The end of art is not art, but communication, or better still, communion, breaking out of the solitariness and silence of one dimension of ourselves and making contact with the "other." That other may be interpsychic: one person meeting another; or it may even be transpersonal: one self touching the universe.

— Peter London (1989, p. 74)

Balanced attention to both *process and product* is integrated with curiosity, respect for the client and his or her image, and needs for proper conditions/safety. These are held in conscious awareness in a state called "compassionate presence." The therapist's commitment is to bear witness and remain present (cognitively, emotionally, physically, and spiritually) to the client and the client's art. Both the image and the relational space can contribute to the creation of containing space to receive, support, and hold the deep emotions of unsponsored experience. Held in relational space and in the artwork itself, are the thoughts, images and emotions of trauma that have previously been split-off and dissociated. Therapists are encouraged to breathe life into and intuitively integrate techniques so that there is immersion into the flow.

Cognitive–Emotional Frame

The Self-Relations principle of "Beingness" encourages a continuous and repeated process of noticing when you and/or your client have left center (being grounded, connected). This principle focuses on a *felt* awareness of knowing, rather than a primarily cognitive communication between self and other. Simply, we are asked to *return attention to center*. In witnessing the process of image making, notice felt sensations in your body as cues to the dropping of attention from cognitive control ("I can't draw a straight line!") to a more centered knowing ("whatever shape, color, line, form that emerges is fine"). Art therapy centered on *cognitive–emotional* release directs attention to awareness in areas of *internal communication, grounding practices, development of*

compassion for self, exploration of balance, and the concept of symptoms as messengers. Suggested art media focus on the use of simpler 2-dimensional media such as drawing, painting, collage, and poetry writing. These more familiar media encourage risk-taking with imagery, while balancing with a higher level of conscious control. Collage work (using magazine pictures, not words) is generally less threatening than asking someone to draw freehand. Emotions will be expressed through imagery, as in dreams. An expanded language for expressing emotions is thus encouraged through color, line, and form.

A simple art therapy technique to develop internal cognitive-emotional awareness of the Self-Relations concept of multiple selves ("There are two of you at any given moment . . . "you" are a relationship") can be enlightening for children, teens, and adults (see Figure 4). Oil pastels and paper are the only materials needed. The task can be modified or expanded-processed for an entire session or used as a quick centering technique in the middle of the night. On a sheet of paper, ask your client to draw two circles, one above the other. Next, have them close their eyes and focus on the normal self in the head area . . . thinking about intellectual formulations, sense of self. Ask for a color that represents this part of self to come to mind, letting go of any pre-conceived meanings attached to colors. Open eyes, and let the oil pastels speak, let the hand choose the color. Fill in the top circle with this color. Now, close eyes again, this time focusing on the somatic-self, dropping attention to the belly-mind.

Most often the place where neglected selves are felt, the experiential self chooses a color as well. Opening eyes, repeat the process of letting the colors speak, choose a color for the neglected self and color in the lower circle. Now, join the circles by drawing 2 parallel lines (like a cylinder). The last step is to connect the normal self color with the neglected self-color by blending the cray-pas. You may use your fingers or a tissue for this step. You can expand into this by noticing the age of the neglected self, and explore this relationship verbally. What often emerges is a tangible image of the relational self: two distinct colors that can maintain their identities while also blending in relation to each other.

Physical Frame

In both hypnotic and creative therapies, transformations often occur during process. Emerging out of deep psychic structure are words, images, and feelings that were previously unaccessed. This unfreezing often becomes activated as the body-mind is allowed equal voice with the conscious/cognitive mind. This is experienced in art therapy when respect is given to the image produced, as if it, too, were an embodied part of the soul. It represents the voice of the body-mind. The creative forces of alchemy always seem to emanate from and through that belly-mind rather than from purely cognitive-emotional responding. Thus engaging the body more fully brings forward a fuller sense of self.

Even so, both fields must be working in relationship, communicating with each other. This will allow for a fuller extension of those creative-healing forces to flow through the psyche and out into the world. Engaging in making images calls upon the creator to both physically (picking up a crayon, moving arms to create strokes) and cognitively (discernment, observation) relate to the messages from the psyche. The frame of the *physical* in art therapy opens more doorways. The focus of attention is on re-associating and deepening communications with the physical knowings of the self. In Self-Relations, this parallels with the principle of "relatedness." Somatic understandings (what is known and felt in the body) are blended with cognitive meanings, utilizing skills of compassionate presence. The focus of intention is on *sponsoring differences*. The body may be longing to delve into play with clay, while the mind may be saying, "Oh, no . . . that's too messy!" An experience that attends to both desires might evolve in the work of art therapy. Knowledge of different clay medium would facilitate a "middle path" solution of offering polymer clays or crayola-brand "model magic." Both these clays are non-sticky and do not produce messy residue on the hands, while they offer the tactile and physical sensations of resistive manipulations. Art therapy skills are developed to be able to hold the tensions of opposites with a belief in the both/and of multiple truths. The physical skills of softening the body and breathing deeply are encouraged.

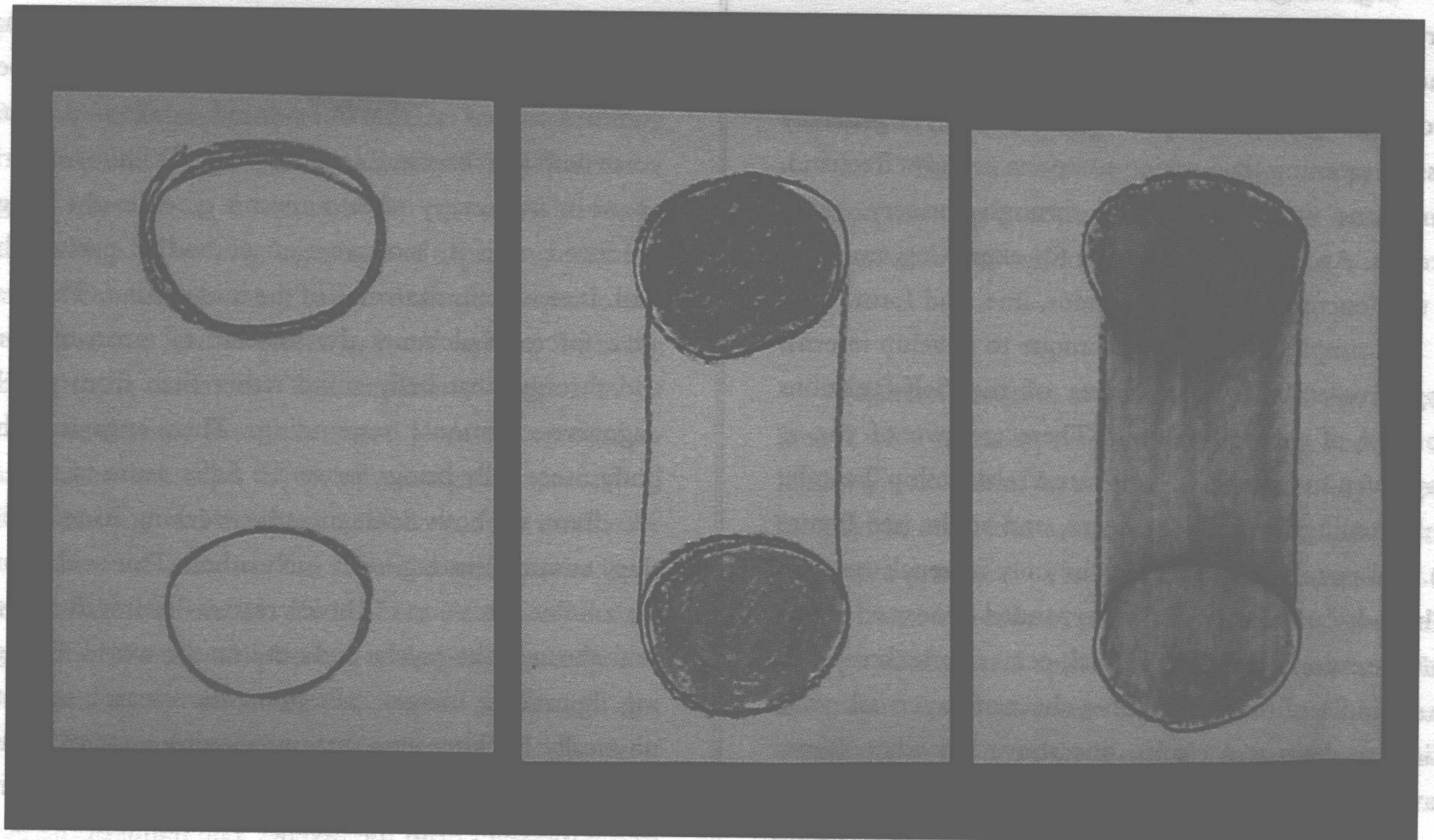


Figure 4

Physical frame art therapy techniques are useful in sponsoring learnings about *external communication, images/metaphors for safety, boundaries, body memories, and somatic knowings* (often pathologized as negative symptoms). Suggestions for art techniques focus on the utilization of the more spatial medium of 3-dimensional materials such as: sculpture (clay, found objects, wood, stone), box-making, stimulation of tactile awareness through music and olfactory explorations as an effort is made to more fully engage the entire physical self. The depth of 3-dimensional work activates more varied explorations than flatter, 2-dimensional work.

In seeking to develop skills of compassionate presence (bearing witness with open heart) the blending of imagery material *with* attention to the body, widens possibilities for acceptance and curiosity. Mary Rockwood Lane (Samuels & Lane, 1998) writes in *Creative Healing*,

Painting is physical for me — I embody my pain as I paint it. For the first time, I was experiencing my pain in a strange and new way. . . . I painted my emotions. I painted my body. I could feel that I was the creator of myself. I backed away, left the studio, and went home. When I returned, I saw that the image had captured and contained a moment that was now past. Then I had an incredible insight. The painting remained an object that contained an image created in genuine and immediately felt expression, and I now had moved past it. I realized that there was movement and I was witnessing my own transformation. (pp. 48–49)

In the tangible art form, emotions which are not

yet acceptable (sponsored) are given a place to be not only felt, but also literally seen and touched. The space created for letting go of judgments, rejection, and control is the canvas, the paper, the clay. The therapist's attentiveness to offering permission for self-expression without words can quiet the critic's admonishments, commonly heard as "this is silly, childish . . . those colors and lines don't mean anything!"

Spontaneously emerging in art is often one's unique voice of soul. These images speak very differently than the often-rehearsed "survival-driven" linear verbalizations of the problem. Art is created, seen and experienced spatially with physicality. Working with Lourdes, the 14-year-old mentioned earlier in this chapter, offers a further glimpse into the blending of Self-Relations, Ericksonian hypnosis, and intuitive imagery in art therapy as attention is focused on the *physical frame* of awakenings (Miller, 1999).

Lourdes was referred by her pediatric GI specialist for her high stress level and long-term history of stomach pain/spasming to the point of incapacitation. She was on a moderate regimen of medications, some prophylactic and others intended to directly alleviate pain symptoms when they would occur. Lourdes and her mom presented at our initial session with some trepidation, conveying that they had seen two previous therapists, with no resulting symptom relief, nor had she been shown any techniques for pain management or stress reduction. I liked them both right away, and there was an immediate comfort level appreciated as we entered my office from the waiting room. After the first session formalities, I met with Lourdes alone, and began by teaching her a self-hypnotic technique called "Three Point Attention." This is a favorite at Self-Relations workshops and supervisions, which SR therapist Chuck Holton describes as having a "history in aikido as a technique for defending from multiple-attackers; hypnotic and relaxing, but maintains an alert, resilient awareness" (private correspondence, 1999).

Lourdes responded beautifully to this technique and softened her awareness of herself and her surroundings quite visibly. While in the lighter trance state of three point attention, I spoke to Lourdes about my understanding of pain symptoms . . . of symptoms as messengers, carrying deep multiple meanings . . . not to be killed off or gotten rid of. Conversely, they are shown grati-

tude for being messengers of life's loving attempt to awaken each individual to their own unique beauty and place in the world, that the heart of the therapy is not focused on eliminating symptoms, but finding ways to open to their metaphoric knowings. To be able to do this, one must suspend fundamentalist cognitive judgments (e.g., "all pain is bad") and be able to listen in curiosity for intention and direction from the psyche. This involves psychic and physical softening and a level of relaxation attained from trance states and often in doing art. Lourdes seemed to intuitively take in all this information and be curious about how this might help her.

Once she had settled into a slightly deeper trance state (and listening to all of that information certainly quickened that process!), she chose to close her eyes. Her body visibly relaxed. I asked her if she had any healing colors that felt good to her. She responded that blues and purples felt soothing to her. I then asked her, in her mind's eye, to bring those colors to any areas of her body where she might typically feel discomfort or pain. I next had her visualize these colors in the form of light energy, surrounding a symbol for pain. As she was able to do this, I asked her to see the pain symbol shrinking as the healing colors/light filled the areas of discomfort.

A guided imagery then evolved in which she explored the interiority of her physical being. She viewed each of her stomach lining cells, seeing them in spasm and out of spasm. A story (as in an Ericksonian story evolution) emerged of a girl befriending a fire-breathing dragon, with an imaginary guide seen as an "older, wiser self." This was not a scripted story, but one that was generated by the relational sensing of the imagery that was informing our shared consciousness in those moments. As the story reached its conclusion, I asked Lourdes to begin to be curious about the messages of the pain and to begin to develop understandings of her 'other' brain, located in the stomach area (the enteric nervous system), while trusting her body-mind's wisdom to incorporate these knowings at their own pace. Lastly, I encouraged her to soften out of locked beliefs, such as no pain = good *and* pain = bad. I asked her to allow her belly-mind to share with her cognitive mind deeper and deeper questions without seeking answers. Lourdes left this initial session saying, "I can't wait to come back!"

Coming to our second session, Lourdes was ex-

periencing severe stomach spasm. In fact, she had almost canceled her session due to the pain, but her mom encouraged her to come. She expressed a genuine desire to be at session and we went right to work. I spontaneously thanked her for helping me become more aware of her experience by bringing her symptom into session. I also congratulated her belly-mind for knowing that this could be helpful and useful. We began with my request that Lourdes use oil pastels. Oil pastels were chosen for their bold color (emotional quality) and their tactile (oily/smooth) feel. Smooth body movements are thus reinforced with oil pastel strokes on the paper. I asked her to draw her stomach in spasm ("drawing the symptom"). Lourdes easily and quickly drew a realistic image of her stomach in spasm, making an effort to convey the spasming motion. I encouraged her to draw symbols of all of the different kinds of pain she was experiencing. She easily drew in sharp pains, rhythmic pains, constrictive pains, acidic pain, and blockage pain. Each was represented by a different line form, shape and color that she chose (see Figure 5a).

When she felt finished, I gave her a new sheet of paper and asked her to draw her stomach when it felt good (no spasming). She complied easily with some new enthusiasm, and produced a smoother image of her stomach, absorbing food easily and filled with healing blue and pink colors (see Figure 5b). When this picture was completed, Lourdes expressed feeling better (less pain, more relaxed) already! The "*drawing transformation*" technique came to mind as a way to facilitate healing with experiential connection to deeper core Self, as well as a way of fostering a sense of personal agency in her healing process. Lourdes was asked to choose the order of pain relief (personal agency) and to develop further her personal symbolic languaging of the symptom. This was done through this art therapy technique.

I folded a new sheet of paper into eight equal boxes, like a cartoon strip. I had Lourdes draw a smaller version of her spasming stomach in the top left-hand box, and the calm stomach in the bottom right-hand box. I then explained to her that in each successive box, she would draw her stomach with one symbol of pain leaving the whole image of the stomach, *one-at-a-time*.

The areas left open by the absence of pain would be filled in with the healing pink and blue light. In

following these directives, Lourdes was able to choose to let go of one type of pain sensation at a time, using her symbolic language and free choice. Healing colors began to infuse the stomach image and blend with the pain symbols still remaining, as she drew from box to box. With each successive box filled in, Lourdes' art sponsored an intuitive healing and guidance to knowing a pathway.

When the "Journey of Transformation" (the name of this piece) was complete, I asked Lourdes to relax into a deeper trance state. I utilized guided imagery to reinforce the wisdom of the body-mind and stomach muscles who could understand the use of symptoms as messengers. The words that emerged through me spoke to her cells, asking each to remember its song and be able to sing together with all of the other cells, singing once again in harmony. I asked the colors to flow internally with the healing energies of their blue and purple light and thanked the images of the journey for appearing and taking form. Lourdes emerged from a deepened trance, refreshed and with markedly less stomach pain with no spasming.

At her next session, one week later, Lourdes and her mother proudly reported that she had experienced a week free of any spasming! It was the first time that she had experienced that many consecutive days of body calmness, ever. Yet, more profound than the symptom relief was the lightness in her step as she practically floated into the office. The thought that came to mind was, "Oh, she's waking up!" This transformation, seen physically by a softening into her body-self, was quite beautiful and moving. This beginning of the awakening of the Self seemed deeply connected to a step in reclaiming her body-wisdom and a new spirit of hope that seemed to glow from her eyes. Her mother, too, seemed infused with a new energy and brighter affect. Her unique symbols and forms in her art continue to guide us on the creative path of transformation and awakening.

Spiritual Frame

Help us to be always hopeful gardeners of the spirit who know that without darkness, nothing comes to birth.

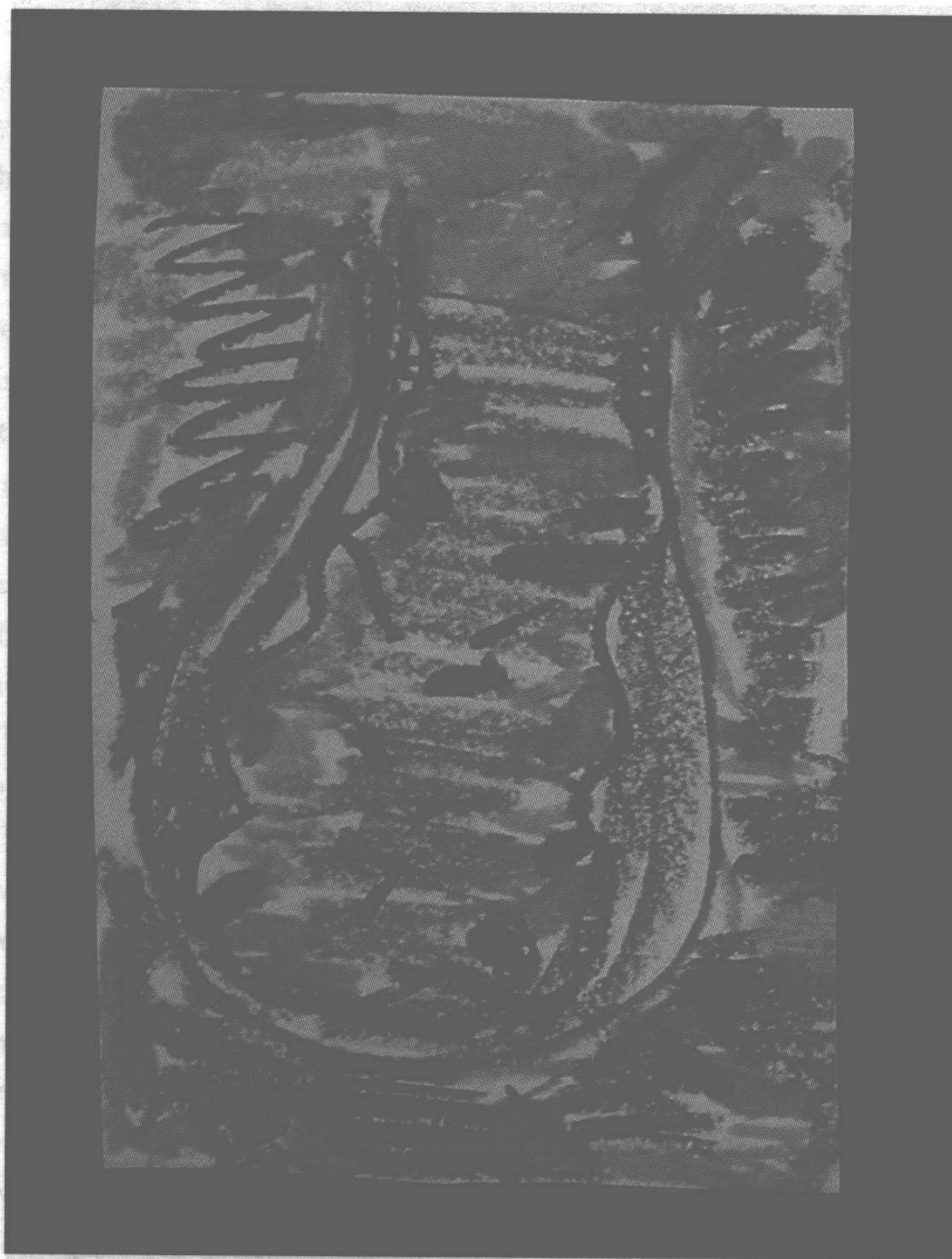


Figure 5a

As without light, nothing flowers.

— May Sarton (1971, p. 180)⁵

The act of drawing is soul work; a path to the sacred and a movement toward realization, transformation, integration, nourishment, and wholeness.

— Meinrad Craighead (1986)

The non-linear language of creativity also parallels the cyclic journey through spiritual births, deaths, and re-births. Both Self-Relations and creative process honor the various stages of organic growth that are experienced

both literally and symbolically throughout a person's life. From the quiet void to conception, to the quickening, gestation and explosion of birth, to the aliveness of being, into the decline and descent towards a death, and back to the quiet of the void . . . readying for re-birth. . . all stations along the creative path. In the *spiritual frame* metaphors and spirals from the center call to us. Marc Ian Barasch (Jensen, 2000) shares:

. . . in Tibetan Buddhism, there is an arcane tradition called the Mahamudra, which sees everything as metaphorical, but not in the sense of things standing in for other things.

⁵ "The Invocation to Kali, Part 5." Copyright ©1971 by May Sarton, from *Collected Poems 1930–1993*, by May Sarton. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.



Figure 5b

Rather, it is said, “*things symbolize themselves.*” That is, the world is not your subjective fantasy, but it’s not what we understand as “purely objective” either. (pp. 9–10)

Spiritual frame imagery connects with the Self-Relations principle of “Belongingness.” Self in connection with the universe is a consistent theme as the intention of being *reunited* with a larger field is supported by concepts of *extension* (being open to multiple meanings) and *expansion* (awareness of multiple energetic fields). Archetypal energies (the contents of Jung’s [1971] collective unconscious) and life-cycle callings are explored in experiential knowing. As in Self-Relations, the question of “*what is trying to awaken?*” leads to deeper awareness.

In image making, we have available the means to

connect with and safely express archetypal energies with infinite possibilities. The archetypes represent various personas that are universally experienced and known (on some level) to all humans, cultures and time. They are a kind of personification (only larger than life) of energies that symbolize core beliefs/ways of being, knowing and understanding the world. Archetypes are experienced as strong energies that seem to possess a person with great force and power. They can be most helpful in therapy when they are explored from a non-literal, aesthetic stance, that is, as one would write poetry rather than an academic text. As “life moves through you” (Gilligan, 1997) the archetypal energies will also flow through you, but YOU are not the archetype and the archetype is NOT YOU.

Often, I will encourage clients to consciously ex-

plore, and create in art, archetypal images on a theme that is awakening. If a woman's anger is trying to find a voice, I might ask her to create images of Kali Ma, Pele, or Oya.⁶ If a deep energy of love and compassion is beginning to break through, I might encourage a rendering of Kuan Yin, Mother Teresa, or Gaia.⁷ Conversely, I might offer a theme such as anger, and archetypal images of fire will appear in the art. A metaphoric viewing of the content is essential to holding the container of safety. Often the archetypal energies are so powerful that there is a sense of fear that accompanies their creation in imagery and literal interpretation. Painting fire does not mean that someone is going to literally set his or her house on fire! The internal communication from the psyche may be that there is a fire, a passion, needing attention. Passion is the archetypal force that will find its way into consciousness through images if given the opportunity. When these energies are sponsored (given form, named, seen) the initial fear can be released into alchemy and authentic presence.

Spiritual frame art techniques focus on an *integration of internal and external communications to explore the meaning of life, the concept of suffering, natural life cycles and the idea of self-in-connection to the universe*. Art techniques utilize all media and include observation technique. Observation encourages a period of reflection so that one responds rather than reacts. Archetypal symbolism and trauma-based art might be observed, as if visiting a museum. Personal pathways are created and journeyed, and the creation of personal mandalas offers a deepening into centering process. An emphasis on the use of mixed media is again encouraged to extend and expand, pushing boundaries, creating new paradigms.

Engaging in art therapy from a centered place is a spontaneous process that encourages listening to the conversation that flows from the field, held in the silent spaces. This is the relational space both within (internal) and in connection to "the other" (external). A wonderful experience with a client in her first art therapy session will hopefully animate this process for you.

Lori (not her real name), a 48-year-old woman, sought out art therapy to more fully connect with her "real self" (client's quote). She had been in more traditional verbal therapy before, and had felt positive about much of the work. At this point however, she felt drawn to imagery rather than words. She expressed a sense of feeling differently on the inside than she was presenting to the world. This relational struggle of incongruence touched me very deeply, as Lori spoke of her desire to bring more of herself "out." I asked her to make an "Inside/Outside Collage" using magazine pictures. In this way, she would depict what she felt she showed to the world on the "outside" part and what she felt like internally, on the "inside" part.

The collage images depicting inner and outer aspects of self were rich and deeply intuitively chosen. Lori would carefully respond to each magazine image, noting if she felt a connection to the picture, without trying to analyze why she might feel that connection. Especially striking was the collage she created for her "inside" self (Figure 6). Personally, Lori spoke of the images depicting her Self being pulled downward, into the grassy/grave-like area. She felt connected to the mother-goddess figure overlooking the scene, the central blossoming tree and she loved the colorful flowers that framed it. A young innocent of self emerged in the lower right-hand area, haunted in the upper right-hand corner by the demon-like face. These two are separated by a chasm of landscape that appears bridge-like. Lori was reluctant to use the demon's mask picture in the grouping, but honored her instinctual knowing that it was *meant* to be in the picture. She felt compelled to include it, and spent a good deal of time making sure it was placed in the appropriate area.

As we verbally processed these images I shared my experience of witnessing the creation of this image with its archetypal connections, as I sensed the emergence of imagery of the Demeter/Persephone Myth. I asked Lori if she knew of this myth, which both Marion Woodman (1993) and Kathi Carlson (1997) write so beauti-

⁶ *Kali Ma*: Hindu goddess (as the Destroyer) recognizes that life cannot exist without death; *Pele*: Hawaiian fire goddess, shows how to use anger to create change; *Oya*: Yoruba goddess, considered a patroness of feminine leadership using words to empower.

⁷ *Kuan Yin*: Chinese goddess of compassion and healing; *Gaia*: ancient Greek goddess, honored as the creator of our earth ("earth mother").



Figure 6

fully about. She did *not consciously* know of this archetypal story of the maiden's descent, the mother's grief and rage, the transformation through the journey into Hades and back into re-birth as the wiser self. I shared a brief re-telling of the story of Demeter's daughter, Persephone, being captured by the god of the underworld and brought against her will into the land of the dead. After much angst, Demeter is able to bargain for her daughter's release by withholding her bountiful energies from the land. In her grief, no crops grew, no flowers bloomed, and the world was in a state of death. The people begged the other gods to help Demeter find her daughter, and they agreed. Persephone emerges from the Underworld, no longer naïve and innocent. She has

stepped into maturity through ordeal. As I re-told the story to Lori, I pointed out the uncanny parallels in her chosen imagery, and the personal art began to "widen" into the realm of the archetypal universal field. This transcendence into mythological story (Lori agreed with the parallels seen) allowed Lori to feel a palpable connection with the life's journey of all women.

Not only did the art create an image that mirrored the personal self, but its archetypally rich contents had the capacity to allow Lori to connect with and express the universal — at the same time. In this integration, a new creation of meaning was experienced in the moment while multiple truths were held in awareness, in the body and in spirit.

Full Circle on the Journey: Coming Together of Inner and Outer

The complexity of experience can never emerge when we're holding tightly to one particular version of it, whether we're in relationship with a person, a disease, or anything else.
— Marc Ian Barasch (Jensen, 2000, pp. 9–10)

Art therapy that flows from a centered relationship looks to weave a fabric of color, content, and form whose threads emerge from the creative core of one's unique being. Each field is a thread that provides opportunity for renewal in its attention to differing aspects of cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual neglect. Multiple threads are then woven into the colorful sponsorship of an embodied and animated form.

The technique of the *Art Therapy from the Center: Collage and Poem* (Appendix C) incorporates all three energetic fields in the process. The journey begins with centering technique (cognitive–emotional) and choosing imagery that speaks to a given theme. This “proper naming” then engages the physical self by creating a collage piece using scissors and glue. Voice is given to two aspects of self in the moment by writing one-word descriptors from the awareness of the adult/normal self and the child/neglected self. Full circle integrates the visual with the verbal, as a poem is created by blending the two voices in a response-oriented dialogue. This poem then widens and expands into the dream-like both/and knowings in image and metaphor (spiritual).

The psyche becomes lubricated while engaging in creative process, such that transformation can and does occur. The powerful forces of creativity that can be unleashed not only touch and transform the creator, but offer the opportunity for touching others who witness the process, such as the ripples from the small pebble dropped into a pond. I will end this chapter with a lovely experience of this transformational witnessing.

Self-Relations supervisions with Stephen Gilligan have been a primary gathering place to learn the skills of this model. At a recent residential supervision group, I followed the path of one of my colleagues, and chose to create art while others were doing the work of the su-

pervision (being supervised and being client). I had brought my favorites — oil pastels, water colors and magazine pictures for collage — to choose from spontaneously in the moment. As each piece of work evolved, I would gaze at the blank sheet of paper and drop into center. Images would come to my mind's eye, shapes and colors . . . and I would allow them to take form on the paper with whatever media called. At the end of each session I shared the process of the images' birth, and then gave the art piece to the client.

Before our closing ceremony, I requested that all the pieces of art be brought back into the circle, to be viewed as parts of a whole. After this request, one participant who I had done a piece for spoke privately with me. She confided that she was very grateful for the effort and the work of making the art, but that she really didn't like her picture or the imagery in it. She expressed her feeling that her picture was not beautiful, as she thought the other pictures were, and that she didn't feel comfortable with her picture being viewed within the group again. I agreed that this was, of course, her choice . . . and that I fully accepted her not liking the art images that had emerged. We both entered the closing group anticipating that her picture would not be part of the grouping.

During our closing, the individual pieces in a circle formed a beautiful mandala of imagery. We concluded with song, and then all began the final process of catching our flights home! Before I left, this same colleague caught me with much excitement in her eyes and a glow on her face. She told me that the most amazing thing had happened . . . that during the closing ceremony, she was looking at all the pictures . . . loving the forms, shapes, colors, images. She had felt particularly drawn to one — it had her favorite colors in it and intriguing imagery. She remembered wishing that *that one* were hers, not the one she recalled me handing over to her at the end of her work. In the midst of this longing, she startled and realized that the picture she had been wishing were hers, *was in fact the very one she had been given!* (Someone must have put it in the circle with the others without both of us realizing it.) . . . she looked at me with tenderness and joy saying, “Somehow, the *picture* must have changed . . . it's beautiful. . . . I love it!”

Circles of Balance

The blending and weaving of creativity becomes an agent of transformation that begins by opening the doorways to our inscapes of being. They can be unlocked through art's imagery from the center, taking us beyond the realm of logic and reason. In opening to this source, we are able to access the re-sources of "the medicinal agent . . . art itself, which releases and contains psyche's therapeutic forces" (McNiff, 1992, p. 3) and enter into a dimension where time and matter are unknown. Our clients bring themselves to therapy with conscious and unconscious sensings of imbalance. If we can look to these imbalances as doorways to creativity, we can become midwives to transformation and re-birth,

spontaneous connection to pure essence of spirit. Art therapy is but one guide on this amazing journey.

Circling

We seek not rest but transformation.
 We are dancing through each other as doorways.
 We are ripples crossing and fusing, journeying
 and returning
 from the core of the apple, the eye of the
 mandala,
 the cave in the heart of the rose,
 the circle without boundaries centered on
 silence. — Marge Piercy (1976, p. 32)⁸

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⁸ Excerpted from "Circling" by Marge Piercy. Copyright ©1973, 1976, by Marge Piercy and Middlemarsh, Inc. From *Living in the Open*, published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. First published in *Best Friends Magazine*, 1973. Use by permission of the Wallace Literary Agency, Inc.

Appendix A

In Three Frames

FRAME	FOCUS	MEDIA	TECHNIQUE
<i>Cognitive/Emotional</i>		2-dimensional	
	1. internal communication	poetry	poem of "I believe . . . I feel . . ."
	2. grounding practices	draw/paint	colors and shapes of safe people, places
	3. compassion for self	collage	pictures: hurt/sadness evoke compassion
	4. balance	draw/paint/write	sets of opposites/polarities
	5. symptoms as messengers	draw	draw a symptom
<i>Physical</i>		3-dimensional/music/olfactory	
	1. external communication	clay (fimo-type)	body as emotion/family sculpture
	2. images/metaphors for safety	box-making	safety box
	3. boundaries	sculpture	self in a container
	4. body memories	found objects sculpture	trauma sculpture
	5. somatic knowing	music	resonating music
<i>Spiritual</i>		mixed-music	
	1. integration of internal/external	mixed	personal art/universal art
	2. meaning of life	mixed	create a "pathway" in art
	3. concept of suffering	observation	observe and journal reactions to trauma art
	4. natural life cycles	collage	life-cycle collage
	5. self in connection to the universe	mixed	personal mandala

Appendix B

Techniques

Cognitive–Emotional Frame

1. Have client write 3–5 simple statements of “I believe. . . .”
“I feel. . . .”
“I know. . . .”
Then ask them to choose a color for one of each of the statements
Finally, ask them to create an image with all three of these colors.
2. Have client draw/paint colors and shapes of safe people, safe places.
These “safe” colors can later be utilized to “frame” trauma images.
3. Have client create a collage with pictures of hurt and sadness. When this is complete, ask the client to speak compassionately about the beings in the pictures who are being hurt. Mirror back to them phrases of your felt compassion for their hurt/sadness. Ask the client to create a statement of compassion for themselves — this may be another collage, or a verbal statement.
4. Have the client write down 3–5 sets of opposites. Ask them to draw or paint one of these “sets” on the same paper/canvas. If the images are greatly distanced, ask the client to create an image where the polarities can be closer together. If they refuse, accept this and use the “need for distance” to hold the opposites in verbal processing.
5. Have the client simply draw the symptom they are focusing on. While viewing the image, encourage a conversation between the image and the client, holding the questions: “what is/are the messages of this symptom?” “what are their positive intentions for this client?” “what is this particular symptom asking the client to ‘awaken’ to?”

Physical Frame

1. Body as emotion — have the client use soft clay (sculpey is good) to depict the five basic emotions as clay “stick figures” (*anger, happiness, fear, pain, sadness*) Explore how these figures seem to connect or distance from each other; which figure does the client feel attracted to?/repulsed by?

Family sculpture — using the technique from above, have the client create a family sculpture with clay figures, choosing ONE primary emotion for each family member. Have them place the figures in a group “portrait.” This can be adapted to other groups that the client interacts with (co-workers, peers, social situations).
2. Have client create a “safety box” with collaged images of safe places/people/things on the outside. Inside, have the client place specific “safe” items, such as tapes/CD’s of soothing music, poetry, perfumes or essential oils, objects that when held evoke a soothing feeling in the body (i.e., soft blanket, feathers, velvet, stuffed animal). This box can be utilized as a “grounding” tool, when clients become overwhelmed by flashbacks of trauma.

3. Have client create a 3-D sculpture (may be mixed media) of themselves in a container. Encourage clients to explore different types of containers (e.g., mesh wire, glass, paper, cardboard, air, water, fire). Compare and contrast the felt experience of sensing the physical body being “held/contained” in different environments/conditions.
4. Have the client find objects that represent past traumas to the body. When these have been gathered, have the client create a sculpture of their body with these objects. This then represents the body in the past, which is to be honored in memory by creating some kind of memorial for it (this may be another piece of sculpture, a poem, a song, a written statement). Combine the body sculpture with the memorial in the processing of letting go. Have the client notice which areas of the body are resisting, which areas are feeling freer?

Then have the client gather objects which represent the present body and the hopes for the future body. Create a new body sculpture, and a place of honor for it.

5. Have the client find music that moves them in some way. Together, play the music and ask the client to “internally listen” for places of resonance, areas of tension, calming. Try moving to the music, seeing if a sense of an animal/bird/insect is evoked. If it is, create a visual piece of this totem. If a younger self is sensed, have the client identify an ‘age’ and create a piece of art for this “neglected self.”

Spiritual Frame

1. Have the client choose one of their own art pieces that feels very personal and significant to them. Then, ask the client to find an image of another piece of art that they did not create, but that also evokes strong emotion in them. Have the client view both images (their own personal image and the other) at the same time. Then, ask the client to create a new piece which blends the imagery and meanings of the two. Compare and contrast the differences/similarities between personal art and universal art.
2. Ask the client to create a “path” in art media, focusing on the theme/concept of a journey . . . ask clients to pay particular attention to the meanings they ascribe to the journey rather than the “goal”/end point.
3. Have client view “trauma-art” (survivor art, holocaust art, art of children who have survived/witnessed horrors . . .) and then journal their reactions to the art, stressing the concept of suffering in conjunction with transformation through art. Help the client to explore images of “effective suffering” = bearing witness vs. non-effective suffering = suffering in isolation/alone. This may be explored in new artwork by the client as well.
4. Have the client create a “life-cycle” collage after discussing the stages of life and creative process, with attention to the various phases of birth, death, and re-birth over the course of a lifetime.
5. After discussing the universal concept of the mandala, ask the client to create a mixed-media personal mandala, using form and color. Central in this process is the concept of self-soothing artistic expression that connects one with the whole (personal in connection to universal).

Appendix C

Collage and Poem Flow Chart

Materials

1 large sheet of paper (12x16, 18x24)*
3 small sheets of paper (9x12)*
writing utensil (pen, pencil, marker, crayon)
scissors
glue stick
magazine pictures — wide variety

(* exact size not important)

Directions

1. Identify with client a focus/theme emotion (i.e., abandonment).
2. Ask client to look through magazine pictures and to choose about 5 pictures which fit their theme.
3. Ask client to glue these pictures onto the large sheet of paper (may rip or cut) to make a collage.
4. Light trance to connect with “neglected self/younger energy” in the body, asking him/her to look at each picture in the collage and write down (on small piece of paper) a one-word description of each picture — may want to use non-dominant hand to write these.
5. Re-center to “normal self.”
6. Light trance to deepen connection with “Cognitive Self” in the head, asking him/her to look at each picture in the collage and write down (on second piece of small paper) a one-word description of each picture.
7. Re-center.
8. Poetry writing: direct client to compose a ‘poem’ as follows:
 - a. Have the two lists and third sheet of small paper in sight
 - b. Complete the first line, forming a sentence with one of the words from the “Neglected Self’s” list:
THE CHILD SAYS _____
 - c. Complete the second line, forming a sentence with one of the words from the “Cognitive Self’s” list:
THE ADULT RESPONDS _____
 - d. Continue to alternate sentences until all of the words are used.
 - e. Name the poem.
9. Attach or glue the poem into the collage.
10. Read the poem aloud while viewing the collage-process.

The voice of woundedness says _____

and the voice of the divine Self responds _____

The voice of woundedness says _____

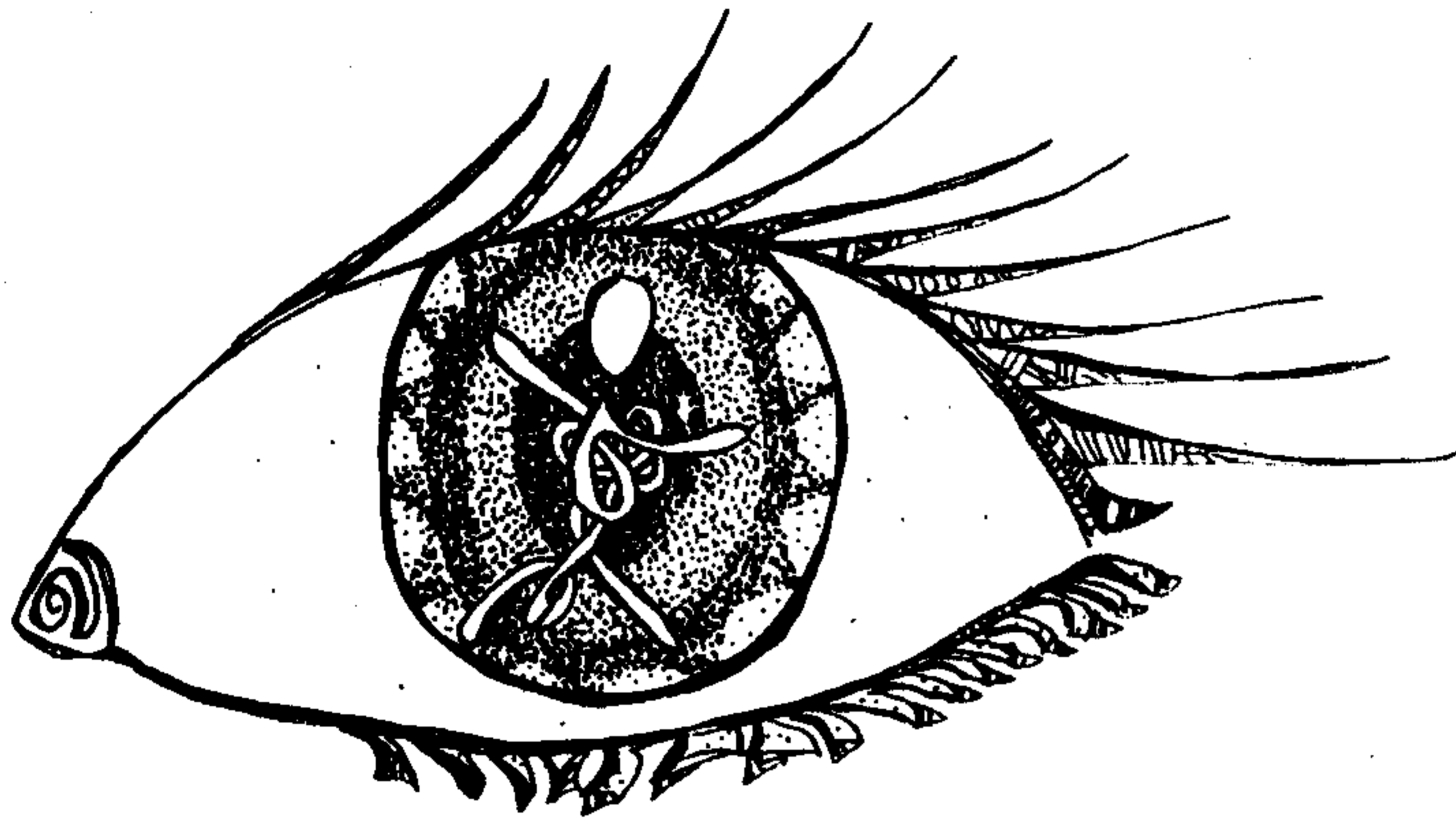
and the voice of the divine Self responds _____

The voice of woundedness says _____

and the voice of the divine Self responds _____

The voice of woundedness says _____

and the voice of the divine Self responds _____



*Instant Painful Success and
Ongoing Wonderful Failure: My Personal Experiences
with Self-Relations Psychotherapy*

Jeff Weakley grew up the meaty by-product of a wonderfully alcoholic family living just a rifle shot outside Nashville. He now works as a writer and lives in Santa Monica, California, with his beautiful wife Suzanne and their baby daughter, Dagny.

INSTANT PAINFUL SUCCESS AND ONGOING WONDERFUL FAILURE: MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH SELF-RELATIONS PSYCHOTHERAPY

I am in Russia and a comrade is showing me the new Yugo he's bought. Another man walks out from the shadows behind me, points a machine gun at my head, and accuses me of being KGB.

Seconds later I am in a prison cell in Alabama. A large redneck man in a dirty T-shirt is threatening to buttfuck me.

Less than a minute later, a woman I've known for only 30 seconds is telling me she's pregnant and it's either my child or the offspring of an alien that abducted her.

For a brief moment, I marvel inside at my own ability to calmly navigate through this insanity. In fact, I revel in it. It's just another Tuesday night at the Improv Olympic Theatre in Hollywood.

You see, I'm not a therapist. (Nor do I play one on TV.) But I have studied with quite a few of them. Mostly in an effort to sort out and solve my own peculiar craziness. That's how I came to meet Stephen Gilligan more than four years ago. And the last year or so specifically, I've been taking some of those same Self-Relations techniques and principles that have helped me to be a little saner and using them to help me be a little crazier. Every Tuesday Night at the Improv Theatre. As well as in my daily life.

For those of you who've never seen it, the Improv

Olympic created and teaches a particular form of ensemble improvisation called "The Harold." In essence, a fast moving, structured and yet unstructured 20-minute play, created entirely in the moment, all from a single suggestion by an audience member.

It's kinda like life really. Only more so. That's what I like about it. After all, if you're a therapist, this type of "insanity" probably walks through your door on a regular basis. And while maybe not in as extreme circumstances, the consequences are far more serious.

So how do you keep from being sucked in, swept up and knocked out by these emotional maelstroms?

Cut. Edit. Clockwipe. Subtitle appears: Four years earlier in a therapist office in Encinitas, California.

My wife and I sit in the small waiting room of Stephen Gilligan's office. We're not talking. I don't just mean we're not talking right now. I mean we're not talking, period. Our marriage is on its last leg and in a desperate attempt to get my wife "fixed," I've hauled her all the way down here from Los Angeles to see this supposed hypnotic wizard, Stephen Gilligan. I've studied quite a bit of NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) and read a lot of Milton Erickson and yet have been completely unable to convince my wife to accept the great help I have to offer her. Having read his book, *Thera-*

peutic Trances, I'm secretly hoping that me and this Gilligan guy can conspire together to get my wife to stop being so fucking bonkers.

Ironically (though maybe not for those of you who work with couples), Stephen begins working with me for most of the session. In very direct and indirect ways he begins to talk to me about giving my power away. About giving myself away. And about being able to hold my own center. I'm surprised by that. As I said earlier, I thought we would work together to fix my wife. I guess that may have been part of the problem. Every time my wife would go off into her pattern, I would follow her in, hoping to fix her, hoping to solve her problem. Unfortunately in the process, I would leave ME behind somewhere. So the more I tried to help her, the less I could really help her. Stephen began by teaching me to get in touch with my center. And to be able to stay connected there. It's very simple. And very, very difficult. In fact, on two occasions in between sessions, I found myself spontaneously crying, almost uncontrollably. It was as though the very act of getting in touch with my center had touched something both painful and liberating.

By the end of the second session, I was far more able to simply stay connected to myself and still "be" with my wife when she went into one of her tirades. Almost as soon as I quit trying to change my wife, she began to change. The more she would go into her usual pattern, the more connected to me I would manage to stay, and the more truly supportive I could be.

In a very short time, this radically changed our relationship. While we have continued to grow and change (and also seen other helpful therapists occasionally at times, as Encinitas is a 2- to 3-hour drive from our home), I'm certain these two sessions saved our marriage.

A satisfied customer, I returned months later to see Stephen about some other problems of my own. Looking back now, as I try to recall them, some of the problems seem as if they were the problems of someone else. But here's how I remember talking about them at the time.

I was sad. I think that's how I described it at the time, though looking back, I think I had probably been pretty depressed off and on for years. I come from an alcoholic family and this sadness had become so much a part of my person I don't think I knew there was much else.

I felt anxious, insecure, and occasionally paranoid. Those are pretty vague words but the experience that comes to mind is of being at my work. I write advertising for a living. And when I think back, there were a few experiences that were ongoing and typical of what I'm speaking of. I can remember being in my office and *dreading* going out into the hallways. It made me extremely anxious. Passing people in the hallways increased that anxiety greatly. Like never really knowing what to say. My incongruence in passing had made some people uncomfortable towards me and, over time, that weird discomfort seemed to grow, compounding itself in my relationships. (I freelanced in the ad business for many years. Partly because I liked the lifestyle of having time off, but I think honestly underneath, it was also difficult for me to be somewhere long term, where more intimate relationships would develop.) I would also often fixate on some ongoing problem/relationship situation at work, and lay awake at night replaying it in my head, talking to myself incessantly, the lack of sleep only made it worse.

When I wasn't at work, I sometimes masturbated compulsively to Internet pornography (something that was a part of and fed right into problems my wife was experiencing). I was also having overwhelming, all-consuming bouts where I would have a fear of death. For several years when I was younger, I hadn't even bothered to have health insurance. But sometime around the age of 35, I began to have a huge fear of dying. Of cancer in particular. A single example of this was my sister's wedding. I discovered a knot underneath my arm. Being in Rhode Island for her wedding, I decided I would wait until I returned home to Los Angeles to see a doctor. So for 4 days, I felt it, obsessed over it, and worked myself into frightening night sweats (which I convinced myself were surely confirming symptoms of something horrendous) about what I had to face. Insisting my doctor see me as soon as I returned to L.A., I learned I had an ingrown hair. It was healed a few days later.

Just to be clear, very few of the psychological and sometimes pejorative words I used to describe my problems were a part of my actual therapy with Stephen. I don't remember him "diagnosing" me. Some of my therapy experiences are still very clear and vivid, popping into my head, spontaneously, years later, at those

times when I need to remember them. Some of them are hazy, trance-like and powerfully difficult to remember.

I do remember being shocked by Stephen talking to me about death. I assumed, I guess, that he would assuage my fears of death by telling me everything was going to be alright. Instead, he talked of Buddha's revelation that "Life is suffering." He told me of students in India who must write about their own demise, all the way down to describing their bodies being eaten by worms. He talked to me of Jung, and how uncommonly common it is for people to experience a sort of mid-life enlightenment. "For life to come and get you" and tell you there is something you need to learn.

In one session, he no doubt noticed I was tired from having gotten up at 5 A.M. to make the drive down to Encinitas for my 8 A.M. appointment and he simply let me go into a very restful trance. It lasted the entire session and I have very little memory of it except for a part of it that included an extended metaphor he told about a snake shedding its skin. I'm not exactly sure what this was about except that it truly did have some deep, deep meaning for me. It has popped back into my head a number of times over the years. And I'm certain it affected me greatly, though I couldn't tell you exactly how and why.

All that included, and more, the single most important thing I remember from our few sessions in his office was simply sitting with Stephen, doing nothing. Even as I write about it, I'm filled with a profound sense of peace and inner connectedness.

At some point in a session, he simply held my gaze and encouraged me to really sink down into my center. To follow my breath down my lungs as it came into my body. To follow it down to a spot just below my navel. And to widen my field of vision. To soften my eyes. And yet to stay in contact with him. I'm not sure I had ever been myself, in relationship to someone else like that, ever before in my life. Especially not another man.

It was virtually impossible for me at first. Overwhelming in so many ways. Especially to look another man in the eyes in a way that I had only had a somewhat similar experience doing occasionally with women. It was profound. To be able to sit quietly — truly, beautifully, quietly, in a room with someone and just to be with them. To be with myself. And to feel okay

with that. In fact, to feel damn good doing that. It sounds exaggerated but it was truly overwhelmingly profound for me. As I made the long drive back to L.A., I couldn't help but realize that my world had changed in some drastic way. That night, I played onstage with my new improv group for the first time. I was great, if I do say so myself. Somehow I was able to stay in that place and be safe and secure, allowing them to do the same. I could really listen to them instead of having to devote so much attention to the voices inside my head.

All of this, of course, doesn't mean that I was permanently "cured." I had learned a lot. I had changed. I was better. And yet, over time, I still had experiences where I was far more uncomfortable with people than I wanted to be. More often, I was able to just relax and slip down into my center. I would feel grounded. Centered. Able to deal with life more resourcefully. But not always.

In September of 1997 I attended a seminar with Stephen at Robert Dilts NLPU held every summer in Santa Cruz. The seminar was going well, I thought, though I also realized that all of the new age therapist types and instant intimate relationships were bringing on more and more of those anxious feelings. I had a hard time just hanging out with people there without feeling really disconnected from them, and I later learned, from myself.

I can remember the feeling of wanting to be with people and so I would join a group talking. As I stood there, I would feel so disconnected it was as if the words I was saying were coming from some hollow echo in the back of my head. Losing their power and meaning by the time they reached the listener. It took too much psychic energy for me to attend to the anxiety on the inside and the people on the outside. So my comments and thoughts felt delayed and ill-timed, like dancing with someone who's wearing a Walkman, only they're listening to a different song. People seemed to nod as though they understood, but something was missing. Underneath, they knew it and I knew it. They were having a long-distance conversation with someone right in front of them.

Stephen must have sensed this because about five days into this week-long seminar, he called for volunteers to work in front of the group. I didn't raise my hand. Partly because I felt I had had the privilege of

working with him already. And had come to accept this sort of weird disconnection as so much a part of just how I am, that I didn't really think I had anything to work on. However, he called my name and I came to the stage thinking he had made a mistake. I even told him I would be glad to be a volunteer, but that I wasn't sure I had anything to work on.

Apparently, he sensed otherwise. Very shortly into our conversation, I began to drop down into that elusive anxiety that so often controlled me and so easily hid from me. My sense of it is that I had learned to dissociate so well from parts of myself, so completely, I no longer knew they were there. So they weren't really a problem. And yet they were very much a problem.

What happened next is a little like a great improv scene. It's possible to be so involved in the experience that you have very little memory of. So much of you is involved in the moment, no part of you is standing back and recording it.

I can remember him asking me to pay attention to that feeling of anxiety. I felt it briefly, but then it went away. Maybe I didn't have anything to work on after all? Maybe I did. Stephen talked to the seminar audience about "Touch and Go," the tendency to touch that experience and then leave as quickly as possible. A fairly good description not just of that moment, but of much in my life in general.

He encouraged me, gently, softly, to drop down into my body. To get in touch with that feeling. To give it an age. I think I said "5." I felt it in my stomach just below my sternum. The more attention I paid to it, the more it began to vibrate.

All of this seems deceptively simple in my words. And painfully hard to do in the real world. At that moment though, I felt supported, safe, enveloped in my relationship with him. I truly felt the "field" that he often spoke of as a living, breathing thing, not a vague esoteric concept. And though I could sense the presence and energy of the audience, the room fell away. He and I were alone.

I struggled to connect with that five year old. Then once I finally did, he asked me, in a different voice, how old I am now as a resourceful mature man. I said "37." He then asked me to get in touch with that

experience, the experience of being a resourceful 37-year-old man who had accomplished many things. I could feel that part of me located firmly behind my eyes. It felt different. Strong and knowing. Even if disconnected, I could operate from there. "Supreme Allied Central Headquarters" I think Stephen called it.

My memory is that we went through those steps a couple of times until they were cleanly sorted. Then at some point, using his hands (having used them to mark out the separate entities), his voice and a metaphor about an elevator going up and down between them and light connecting them, he began to integrate the two.

On the inside, it wasn't quite so clean and clear and clinical. My stomach, that had been vibrating, now wretched and seized and dry heaved with invisible emotion. I was shocked and consumed. My body began to lurch upwards as if vomiting up a demon. I truly felt as though I was in the middle of an exorcism. I could barely catch my breath before the tidal waves of antique emotion launched upwards from deep, deep, deep within me.

I was scared and elated, desperate, confused and vibrating. All the while though, safe. I'm sure this is what let me continue, despite all of that pain and confusion, despite the crowd of 60 or so people in the seminar watching. I felt supported and enveloped in some kind of field of safety and caring. I can't begin to describe how that made all the difference in the world in allowing me to continue with that experience.

I can't tell you how long all of that lasted — could've been seconds, could've been an hour. But at some point my body had wretched and writhed and rocked and rolled until now what I felt in my body was the lucid, clear calm of integration. And the post-orgasmic physiological knowing that I was somehow back in my body in a way that I could not ever remember having experienced before. I knew this is where I lived. I knew I was home.

Even as I write this, tears come to my eyes. The tears of clarity that come from looking out and knowing I belong here. I deserve to be here. In fact, Stephen had me look out at the seminar audience and hold their gaze. To look at them from that place of belonging, of holding my own power. And he asked me to speak to

them and tell them what I was experiencing. And as I told them how it felt to be "okay." To be in my body and looking at them and knowing I was here and they were there and I was damn okay. The voice that spoke did not come from some long distant bad connection, but from deep in chest, from deep in my stomach — a voice that resonated from deep within my soul.

Now, I have done many drugs and have had many profound experiences in my life. But I never have, nor have I ever since, had such an extraordinary exorcismic experience. I knew my world had changed. I knew me and felt me and experienced me in a way that I had never done before.

That experience stayed with me, powerfully, for days. And carried with me as I came back into my old world that was now somehow new again.

Aaahhhhhh . . . I take a deep breath and relax as I enjoy reliving that strong, clear, lucid feeling.

Did I permanently remain powerful and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound? No, I slowly inte-

grated back into my world. People slowly integrated with the me I had brought back.

My world is different now, but it is not perfect. I have gone on to newer and more interesting problems and question, many of which I have been able to deal with so much more effectively by centering, connecting, breathing, and utilizing the principles of Self-Relations. I have also received help and learning from other extremely talented therapists along the way (Ernie Rossi, who's more local to my area. And Paul Carter and Ni-yaso Carter, who my wife and I have seen as a couple). But my past experience with Self-Relations, and my present ongoing practice of it, has affected and influenced my life in so many rich, wonderful and powerful ways.

Said the man who once sat in his office afraid to walk out into the hallway, just before he walked out to perform in front of a live audience, face a KGB agent with a machine gun, fend off a prison redneck with love on his mind, and laugh his way through an intergalactic paternity suit.



*Creative Expression as a Vehicle for
Positive Self-Sponsorship*

Molly H. Guzzino, A.T.R., L.P.C., L.M.F.T., is a psychotherapist, researcher, and art therapist in private practice in Austin, Texas. She specializes in trauma resolution and the use of creativity to promote spiritual well-being. As a member of international delegations to China and South Africa, she has taught treatment methods for post-traumatic stress disorder and compassion fatigue. She is currently conducting research on how spirituality is incorporated into the lives and work of medical and mental health professionals. She can be reached at <mollyg@eudoramail.com>.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION AS A VEHICLE FOR POSITIVE SELF-SPONSORSHIP

An artist feels, listens to, and draws upon the “unconscious” to guide him. In the art of developing personhood, the same challenge exists: to realize and relate with the gift of inner life that lives in the soul of the somatic self. By locating and naming this archetypal presence, we transform a symptom into a creative act.

— Gilligan (1997, p. 136)

Sponsorship, the over-arching principle of Self-Relations, accelerates therapeutic momentum when powered by intentional acts of creativity. Positive self-sponsorship can become not only a guiding light but also a daily practice reconnecting the somatic and cognitive selves. The incorporation of creative acts within a daily practice leads to a fuller integration of an individual’s intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal fields. As an art therapist, my work is two-fold: to explore internal images, sensations, emotions, and beliefs and to facilitate creative acts.

In this chapter, we will look at how Self-Relations and art therapy inform and expand each other and can ultimately lead client and therapist into an exploration of transpersonal experiences. We’ll first look at an overview of the use of art as a therapeutic tool. Next, we’ll see how artistic expression synergistically affects the seven-step protocol of Self-Relations therapy. Finally, we’ll

explore how creative acts can move us beyond the remedial therapeutic experience into the relational field of spiritual growth.

Artistic Expression as a Therapeutic Tool

Using art and writing with clients expands the therapeutic conversation beyond the boundaries of oral communication. Engaging in a specific creative task helps an individual directly express her inner experience. In therapy, artistic expression intensifies the focus of her work. Through art and writing, she reveals her cognitive and affective experience in a concrete, externalized form. With the images, the individual also creates a tangible and permanent record of her experience which can be referenced over time.

The purpose of these creative expressions is not to produce fine art. Rather, they serve to articulate the process of living more fully with images and written words. When we humans create, we move, shift, and rearrange our perspectives. We increase our sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Self-Relations, coupled with creative expression, promotes this experience as we move from total dependence on the spoken word to a conversation that includes imagery, color, shape, line, and symbol.

Positive self-sponsorship involves becoming connected through “centering, grounding, and opening

within and beyond oneself" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 104). This leads to a greater cultivation of self-love and deeper connections to our internal and external worlds. Intentional acts of creativity act as a catalyst for positive self-sponsorship by re-linking the cognitive and somatic selves.

Intentional acts of creativity provide a bridge for transformation and transcendence. *Self-Relations* promotes the transformation of identities, moving clients beyond their currently frozen states of being. Art, poetry, and prose awaken and illuminate the relational field. Transcending multiple sensory modalities expands the gap through which emergence of new understandings and resources occur. Tolerating this "gap of emergence" can be difficult, both cognitively and physiologically as the body kinesthetically responds to disturbing or disruptive thoughts and emotions. Creative expression, however, provides an arena for containment and exploration of the gap. Intrusive thoughts and feelings are captured within the imagery, resources retrieved and depicted. The alchemy of sponsorship and transformation begins.

The Use of Art

When we create visual images, we enter the world of symbolism, both personal and universal. At the personal level, we capture the essence, the felt sense of an event, a feeling, a cognition. Multiple levels of meaning within one image can emerge. Symbolic images juxtaposed in a drawing may generate their own constellation of meaning. The client/artist often discovers that as he draws, images emerge, often looking quite different from those originally seen in his mind's eye. As a new relationship between images is defined, evaluated and experienced, the spell of fundamentalism is broken. Images that initially seemed inconsequential or insignificant expand the overall meaning of the artistic piece.

The therapist can encourage further elaboration by asking the client to enter into the symbol: to describe through writing while viewing his drawing, aspects of the symbol as a description of himself. This intensifies the experience. Images and symbols become an externalization of an internal state. By giving line, shape, color, and meaning to the internal state, the journey back to the "true self" is clearer and more concrete.

As exploration of the permutations of images unfolds, the individual can move from a private, personal, specific framework into a more global or universal un-

derstanding and perspective of her imagery. Here the multiple levels of meaning broaden and deepen to encompass the interpersonal and transpersonal fields. Recognition of the universality of one's imagery and its symbolism automatically creates wider field experiences. This expansion of the field from the intrapersonal to interpersonal and transpersonal is inherent in the process.

When imagery and symbolism are shared with another, they have opportunity to be seen, held and blessed by a larger community. The relational field intensifies through validation and acceptance. Here the client's neglected self can truly experience being seen, acknowledged, and appreciated. The client learns that the field can hold whatever the self brings. Transformation is possible. From this expansion of the relational field, the individual can reconnect with the true self. The creative act of making, exploring and sharing art thus becomes a vehicle for positive self-sponsorship.

Promoting Creative Exploration

Introducing an art experience to individuals, particularly adults, may initially seem daunting. Remind them that the purpose is to explore and learn from the process rather than to create an esthetically pleasing product. Decrease anxiety by making references to "just doodling" or "making marks, not art." Suggest they are finding a new way to externalize what's going on inside their heads and bodies. Having clients make abstract drawings or cut out magazine photographs are additional "fail-proof" methods for expression. Creative expression doesn't require elaborate supplies or artistic skill. A client needs only a willingness to explore her internal dialogue through a conversation in pictures, lines or shapes to begin.

Although I believe most people benefit from the exploration of their personal imagery, it remains the therapist's duty to monitor the client's processing and maintain safety within the session. Particularly when addressing trauma issues, the imagery can sometimes become overwhelming or too threatening. Therefore, it is important to consider the specific choice of art materials. In general, the more fluid the art media, the more fluid and loose the client's internal kinesthetic and emotional response will become. For example, watercolors tend to be more emotionally evocative than colored pencils as they flow across the paper. Please consider before providing art supplies whether the client will benefit by a

more cognitive, symbolic experience due to their current state of overwhelm and need for containment. Therefore, using oil pastels, colored pencils, markers or drawing pencils is in order. Or perhaps, the client is experiencing her trauma from a far too rigid perspective. Here, the gradual introduction of watercolors, tempera paints or clay might provide a more emotional–kinesthetic experience, generating a more expanded dialogue within the field.

Moving from a more fluid to less fluid media or vice versa is an excellent way to modulate the client's rate of discharge within a session. Switching media while staying on the same issue greatly enriches the field. The same traumatic experience depicted in drawing pencil, oil pastel, tempera, and clay will yield a gamut of information and resources. Writing about each piece further promotes "field flexibility" as the client transcends multiple layers of meanings and understandings, concretizing, and elaborating the experience as the creative expression evolves. Overall, this field flexibility enhances self-sponsorship. The client practices intentionally stepping into and out of traumatic memories through the art, while simultaneously learning to hold their center.

Many individuals process experiences auditorially or kinesthetically more than visually. They can be frustrated if asked to draw literal images of what they see in their minds. In this case, suggest they depict their sensations through making marks or colorful lines. If words, dialogue and sounds are their preferred information processing modality, encourage them to translate them into pictures with the option to write about the images later. Again, emphasize the process, not the aesthetics of a piece. The meaning clients make of their images and where it leads them in their relationship to themselves is of importance here.

Communicating about Art Work

At the completion of each piece of art, invite the client into a therapeutic conversation focused on what she noticed physically, emotionally, and cognitively as the piece evolved. This clarifies the symbols and the issues they represent. Further exploration may include how the images form constellations of meaning. Therapists can also pay attention to aspects of the art that are omitted entirely and those that are over-emphasized as they are both rich sources of information.

Rather than follow a predetermined script of questions to analyze the artwork, the therapist's role is to widen and deepen the relational field while the client expresses his multi-leveled thoughts and feelings. As the therapist holds her personal center, she can in turn open to the client's. Within this relational field, questions, curiosities, concerns, and connections will spontaneously arise. The art acts as a catalyst that enlarges reporting and vision.

Clients are encouraged to look at and write about their symbols outside of the therapy hour. This is an excellent homework assignment that encourages the evolution and multi-leveled meaning of their art. Ask clients to live with their imagery, thus allowing it to expand, to continue teaching them between sessions. This reflection promotes a greater intrapersonal sponsorship. It gently teaches them to learn in a non-violent manner while promoting many possibilities for new perspectives. The art and written reflections are brought to the next session for further exploration with the therapist, partner or group. This increases the sense of interpersonal connectedness. Couples, families, and groups often experience significant shifts in understanding of one another through this type of communication.

The Ethics of Doing Art with Clients

When entering into the field of creative expression, certain ethical concerns bear attention. Without the proper training and credentialing, it would be unethical for the therapist to refer to herself as an art therapist. This, however, does not preclude the use of art materials within the therapy session if the clinician will bear in mind certain guidelines.

The primary focus needs to be on the client's experiential process and the significance of the imagery they produce. Interpretation of the imagery rests solely with the client, not the therapist. The therapist's job is to hold the field and aid in imagery exploration and clarification.

Completed artwork requires proper handling. All art produced by the client belongs to the client and should be titled and dated. They should be encouraged to take the artwork with them at the end of each session. However, the client may request to leave the art with the therapist. All art left in possession of the therapist should be treated with the same confidentiality

practices as all other items in a client's chart. If the art is too large to fit in the chart, a separate portfolio can be constructed of poster board for each client. These portfolios must be locked up. If the art is to be used by the therapist for any purposes other than with the client in their session, the therapist must obtain a written authorization of release from the client. The release must clearly state the purpose of the use of their artwork, i.e. consultation or presentation at a professional conference. The release must also state that their identity will be kept confidential. Client artwork should never be used for decorative purposes within the therapist's office.

Encourage the client not to throw away their artwork. As a metaphor of self, the imagery needs to be cared for and honored. When traumatic or neglected self-work is produced, the client's urge to dispose of their art can be quite strong. For the therapist, this is a potent opportunity to hold and bless all aspects of the client work, thus modeling positive sponsorship.

It is customary at the termination of therapy or at the end of a significant piece of work for the client and therapist to review and sort the artwork. At this point, the client can select artwork to keep and others they would like to "transform." This transformation process then becomes a carefully planned therapeutic ritual in which the imagery is disposed of in a healing manner.

Creative Expression and the Self-Relations Seven-Step Protocol

Gilligan (1997, p. 28) identifies seven steps that comprise the Self-Relations model. Extending the model to incorporate forms of creative expression elaborates the steps.

In Step 1, that of identifying the problem (Gilligan, 1997, p. 128), the client and therapist begin to narrow the focus of the presenting problem and symptoms, looking closely for the unique characteristics that make this experience problematic.

Exercise: "Show Me the Problem"

Goals

1. To graphically identify the problem
2. To gain greater familiarity with personal symbolism
3. To spotlight specific characteristics that seem "unchangeable"

Materials

- 8" x 11" white drawing paper
- Colored markers or artist grade colored pencils

Instructions

In your mind "run a video" of your current problem. Then using a comic book style series of frames, draw the problem. Use as much detail as possible. Also include any dialogue, emotions and thoughts that assist in relating the story. Stick figure drawings are permitted.

Therapy generally accomplishes this problem identification through an oral retelling of the presenting problem. However, if the client is asked to draw and write about their issue as they currently experience it, the intrapersonal and interpersonal fields are expanded. Emotions, physical sensations, and thoughts experienced by the client during this expressive retelling are externalized and concretized onto paper. The creative process goes beyond the "verbal-only" experience and a middle path between the somatic and cognitive selves begins to open.

Since the body stores trauma in both sensations and images, in Step 2, it can be helpful for the client to create a visual map that identifies and somatically locates the wounded and neglected self (Gilligan, 1997, p. 131). This map depicts disturbing somatic sensations and associated feeling states.

Exercise: "Mapping the Neglected Self"

Goals

1. To draw emotions and physical sensations as they arise concerning a problem area
2. Learn to slow trauma processing to avoid overwhelming the system

Materials

- 8" x 11" or larger white drawing paper
- Colored markers, oil pastels, crayons, or artist-grade colored pencils

Instructions

1. On a sheet of paper draw an outline of the human body. It can be as simple as a gingerbread man shape.
2. Imagine the problem as a video running in your

head. Each time a disturbing sensation or emotion is felt in your body, put the video on pause. If you have trouble pausing the action, run the video one action frame at a time.

3. Select a color that aptly represents that disturbing sensation or emotion. Draw it on the body outline with marks that visually capture your physical experience of this sensation/emotion. Depict how much room it occupies in your body.
4. Once you've recorded this information, mentally take your video off "pause" and continue viewing. Continue to closely monitor each sensation and emotion as it rises. Record them on the drawing.
5. When complete, create a color key with the emotion or sensation it represents, for each color you used in the drawing.
6. Date the work.

For example, a client with an eating disorder begins to run a problem sequence video of how and when she decides to binge. Suddenly, she experiences a feeling of loneliness, coupled with a uneasy/unsettled sensation in her chest. She puts the mental video on hold, selects a gray oil pastel to represent the abandonment she feels and represents the uneasy/unsettled sensation symbolically by drawing a spiral in the chest area on the body outline. Once recorded, she takes the video off pause and continues watching until the next somatic sensation and emotion is experienced.

By doing this slow motion experiencing, the client maps the neglected self. The therapist and client together can then decide which emotion/sensation is the most problematic and prioritize them from most to least disturbing. This neglected self map assists the client and therapist not only in treatment planning, but establishes a visual field where all sensations and emotions can be welcomed and attended to with care. The therapist can check their work by asking the client at a later date to re-run the video and re-map their emotions and sensations on paper. As the neglected self is brought into greater relationship with the cognitive self, the client's maps will change. Therefore, it is important to date all the artwork. The therapist and client can arrange a series of these maps created over time in chronological order and actually see their progress.

Using a color key further concretizes the experi-

ence. By having gray, for example, represent feeling unsettled, tight, and abandoned, the client begins the process of resonant naming. A color key helps track this process and the multiple levels of sensations and emotions expressed simultaneously. The key also provides an on-going reference for what specific color choices may symbolize for the client. Over time these color preferences may solidify into the client's personal color symbolism.

One tenet of Self-Relations is that the therapist learns to sense within herself the locations of the client's wounding (Gilligan, 1997, p. 105). She can more easily open her somatic self, with the accompanying sensations and emotions, with the use of the client's neglected self-map. The map provides the therapist with a vivid concretization of the client's internal experience. This process allows for the therapist and client to come into the same field, sharing awareness and presence. The map also reinforces the immediacy and present focus of the work. No longer focused on regrets about the past or predicting negative future outcomes, the imagery concerns the current internal experience of the client. The therapist can more easily extend and join clients directly in their process.

Step 3 is that of activating and locating the cognitive self (Gilligan, 1997, p. 136). Using the client's imagery facilitates connections between internal resources, personal symbolism and the cognitive self. In discussing the client's symbolism, intense emotions can arise. Art can be a modulating tool. Should the client become immersed in symptoms or physical sensations, the therapist can reconnect with the cognitive self by asking the client to depict personal resources that might prove helpful.

Exercise: "Resources: Known and Forgotten"

Goals

1. To locate and activate the cognitive self
2. To re-associate internal resources

Materials for drawing method

- 8" x 11" white drawing paper
- Colored markers or artist grade colored pencils

Materials for collage method

- 12" x 18" white drawing paper or Poster board

Gluestick, scissors

A wide variety of magazines

Instructions

1. Depict yourself at your current age.
2. Draw or find pictures and words in the magazines that represent the gifts, talents, resources, learnings and competencies you have that may be useful in your current situation.
3. Glue pictures onto paper, on or around the figure of yourself.

Done as a homework assignment, the collage method of gluing down images and words from magazines provides the client with an excellent exercise for amplifying the cognitive self between sessions. This technique also allows the client to focus on images of their resources rather than their possible lack of artistic skill.

Request that the client post this drawing or collage where he can frequently review it. Encourage him to add to it. Over the course of several weeks, these symbols may consolidate into a greater sense of resource identification and consolidation for the client.

Inherent in this process of reconnecting with resources is the belief that the client has the capacity to sponsor himself. While he may not experience this as a current personal reality, his imagery, self-generated or selected from magazines, stands as a concrete and undeniable outward manifestation of his ability. He is developing internal "self-sponsorship." This path may not be fully revealed but it begins to emerge through the imagery.

Identifying and differentiating negative sponsors is Step 4 (Gilligan, 1997, p. 138). This step brings the client and therapist into contact with the client's self-limiting beliefs. The negative sponsors are the persistent internal voices of devaluation that paralyze action and numb the soul. These voices can be traced to both interpersonal and intrapersonal sources.

Interpersonally, alienating thoughts, beliefs, and emotions spring from early negative sponsors such as significant adults who told the client of his un-loveliness. A chronic diet of negative sponsorship causes the child to override his self-knowledge and his physiology. A traumatized child knows the profundity of his powerlessness. In order to survive in this type of environment, dampening down his cognitive and somatic selves may

be his best strategy for survival. However, in adulthood, the negative sponsors continue to live in a person's psyche as though nothing has changed. Therefore, identifying the original negative sponsors and differentiating past from present becomes a crucial step in reconnecting with the true Self.

Exercise: "Me, Not Me"

Goal

1. To identify and differentiate negative sponsors

Materials

8" x 11" white drawing paper
Colored markers or oil pastels

Instructions

1. Run an audio tape of the current problem and listen to your thoughts. Each time a self-devaluing statement is detected, write it down.
2. For each negative or critical statement create a character. This character may be human, animal or fantasy being. Depict the character actually doing an action as they deliver their alienating message.
3. Sense in your body the location of this alienating message.
4. Write this message on the character's body, in the corresponding location.

For example, a young father comes to therapy because he is screaming at his children. He fears he's becoming the parent he vowed he'd never be, having grown up in a physically and verbally abusive home. As he runs the problem audiotape of him screaming at his toddler, he catches the alienating thought, "You cry-baby! Stop that or I'll give you something to cry about." He recalls his father yelling similar phrases.

The client then draws a fire-breathing dragon chasing him as a child. He is able to feel his stomach tighten and lurch as he reviews the drawing. Next, he draws the alienating message, "You crybaby . . ." exploding from the dragon's gut. Here the therapist and client can explore the relational source and negative sponsor, his father, as well as his current parenting. This facilitates the differentiation process allowing the client to open to possible alternative behaviors and beliefs.

The client may also use self-intoxicating behavior patterns as a means of avoiding the feelings of anger, fear, sadness or love. Gilligan identifies some of these familiar patterns, "... as self-pity, grandiosity, whining, envy, jealousy, crankiness, self criticism, and self doubt" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 142). These function to shut down the body and distort thinking.

In order to combat this self-intoxication, the client needs to become more fully aware of the self-intoxicating pattern's complementary behavior. In the following example, self-pity and its complementary behavior, compassion is explored. Creating imagery for both patterns while joining them in a relational context can produce a sobering effect.

Exercise: "Numbing and Dumbing"

Goals

1. To identify self-intoxicating behavior patterns and their complementary pattern
2. To explore a relationship between the two behaviors

Materials

8" x 11" white drawing paper
Oil pastels or watercolors

Instructions

1. Identify a self intoxicating feeling/thinking pattern and its complementary behavioral response.
2. Depict them either abstractly or representationally on separate sheets of paper.
3. Create a third drawing that will link these complements.

A client may experience being stuck in the pattern of self-pity. When asked to draw this, she creates an image of a sad little girl, alone and weeping, while other children in the picture enjoy playing a game together. When asked to create a picture of compassion, she produces another image of the small child. However, this time the child is delighting in her pet dog as it licks her face. For her "linking" drawing she produces a path through a dark forest where a variety of characters assist her along the way.

Through this imagery the client and therapist can explore a wide range of sponsorship metaphors both negative and positive. The pathway between the com-

plementary patterns is useful as a "resource retrieval site." The client can come back in contact with her mind, body, and skills through this exercise, reconnecting with her positive self-sponsor.

Step 5 is that of connecting the cognitive and neglected selves. Gilligan describes a scaling technique that gauges the felt presence of the cognitive and somatic selves and the level of connection between the two (Gilligan, 1997 p. 145). This scaling technique can be adapted to a graphic experience that concretizes and more fully informs the client's understanding of these relationships.

Exercise: "Linking Up"

Goal

1. Connecting the cognitive and neglected selves

Materials

12" x 18" white drawing paper
Colored markers

Instructions

1. Close your eyes and travel inside your body.
2. Locate your wounded self and hear the negative belief or deep longing it tells you.
3. Imagine its size, shape, weight and color.
4. Using only lines, shapes and color, draw what you experienced. Pay particular attention to its size and intensity, detailing this in your drawing.
5. After you've completed the drawing, close your eyes again, locating your competent adult self in your head.
6. Hear the positive belief it speaks to you.
7. Imagine its size, shape, weight and color.
8. Again, using only lines, shapes and color, draw what you experienced, paying close attention to capturing its size and intensity.
9. For the final drawing, close your eyes and feel the connection within your body between these two experiences. What is that connection like? What qualities can you feel?
10. Create a drawing of this connection.
11. Lay the completed drawings out with the connecting drawing in the middle. Ask the client if the connecting drawing accurately depicts the amount of space between the somatic and cognitive selves.

Is the space actually larger, perhaps indicating a more tenuous relationship? If so, ask the client to move the drawings apart so the distance corresponds to his felt sense of connection.

12. Revise the connecting picture by adding more sheets of paper as needed, to fill in the gaps. If the space is perceived as shorter between the somatic and cognitive selves, ask the client to modify the connecting drawing to the appropriate distance.

The client can also use this scaling technique outside of the therapy session. Ask the client to check in with the felt sense of connection on a daily basis and modify the connecting distance accordingly. This gives the client daily feedback on her inner relationship. This process also enhances the sense that the relationship between the cognitive and somatic self is dynamic, fluid and constantly changing. Check on the client's homework by asking questions about what they learned from the experience throughout the week.

In Step 6, that of returning to the original problem (Gilligan, 1997, p. 148), the client revisits the conflict armed with a greater relationship between the cognitive and somatic selves. Use the comic book format again to recreate the revised edition of self-sponsorship and self-connection.

Exercise: "Returning from Oz"

Goal

1. Return to the original problem for evaluation and self-assessment

Materials

8" x 11" white drawing paper
Colored markers or artist grade colored pencils

Instructions

1. Draw a series of pictures that depict in images and words, scene by scene, your journey from the beginning problem to your current experience.
2. As you draw, remember to incorporate any resources that have proven useful along your path.

This exercise can be used separately or in conjunction with the first series of drawings in Step 1 that detailed the current problem. Here the client and therapist

can compare and contrast the two series. Resources are specifically named and relatedness is emphasized.

Because therapy is often an experience of words that assist the client in effecting useful life changes, individuals often have the experience of knowing they've changed but not knowing how they arrived at this new place. The dated artwork provides a visual record that can be reviewed and referenced over time. Their chronology of the therapy process and personal journey exists on the drawing paper.

The Seventh Step of "further work" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 148) functions as a re-orienting process. In this final step, the client practices again and again reconnecting to her relational self. Through this art exercise the cycle of disconnecting from self and reconnecting is explored.

Exercise: "Home Again, Home Again"

Goal

1. To learn the process of re-orienting to self again and again

Materials

White drawing paper or poster board circle, diameter 12" or more
Colored markers or artist grade colored pencils

Instructions

1. Within this circle, record images that represent your cycle of disconnecting and connecting to yourself.
2. Include images and symbols that increase disconnection as well as symbols that increase reconnection.
3. This art experience can also be created using the magazine collage method.

This exercise asks the client to examine their "comings and goings" from self. By asking for imagery of disconnection and reconnection, the client is forced to relate to the choice points of departure and return. In learning self-sponsorship, the client needs to know the bends and forks in the road, not just the final destination. As the individual never stays long at the destination, there is an ongoing process of leaving and returning. The goal is to make this cycle a more

conscious process so that returning to the home of oneself occurs more quickly, frequently, and with reduced anxiety.

Throughout each of these art exercises, the principles of concretization and externalization of internal experiences (affect, cognition, and physical sensation) are emphasized. As these principles are vivified, the relatedness between the cognitive and somatic selves increases. An elaborated art exercise can provide the client with experiences that touch on all seven steps. Using the Self-Relations model, John Eschen (1998) originated this next art experience concerning the neglected self. I further elaborated it to include the process of sponsorship. Originally intended for group use, the therapist can easily adapt this exercise to an individual session.

Exercise: "Neglected Self Meets Positive Sponsor"

Goal

1. To explore the imagery and dialogues between the neglected self and sponsor
2. To create a field for relatedness
3. To promote positive self-sponsorship

Materials

12" x 18" white drawing paper
Oil pastels

Note

It is helpful for participants to have art materials already in front of them before the leader begins the first instructions. This allows participants to start their drawings without interruptions.

Instructions

Ask group members to find a comfortable position, one they can hold for several minutes. Have everyone close their eyes and begin a relaxation induction. Poems that evoke the neglected self may be read followed by the art instructions.

1. Identify a symptom or issue that limits or keeps you out of relationship with your positive cognitive sponsor. Give this experience a voice that expresses a negative belief you hold about yourself in this situation.

2. As you repeat the negative belief, let a negative image of the problem arise in your mind. Notice your physical response. What part of your body tightens, experiences a physical disturbance or emotional response? Place your hand on this sensation.
3. Continue to hold the negative belief and sensations while allowing an age for this neglected self to emerge.
4. Gently breathe into the space surrounding the neglected self, making more room to hold her. Notice the voices of the neglected self. Do they sound as if they were given to you long ago? Whose voices are these? What messages do they say to convince you that you are "less than" whole? Also, notice how you abandon yourself. What do you feel now? All the while, keep breathing into the space surrounding the neglected self.
5. Now begin to sense the presence and location in your body of the sponsor; the one who knows who you really are, the competent adult you. Say a statement that affirms the presence of the sponsoring self.
6. Begin to be curious as to how this relationship between the two selves can be strengthened. Allow the sponsor to introduce itself to the neglected self, with a gentle statement, which increases their relationship.
7. In a few moments, when you open your eyes, you will be creating an image of your neglected self that includes the statement of the problem. Add to this picture an image of your sponsor.
8. Please know that there is not right or wrong way to depict your neglected self and sponsor. Your drawing may be representational or abstract. You may have a specific idea already in mind or perhaps ideas will flow as you select a color or begin to draw.
9. Open your eyes and begin.

Note

Throughout the entire experience ask participants to observe silence. If they have questions, they may signal the leader with a raised hand and be assisted individually. The silence allows participants to deepen in their personal work. Quiet instrumental music is also helpful during this activity. If participants need additional drawing paper to complete their work, encourage

them to tape additional sheets to the original and continue drawing.

After all drawings are completed, the leader then provides the next set of instructions.

1. While looking at the images you've created, select one color to represent the neglected self and a different color for the sponsor.
2. Place the color of the neglected self in your non-dominant hand and allow her or him to write a phrase that speaks her pain, bitterness, longing or wounding.
3. Then with your dominant hand and "sponsor color," respond to the neglected self's statement in writing with the words, "I'm here," or with other phrases that allows the neglected self to feel the presence of the sponsor.
4. Pursue this written conversation between the two parts until they can come to a comfortable stopping/resting place.
5. When all writing is completed, ask group members to find a partner and share their art and writing experiences.
6. A large group discussion can follow, providing a forum to share perspectives within the group community. The group exploration further expands the interpersonal field where often the universality of experiences becomes evident. It also creates space to summarize and contain the experience, promoting individual and group closure.

This multi-step exercise allows the client to travel into the relational world of the cognitive and somatic selves. It begins as a mental exercise in which the problem and somatic (neglected) self are identified. Establishing the location and age of the neglected self further enhances the felt sense of the process. The neglected self then identifies and differentiates its negative sponsors. Next, the location and voice of the sponsor are brought forward.

The exercise then shifts from an internal experience to an external one as the client begins to draw the cognitive and neglected selves in relationship to each other. Through combining the two images in one piece of art, the client literally creates a container of their mutual co-existence. By creating art, multiple perspectives or truths can be held simultaneously.

The writing sequence is introduced to facilitate conversation between the neglected and cognitive selves. It is important the neglected self tell her story within the context of the field with the sponsor. Dominant and non-dominant hand dialogues allow both perspectives to co-exist. Within the dialogue, fears, concerns and viciousness of the neglected self can be held more fully. This in turn offers alternatives to the defensive strategies of denial or targeting internally or externally at others.

By using the dominant/non-dominant hand technique, this wounded self expresses through its younger voice, a voice more easily accessed with the non-dominant hand. The positive sponsor can then more accurately hear this voice. The sponsor's voice can act as a homing device, guiding the neglected self towards a new relationship with the sponsor and the field. The sponsor holds the field of compassion and action while the negative self expresses itself. The sponsor tunes to the neglected self by providing it space to exist, with blessings and assistance. Thus, art and writing expand the relational field on the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and ultimately, the transpersonal level.

Creativity and Connecting Within the Spiritual Field

The fifth premise of Self-Relations posits "... the existence of a power and presence greater than the intellect or individual world" (Gilligan, 1997, p. 22). Intentional acts of creativity explored in this chapter link the self not only to the internal fields of cognition and soma and relational field of community, but tap into the universal transpersonal field. By exploring internal processes through the medium of art, particularly with the support of others, the individual concretizes the transcendent experience and positively sponsors one self.

JoAnn Hungelmann, et al. (1985, p. 152) defines spiritual well-being as experiences of harmonious interconnectedness across time (past, present and future) within relationships (intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal). Spiritual distress is seen as a disruption in this interconnectedness, a loss of resources often resulting in a crisis of faith.

Creative acts amplify interconnectedness to self, others and spirit. In research concerning spirituality and creativity, creativity appears to be an overarching quality of spiritual well-being (Guzzino, 1999). Creative acts

prove to be active agents (sponsors) for combating spiritual distress and assisting the individual in returning to a greater state of spiritual well-being. These acts particularly enhance transpersonal connections. Within the study one respondent wrote:

My creativity is a direct link to my spiritual self. When I engage in the creative act I connect within myself and beyond myself. I don't know how I create the things I do. It is a very divine experience to have a piece of art move through me that I know I didn't create alone. That somehow I linked in to a different plane of consciousness or spirituality that moves me beyond my normal abilities or training, resulting in a work of art that I was heretofore unaware that I could create. My creative self is my express-lane back to my spiritual center when I become lost, overwhelmed, and/or stuck in the other arenas of my life. (Guzzino, 1999)

Creative acts seem to touch the indestructible soft spot of the soul, allowing it to be expressed in form, image and symbol. Ken Wilbur (1998, p. 37) speaks of translogical experience which moves beyond reason and cognition, accessed only through contemplation. Creative acts begin with the shift from external to internal reality. A process of contemplative knowing ensues that taps sensory, mental, archetypal and mystical resources. It is this transcendent journey that opens the individual to the transpersonal field. Physiologically, the individual experiences an opening to self and beyond into the transpersonal field. The art becomes the symbolic icon and road map of the experience.

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Pamela Reed's (1992, p. 353) definition of spirituality as experiences of connectedness and transcendence supports this process. It is within these moments of connectedness and transcendence that spirit is both born and directly accessed.

Creative sponsorship occurs on different levels of interaction with self, others and Ultimate other. However, these levels tend to have a synergistic as well as a reciprocal effect on each other, creating a relational field of unitive consciousness.

Unitive consciousness is described in many religious traditions as the experience of connecting with the collective consciousness. This may manifest by uniting in prayer with all others praying at that moment or through group meditation as in the Quaker, Buddhist or other contemplative traditions. Unitive consciousness from a psychological perspective has been referred to as the concept of "flow: . . . the optimal state of inner experience is one in which there is order in consciousness" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 6). In this state the person feels connected both internally and externally, and effortlessly achieves goals. Self-Relations describes unitive consciousness as the relational field. Here the individual connects with self and beyond while continuing to be in community with others.

Unitive consciousness occurs when individuals are creative, particularly in groups, when experiences are shared directly and within the context of community. Creating in a group opens the individual to a greater experience of the world. Isolation is diminished and a felt sense of expansion, internally and externally, occurs.

Through it all, the individual reclaims the artistic self, the self that comes out of the unconscious. By reconnecting the cognitive and somatic selves within the relational field of the creative act, the self is transformed.



Movement Practices for Self-Relations

Selene Vega, M.A., L.M.F.T., is a dancer, workshop leader, ritual facilitator, and psychotherapist with an M.A. in Clinical Psychology (JFKU) and a B.A. in Ritual and the Arts in Cross-Cultural Perspective (UC Santa Cruz). Since 1972, she has guided individuals and groups into the realms of psyche and spirit, bringing movement and trancework to the fields of addictions, eating disorders, psychospiritual crisis, and ecopsychology. With Anodea Judith, Selene co-authored *The Sevenfold Journey: Reclaiming Mind, Body, and Spirit through the Chakras* (Crossing Press, 1993). Former editor of the *Spiritual Emergence Network Newsletter* and Past-President of Santa Cruz C.A.M.F.T. (California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists), she maintains a private practice in the Santa Cruz mountains in California and is adjunct faculty at Bastyr University. Her website is www.spiritmoving.com

MOVEMENT PRACTICES FOR SELF-RELATIONS

Over the past 28 years I have worked with movement as a vehicle for self-exploration, deepening our relationships with others, and finding connection with realms we might call transpersonal or sacred. Although I present this approach to many people who come to my workshops or classes specifically because they are interested in exploring through movement, what excites me most is working with those who would not have thought to come to a movement-oriented group. Whatever the theme or focus for our group, whether it be addictions recovery, psychospiritual emergence, ecopsychology (exploring our relationship with the environment), or using the chakras as a therapeutic framework, I have found that a somatic and kinesthetic approach to learning opens a door to deep and profoundly important areas of our being.

Self-Relations psychotherapy, honoring the somatic self as it does, invites us to integrate its wisdom in multi-faceted approaches that go beyond intellect. SR is more than another set of understandings and techniques for working with our clients, more than a list of principles that we memorize and chant to ourselves in hopes that we will "get" them enough to apply them in the many different situations where we wish to bring growth and healing. It is an approach that asks us to bring ourselves fully into the healing equation. To bring Self-Relations to those that we work with, we begin by applying its principles to ourselves, absorbing them and

working deeply with them in our lives, engaged in our own process of growth and healing.

A wonderful aspect of this experiential learning is that in our effort to become more effective and wise therapists and facilitators, we deepen and evolve in our own personal Self-Relations as well. It may be this work on ourselves that ultimately provides the most immediate experience of Self-Relations for our clients. We bring it to them in our very presence, in our in-the-moment process of staying present for ourselves and for them.

Although many would agree with the concept of working on ourselves in this way, there is often a question of how to proceed. We might read Stephen Gilligan's description of some of the core SR principles to provide a framework for our consciousness to grow into, then begin to inhabit that framework as we develop and nurture the growth of that consciousness through practice. How do we practice? To reach beyond the cognitive understanding that reading and discussing these ideas generates, we can take them in through our bodies, and this is where I see movement work as a direct approach to the somatic integration of SR principles.

This chapter offers a series of somatically-based practices that may be done individually as personal explorations or in group workshop settings with a leader. For those exercises that do not require a partner, you might create a tape for yourself of your own voice lead-

ing you through the exercises or you might read through the script to get a sense of the process and then work with the progression from memory. These exercises are part of a treatment modality for working with clients, but my intent in this chapter is to offer them to therapists interested in more fully embodying SR principles through an experiential learning process. Once a therapist has experienced SR principles in an explicitly somatic form (whether the form I am offering or another sort), they can translate SR into meaningful clinical practice, whether or not they bring that somatic form into their interactions with clients.

The somatically-based practices I present here for experiencing SR ideas are containers that each of us fill in our own individual fashion. There is no right way to do them, and watching a roomful of people working with them together is a study in diversity, as each individual brings forth their presence to fill that container. We may think that our fears and issues are distracting us at times, but once we have started an exercise, whatever comes up for us is what our deeper selves have presented to explore and sponsor. We may temporarily stop our movement, but that is not an end to the experience, just a further glimpse of where we are in our process. If we stay with whatever feelings, sensations, and images emerge, then we are still in the work, following the practice, even when we are not moving our bodies. We can continue to return to the framework of the exercise, coming back to center, coming back to connection to the field, coming back to the "I-Thou" of being with another to sponsor them and be sponsored and learn to sponsor our own neglected selves.

Centering

Centering brings our attention back to our core, back to the somatic self, back to a felt sense of experience. We remember that we are in bodies, and that our experience of the world and our relationships in it is mediated by these bodies. A huge wealth of information lies waiting for us here in torso and limbs, skin and organs, muscles and senses. Through childhood experiences and the messages of our culture, we have learned how to tune out the communications from the body, directing our focus elsewhere and leaving the body on automatic. Now, as adults, our challenge is to conscious-

ly tune in to what came naturally when we were first born into these bodies and remake the connections that have been neglected.

Awakening to center in the midst of the busyness of our everyday lives takes practice, and the best way to practice, especially at first, is to quiet down and provide an opportunity for our habitual ways of holding our bodies (and our thoughts) to drop away. Here is one possible trance script for connecting with your center.

Body Awakening

Lie down on your back on the ground, preferably on a carpet or mat or blanket. Find a comfortable distance apart for your legs and the most relaxed position for your arms, shift and wriggle in whatever ways your body asks for . . . then settle into the floor . . . allowing gravity to pull you gently down . . . dropping into its quiet embrace.

Each breath you release allows you to let go of whatever muscles might still be holding . . . as you realize that gravity will do the work for you, and no muscular tension is required to keep you here on the ground . . . breathing gently and easily into your softening body. Feel the weight of your body against the ground, noticing what parts sink the deepest . . . which parts are just barely touching the floor, and where there are spaces between you and the floor. Notice how your clothing feels . . . where it is tight . . . where the texture of the cloth touches your skin . . . where your skin is open to the air.

Notice where in your body there might be some messages that you need to listen to, communication from your body that you had not noticed . . . and maybe some messages from your body that you already knew were there, that you can listen to again, and acknowledge.

Notice which part of your body feels really good, really comfortable, letting your focus move to that place . . . feeling how that feels . . . and allowing that feeling to begin to spread out into other parts of your body.

Lying there in stillness, tune in to the subtle movements and sounds of your breath entering and leaving . . . your breath which keeps on breathing even when you're not paying attention. Notice how your body takes it in . . . where it goes as it enters you . . . what happens as it leaves, as you exhale.

Notice those movements that happen inside your body . . . heart beating . . . blood pumping . . . cells exchanging fluids . . . small movements that go on underneath the big movements that walk you through your day, turn your head, create your facial expressions.

(If you can arrange to have music start at this point without having to get up and start it yourself, that can be a wonderful aid and inspiration.)

As your breathing takes more of your attention, allow your breath to deepen . . . notice what movement comes directly from that breathing, what happens as your lungs make room for that breath to come in, what happens as your ribs expand and release . . . just noticing those movements that are already happening as your body makes room for breath . . . and releases it . . . do the ribs expand to the front more than the back, one side more than the other? What happens at your shoulders as the breath comes in and goes out? . . . and as the breath moves, begin to follow it and expand it, so that the rib that opens in one direction opens a little bit further into a stretch . . . until it's time for that breath to release, and then your movement shifts again . . . beginning to expand the dance of your own breath . . . and it may be a subtle dance, just a few millimeters of shift beyond what the breath was already doing, or it could be that as the breath comes in, a wave of movement takes itself through your body . . .

It may feel like a call from some part of you that says "move here, stretch there, shift that way" . . . following the breath each time, the breath that flows into you as your lungs expand into your back and those muscles shift

. . . maybe they curl . . . maybe they flow . . . maybe they circle around . . . maybe that wave wants to go all the way down to your fingers and toes . . . maybe it wants to take your pelvis into the breath movement . . .

Imagine that the movement of your breath is contagious, and the muscles next to those that your breath is moving want to join in on that movement and take it and go with it. Your shoulders may move . . . the energy of one breath may reach out all the way through your arm into your wrist and out your fingers . . . and as each muscle is awakened by the expanded movement that grows out of your breath, it in turn awakens the muscles and joints nearest it, which take the movement from there. The area of your body that is moving is breathing, filling with the energy of the breath . . . releasing as the breath releases, ready to explore where the next breath wants to take you . . . further out from the same area? . . . Starting fresh from the lungs into a new place, your belly, hips, legs.

Notice any places that are still quiet, still asleep . . . and direct the breath towards those places, discovering what movement is waiting to happen as the energy reaches and touches those waiting parts of you. Allow your body to move, not consciously thinking about what movement to do, but rather noticing what your body is asking for and following that lead, even if it seems awkward or unusual. This is your body's own dance of the moment, an expression of your beingness right now. If you get caught up in the image of your dance and lose your center, just come back to the breath and once again see where it takes you. You are never too far gone to tune in again and return to center.

Sometimes this practice may take you into wild, energetic dancing. Other times it may be just a very gentle meditation on your relationship with gravity as you breathe. Whatever happens, use this time to pay attention to how your body is feeling, how your energy is mov-

ing, what is going on for you in this moment.

When it is time to finish, allow your dance to find its own conclusion, bringing you back to stillness again. Stay with that stillness for a few minutes, feeling the movement of energy in your body . . . feeling what your body has to say at this moment. Bring that awakened sense of your somatic self with you as you move into whatever you are about to do next.

The responses that students have to this exercise are often multi-layered. Sometimes, there is a sense of joyfulness and freedom, a feeling of moving in ways that they haven't moved in a long, long time, perhaps since childhood. At the same time, feelings of sadness can emerge, a sense of loss for the many years that this dancer within has been trapped and unable to express himself. Sometimes guilt may rear its head, that they are so "out of shape." Acknowledge the feelings, witnessing them without getting caught up in dialogue. If alien voices appear, criticizing or judging, let them know that they are unwelcome in this sanctuary of moving from center.

When we need to return to center quickly, while in the midst of the obligations and routines of daily life, the following practice, *Beingness Breath*, offers a way to do that from wherever we are. The core of this practice is to become consciously present in your body, centered in your somatic self, in communication with all of your being.

Beingness Breath

Whatever you are doing, stop right there, freeze your position and just breathe, bringing your attention to your breath and body. Notice where you are holding tension, what this position feels like to maintain. Now, deepen your breath and allow that breath to spread throughout your body. Notice your relationship with gravity, where your weight is sinking into the ground or furniture, where you can release more fully into that relationship, allow the ground to hold you. As you breathe, follow what your body asks for. It may be a very subtle shift, a release of tension in shoul-

ders or belly or facial muscles. It may be a shift of weight to a more comfortable position, more balanced, more connected with gravity. It may not be very much movement at all, but rather a realization of how much easier and deeper your breath can be, how much softer the muscles in your neck or back.

It doesn't take long to return to center, particularly once we have learned the way. When we check in regularly and give ourselves a chance to pay attention whenever we think of it, we find it easier to return there when we are in crisis.

Sponsorship

In Self-Relations work we are aiming towards sponsorship of our neglected selves by the cognitive self, healing the break in relatedness that exists within us. As part of this process, we cultivate the experience of sponsorship interpersonally, through relatedness with another. Our practice in sponsoring others serves both sides of this healing process: we give the sponsorship that allows another to heal, and at the same time, we practice the skills of sponsorship that we can then turn inwards to attend to our own neglected selves.

To sponsor the neglected selves of another, we begin by opening ourselves to a deeper awareness of those neglected selves, not just as theoretical constructs, but in a visceral, somatic way. Our understanding of those parts of the person we are working with depends on our ability to obtain information from sources in ourselves beyond the intellect. Just as we can deepen our connection to ourselves by tuning in on a somatic level, we can also open to those parts of another from that same realm of somatic knowing, using movement to make the leap from the cognitive into the realm of the body-mind. We can practice this in a simple, structured form with a partner in the exercise *Mirrors*.

Mirrors

Stand facing your partner, close your eyes and begin with each of you sinking into yourself and taking time to find your own center. You will be tuning into each other, but the best

place to start is deeply in tune with your own center. Bring your attention into your own being, into your own boundaries, into your own arms and legs, into your own weight, into your own body standing on the ground. Take time to breathe and go through the steps of the Beingness Breath on your own.

When you feel ready, open your eyes and look at your partner. Let the awareness that is alive in your own body right now expand out to include this other living, breathing, being before you. Be aware of their body in relation to yours — how close are they? How connected are you feeling to them right now? We are so accustomed to using words to connect with others — this time, let your energy reach out to theirs.

Decide who will be the mover and who will be the mirror. The mover's job is to lead the movement, with the mirroring partner following as closely as possible every nuance of every move the mover makes. If the mover raises her left hand out to the side, the mirror raises his right hand, following not just the gross movement of raising the arm, but the dynamic of that movement, and whatever subtle shifts might happen in the torso, as well as the tilt of the head and changing facial expressions. You might not be able to catch everything, but pay attention in the deepest manner possible, working to truly be a mirror for the mover's being as they move. For the mover, the goal is not to confuse or throw off your mirror, but rather to appreciate being seen and followed so closely. Both participants can develop and practice sensitivity, the mirror through his work of paying close attention and following carefully, and the mover through her efforts to allow herself to be seen and followed by moving slowly enough in ways that the mirror can follow.

When it's time to change roles, finish the dance in a way that feels right, then just be with each other in the stillness in between before the new mover begins the process again.

The Sculptor exercise, also done in pairs, allows us to share with a partner something of what we see in them, without the struggle to put it into words. Decide before you start who will be the sculptor and who will be the statue first.

Sculptor

To begin, each of you sinks into your own center. For the statue, this time is for softening and opening yourself to another, preparing to allow the sculptor to mold you and to physically move your body in space. Let yourself become clay, with muscles working just enough to keep you standing and ready to take on the form that the sculptor will create for you. For the sculptor, this time is for emptying your own baggage and projections out as much as possible, so that you can open yourself to what you may see, feel, sense, in your partner.

When each of you is ready to work together, take a moment to look at each other, acknowledging each other's presence in a non-verbal way. Statue, stand in a neutral position, ready to be sculpted. Sculptor, move your partner into a position that expresses in some way something you sense in them, trying to make overt and obvious a part of this person you are observing and sculpting. When you have finished, the statue maintains the pose he has been placed in, feeling whatever might come up for him in that position. When he has spent enough time in that pose to have a sense of what that feels like, he can shift the pose in whatever way seems right to him to reclaim it. It might feel just right already, or it might need just a subtle adjustment. On the other hand, the statue may want to truly shift from this pose into one that takes him beyond the place that pose evokes in him, evolving it into the next stage for him.

The sculptor might do three or more poses with the statue, time allowing, so that more than one part of the person playing statue can emerge and be experi-

enced and moved with. Take time to talk about your experiences and then switch roles so that the statue becomes the sculptor, finding ways to express what he sees in this other being who is now the statue.

Some of the responses from a group that recently experienced this exercise: One woman felt "touched on the inside by being put into a pose that felt right." Another spoke of "how wonderful it was to have someone who is totally there for me and who took the time to look and see me." Another, who had been placed into a warrior-like position with clenched fists felt that she'd been given permission to be strong, and feeling the acknowledgment and invitation to that part of her, used it as a springboard to go even further as she expanded on the pose she'd been given.

From the sculptor role, one person followed their impulse to place their partner in a pose that seemed the opposite of anything they'd seen in them, a quality they felt the partner had been avoiding and could benefit from exploring in herself. Experiencing the discomfort and distance this created gave this sculptor a clearer sense of what happens when we try to force our own agendas onto someone else's process. The opportunity to talk afterwards about what each had experienced gave both a chance to understand more about themselves in relation to others and how their inner process affects and is impacted by their interactions.

Our experiences with these exercises may vary widely, and just as there is no right way to do them, there is also no right experience. As facilitator, I may have a reason for picking a particular exercise for a group to do, some experience that I sense would be a useful one for the group, but I need to remain open to individual experiences that do not fall into that agenda. This was brought home to me once in a group of women who I led through the Sculptor exercise. I had hoped that they would have an experience of being seen by each other in a deeper way. One woman shared the revelation this work had brought her concerning her fears of touching and being touched by other women and the meaning this might have, and how she had cut herself off from healthy touch because of those fears. In this exercise she had felt permission and safety to experience touch in a way she had denied herself for most of

her life. Her experience had not even entered my mind as I chose that exercise, but I was delighted that she had the opportunity to open up that avenue for connection. She was a wonderful example of the healing possibilities that exist beyond our conscious planning for them, and a reminder to leave space for them to occur.

Experiencing the Field

Just as our individual sense of self is held and expanded by our connection with another, so our sense of relatedness with another is held and expanded by our connection with the field. We reunite with the life force, becoming aware of the field as something not separate from us. We begin to have a sense of ourselves as part of a relational field large enough to contain and at the same time transcend our individual self. From our center we reach out to the field, exploring this realm as another level of self, finding our place there.

One way to practice this is to use our dreams as a doorway to the larger field. In our dreams we usually identify with the particular role we are playing. Many times this Dream Ego is our "self" as we know it, our persona in day-to-day life. Other times we may find ourselves playing a part in a dream that is not who we generally think ourselves to be — someone of another gender, for example. Either way, when we enlarge our sense of identity to include the other characters in our dreams, we have an arena for connecting to the field that is beyond our sense of ourselves as individuals. Our dreams provide us with stories that are particularly meaningful for us, and can open a personal, individualized door into the field when we explore them through movement and improvisational play.

Enacting a dream scenario that our unconscious mind has presented to us can be an individual experience, with the dreamer taking the various parts and physically enacting them one at a time. However, a wonderful opportunity exists in group situations for expanding into the field with the help of community, as members of the group take on various roles from the dream. The larger field that we are opening to connection with is not only comprised of humans, so other dream elements that we might not think of as possible roles may also be part of our exploration. We can open

to the field through enlivening the animals and parts of the environment that we might usually relegate to background or landscape, as well. For example, a person can take the role of a building, a tree, an ocean, a wall, the wind, a vehicle, etc.

In a group situation, all the members of the group have the opportunity to experience the field-based nature of dreams and to enter the field through the dream door, as enacting someone else's dream may have deep significance even to a member of the group who did not originally dream that dream. At that level, dreams begin to enter the realm of mythology, and the field becomes apparent to all the participants.

Dancing Dreams

Take time to connect with yourself, focusing inward and breathing the Beingness Breath. Bring your attention to the individuals who are here with you, sensing the energy of the group. Join hands in a circle, each quietly feeling the connection through both hands to all the others in the group.

To enter the dream realm, the dreamer reads or tells the dream story, in present tense, from the perspective of the Dream Ego. Group members may choose the role they feel drawn to, or the dreamer may choose members of the group to take on the significant roles. Take time to ask questions so that everyone is clear about the story and their part in it, and then begin the enactment, interacting from the roles you have all taken on and unfolding the story, using your bodies and your voices (sounds as well as words).

When the enactment feels complete, each participant can share their experience of their role, their sense of the dream from the perspective of that role, and any personal thoughts or insights that may have come to them through this process. Sometimes, in the discussion that follows the enactment, an alternative path for the story may emerge, and the group may decide to replay the dream following this

new direction, or bringing in some of the insights that came out of the original enactment. Participants may even switch roles to experience the story from a different perspective.

In individual practices we take time at the end of an exercise to come back to center or stillness. In group processes, we can bring the exercise to a close by coming back to center as a group by returning to the circle of joined hands.

Connect again with the energy of the group around you, and allow yourself to expand into the broadened awareness of the field that holds all of you.

Archetypes

Archetypal patterns are part of the field, flowing around us and through us, dancing their ancient dances wearing contemporary clothes. When we name them and sponsor them we can find gifts in their presence and meet the challenges they present. This process may begin with learning something about the classical archetypes that have surfaced in so many ages and cultures. Stephen Gilligan, in *The Courage to Love* (1997), has focused on four of these: Lover, Warrior, Magician/Healer, and King/Queen. Another source for naming and identifying archetypal energies is the Tarot, a series of images in the form of cards that emerged in the 15th century. Additional archetypal energies that can be found in the Tarot include the Fool, the High Priestess, the Hermit, Death, the Sun, and the Moon. These images and many others have been interpreted by many artists, providing a wealth of visual illustration and stimulation for our understanding of archetypes.

A powerful method of connecting with archetypes and finding their personal relevance is to work with them through movement. Choose the archetype that you wish to explore more deeply. It is helpful, but not necessary, to work with a visual image of that archetype, which could be anything from a Tarot card to a picture cut from a magazine that expresses that energy. You might also choose music that evokes that archetype, bringing as many senses into the process as possible.

Dancing Archetypes

Begin by coming to center, using the Beingness Breath to sink into your somatic self. If you are using a visual image, let your gaze rest on that image, taking in the feeling of what you are looking at, then close your eyes and allow that image to form inside you. If you are working with an internal image, close your eyes and let your ideas and experiences of that archetype flow through you. Let each breath evoke that energy from deep within you, drawing to you all the rich history and universality of that archetype. If the archetype is human or animal, let your body begin to take on the characteristics of that archetype's body. Even if your focus is something that we don't think of as having a body (the Moon, for example, or the Ocean), allow your body to take on the qualities of that energy. Follow your feelings rather than your thoughts, letting your intuition guide you.

Open your body to the archetypal energy by imagining that you are a statue of that archetype, finding a pose that expresses those qualities. As you hold that pose, feeling the energy flowing in you, allow the archetype to use your body to manifest its energy, dancing its dance with your arms and legs, expressing its countenance in your face, bringing its timeless way of being to this present time in its interaction with your somatic self. Explore the many dimensions of the archetype, the parts that feel easy and familiar . . . the parts that take you to your growing edge . . . the parts that surprise you and introduce you to new ways of being.

When you are ready, bring your archetypal dance to a close. Let the energies that you have invited to dance in you drain out of you, knowing that you can invite them back in again another time. Sink back into your own center, breathing into your Beingness, aware of the larger field that you participate in, and also aware of your own individual self.

Opening to an archetypal energy can give us access to a larger perspective and a greater wisdom than we usually are able to bring to bear on the situations in our lives and our understanding of our place in them. Often this exercise opens a window we didn't know was available. One student was able to find a source of patience with herself that had eluded her until she worked with the great mother archetype. As she identified with an image of Gaia, earth mother, she connected with the long history of our planet as a huge container to hold the speeding, irritable, restless feelings she had been having. The expansive movements that emerged in her dance created a spaciousness that she could not imagine before, and she found her way to a sense of humor and compassion for her situation.

Finding your Own Practices

As you experiment with these exercises and others you may come across in your path of growing and learning, notice what works for you. When do you feel most in touch with your center, your relatedness with others and your neglected self, your sense of the field? What activities and explorations bring you experiences of the principles and ideas of Self-Relations? Look beyond the exercises you are introduced to in workshops and classes, search through your life activities as well. When you have those "Aha!" experiences notice what set the stage for that to occur, in what context your insight emerged. Can you recreate some of that in your life on a regular basis? Are there rituals and practices that you can put together that will enable you to find your way back to those states of being that Self-Relations work evokes in you?

I can share and teach the exercises that have worked for me and for my students and clients, facilitating deeper awareness and connection, clearer consciousness, more loving relationship and sponsorship. But these exercises become static unless each person who experiences insight or growth through them makes them their own, evolving them to fit their individual process, adding and changing to create their own personal and group rituals. Self-Relations is alive in each of us who open to it in this way, a living and moving dance along a path of heart.

As therapists, perhaps the most important practices we can develop for ourselves are those that support our

ability to find our own center and extend our energy from that somatically grounded place in ourselves towards our clients; to reach out to them from a place deeper than words. This is one of the basic foundations of SR work, and discovering how we can best connect with ourselves, extend from that center, and connect with our clients is the key to working deeply with them as they learn to connect with themselves.

I am continually astonished at the powerful experiences that can be evoked by providing a context in which we can go directly to the body and its wealth of information. Working with the body and then bringing our somatic experience into the realm of words through

articulating and sharing them provides a container for those powerful experiences. When I discovered SR and the concept of sponsorship, it seemed clear to me that this is exactly what we are doing in that process. We are sponsoring something that had no place in our verbal realm, finding a way to create a safe space for what had been abandoned and neglected before. Dancing our way to Self-Relations is a visceral bridge between the thinker (cognitive self) and the mover (somatic self). And just as dancing with a partner brings two people closer and connects us from the heart, so that inner connection grows as we move and dance into deeper integration and Self-Relations.

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*Tapping Into Dual Sources of Experience:
Self-Relations and Somatic Process*

Charlie Badenhop is the originator of *Seishindo*, a fourth-degree black belt and licensed instructor of aikido in Japan, a certified trainer in NLP, and a long-term practitioner of the Japanese healing art of *sei tai*, Self-Relations therapy, and Ericksonian hypnosis. He has been living, working, and studying in Japan for the last 17 years and has students throughout the world.

TAPPING INTO DUAL SOURCES OF EXPERIENCE: SELF-RELATIONS AND SOMATIC PROCESS

Let me begin by piecing together for you how my work relates to Self-Relations therapy. Some 25 years ago I began to study psychology and Ericksonian hypnosis. The practice of hypnosis and self-hypnosis began to open me up to the immense possibilities of the power of one's thinking, and the effect that one's thinking has on one's physical and emotional well-being. About three years into my study of hypnosis, a friend told me about what he was learning in regard to coordinating his body with his spirit or *ki*, as it was taught in the Japanese martial art of aikido. Based on his description, I was hooked before even taking my first class, and in a few years time found myself living in Japan and becoming a full-time aikido student.

One of the major differences between my beginning understanding of hypnosis and that of aikido, was that I initially thought hypnosis took place in the head, and that aikido was about learning how to use your body differently. Later on, as I got a tiny bit more sophisticated in my thinking, I surmised that hypnosis took place "in the mind residing in the head" while it seemed that my aikido *sensei* was saying that during aikido the mind was meant to reside in the lower abdomen. As my aikido studies continued, my *sensei* explained that indeed the mind was eminent throughout the entire body, and we were told to place the center

of our mind in our lower abdomen and "think" and act from there.

It was at just this point in time that I started to hear about an hypnosis teacher in the United States by the name of Stephen Gilligan who was using what he had learned in aikido and his other awareness training as an adjunct to his work in therapy and hypnosis. When I first went to Stephen's classes it was a kind of homecoming for me. I was back in America, and was studying with an American *sensei*, and this *sensei* was teaching a form of therapy that matched many of the same things that I had learned in Japan. One of the first things I learned as I began to study with Stephen was hearing him tell his students to "place your center in your lower abdomen and feel yourself and your experience from this tender place within yourself." This was very exciting to me as it exactly matched the aikido concept of placing the center of one's mind in the lower abdomen.

Understanding from aikido how to think without needing directions from the brain in my skull and receiving that same wisdom from Stephen was fascinating for me. One of my Seishindo students recently paid me a great compliment when he said to me "Sensei, I have never met anyone that can 'not think' better than you!" It is true, that after studying aikido for a while you notice that your ability to act spontaneously and gracefully

is actually aided by not using your rational mind as the main source of your intelligence. And in this regard the similarities between aikido and Stephen's work started to become much clearer, as I now understood from his training that the power of one's intellect is not the main source of intelligence when one is in a trance.

In aikido we learn to sense and react without needing to rationally consider what is taking place. We occasionally used to play a game when fooling around outside of the aikido dojo. The game involved three students and three metal cups turned upside down and sitting on a table. While the students had their backs turned the teacher placed a small treat like a piece of chocolate under one of the cups. The students would be given a signal, and they would turn around and grab for the cup that they thought had the treat underneath. Invariably certain students had a high percentage of correct guesses, while other students rarely guessed correctly. I would like to say that I gained a lot of weight from playing this game and eating all of the candy, but this is not the case. Initially I guessed incorrectly just as much as most students. It was only after a period of trial and error that I began to understand how to switch off my rational mind and rely on my intuition. Little by little I began to realize that the intelligence of the body plays an important role in our ability to relax, improvise, and react gracefully in the face of challenge. Another important point that I noticed from my practice was that the feeling I got when doing certain aikido relaxation exercises was very similar to the way I felt when doing self hypnosis. By shifting my attention to my body (my somatic self) in aikido, I could relax in much the same way that I could when shifting the way that I related to the thought processes of my cognitive self in self hypnosis. Many times I have heard Stephen ask, "Where is your attention now?" or "Where in your body are you feeling your problem?" Answering this line of questioning necessitates that we shift our main focus of attention away from the cognitive self and towards the somatic self.

The next piece in the puzzle that relates my work to SR is my study here in Japan of something known as *Noguchi sei tai*. In Japanese *sei tai* can be said to mean "correctly organized body" and "Noguchi" is the name of the teacher (*sensei*) that created this particular form of

sei tai. Noguchi *sensei* (1984) had already passed away by the time I got to Japan, but his students taught me how to do special exercises that allowed me to use my body in a new way, and release my excess energy. Noguchi *Sensei* used to say that the body and a spinning top are similar. He would say that if a top isn't spinning, and if a body isn't moving, you can't realize what they are meant for and how to use them. One of his main premises was that people tend to use unconsciously generated muscular tensing patterns to organize their body and hold onto excess energy in their system. He said that unconsciously tensing various parts of the body inhibits the body's natural movements, and produces stress and excess tension in the system. It is this holding onto excess energy and the concurrent inhibition of movement that causes illness and less than full health in general. It was his premise that the more serious a person's health condition, the more they were holding onto excess energy. When you release excess physical tension, you discover that your unconsciously generated body movements change, along with your thoughts and your emotional state. Noguchi *sensei* said that physical tension and emotional tension are realized as two sides of the same coin. This is something that Stephen also teaches in SR.

A second premise of *Noguchi sei tai*, as I understand it, is that you need to find a way to encourage and allow the unconscious organization patterns of your body to release with a minimum of direction from your conscious mind. In almost all instances attempting to consciously and willfully change one's posture and physical holding patterns rarely gets the results that one would desire. The simple reason for this being that conscious thought processes usually involve unconsciously tensing one's body, such that we freeze rather than free up the nervous system and muscles, to act. In SR terms we would say that the mind that creates a problem is not the mind to use when looking to change one's thoughts, feelings, and actions. The use of the intellectual mind as one's main source of intelligence is often not enough to get the desired results.

Noguchi *sensei* developed special exercises to help accomplish the unconsciously generated release of excess energy by entering into a state of spontaneous movement. When practicing these exercises I soon noticed

that my experience was similar to what I achieved with my aikido and self-hypnosis practice. By this point in time I was beginning to have a first hand experience of the two centers of control that each person has: one located in the head (the cognitive self) and the other located in the abdomen (the somatic self). It soon became apparent to me that influencing one's behavior through cognitive strategies produced different yet complementary experiences from influencing one's behavior through tuning into the somatic intelligence of the body.

For example, it is commonly known that well constructed affirmations/mantras can help people to perform more effectively in life. I often suggest to clients who want to be better public speakers that they develop a mantra to the effect of "Relaxed, Confident, and Appreciating the Audience." Such a mantra can often be quite effective, but the effect will be limited if the client fails to realize that when he does public speaking, he tends to tense his shoulders, round his posture, and breathe in a shallow manner. Superior performance is thus best facilitated by concurrently giving one's attention to both the communication of the cognitive self in the form of a mantra, and the communication emanating from the somatic self, in the form of posture, movement, and breath. Listening to both "selves" simultaneously gives us the highest quality results. Repeating one's mantra while concurrently feeling into, relaxing, and expanding one's physiology.

In my work with individual clients I began to experiment with having them enter into a relaxed state of awareness by teaching them how to tune into their breathing, posture, and unconsciously generated body movements. I would have them sit on the front half of their chair, take several deep breaths, and then begin to softly and gently adjust their posture, by letting their body move in whatever way it wanted to. I would say something like the following: "Jim, I am talking to you now, and I would like to ask Jim to not move his body. . . . Instead, I would like to ask your body to move itself, in whatever way it would like to, whenever it is ready to do so, and without the well intentioned advice of Jim." In the course of this work I soon began to see that when people become actively aware of their body without attempting to consciously change or direct what

they are doing, that indeed the body will begin to shift itself, without the need of conscious intervention. The body knows what the body needs. This led me to understand that when wanting to enter into a state of altered consciousness, being sensitive to and subtly influencing the communication of the body was just as important as being sensitive to and subtly influencing the verbal communication that emanated from the brain in one's skull.

Although my individual practice and my work with clients was progressing well, I still didn't quite have a complete model for understanding how to coordinate and work with each person's dual intelligence — somatic and cognitive. I was beginning to realize that the piece I was still missing was finding a way to facilitate better communication between the rational mind and the body. It is Stephen's work in what is now called Self-Relations therapy that helped me to finally synthesize a model of working with people that melds the intelligence of the cognitive self and the somatic self (our dual intelligence) into a single experience of what is called in SR "the relational self." When we experience ourselves as *the relationship between* our cognitive self and our somatic self, and join this relationship to our interaction with the outside world, we are able to better generate a sense of health and well-being.

Seishindo

What follows is an explanation of the principles of the discipline I have developed, called *Seishindo*. What I present can be an aid in further understanding SR, and can also perhaps give you some additional insight into how you think about and react to the world.

The Body—The Somatic Self

When working with a client who was an athlete and who regularly suffered stress injuries during her training I asked her to "Let your body move some as it feels some of its injuries . . . As you move, let your body recall exactly how it has been injured at various times . . . And then at some point, freeze your body . . . Sit still . . . And tell us what your body wants to say in regard to all of the injuries it has received." After taking

a few minutes to breathe and move her body my client stopped moving and spoke these words, "You don't understand what I am capable of and what is beyond my means. I feel like you are punishing me." The moment the client finished uttering these words, I asked her to begin moving again, and while moving I asked her to tell us what her body was wanting to say now. This led to a very fruitful conversation about the client's sense of self worth and how she tended to feel that she wasn't as talented as other athletes and thus had to work harder than them. She said she was now realizing that she had to love herself with just as much determination as she used in improving her athletic performance. She said, "You can't enjoy the win, if you can't love and appreciate the person that did the winning."

The above treatment session revolved around having the body move as it would in the situation that was being explored, and then having the body freeze as it would when injured. We somatically recreated the initial debilitating situation and then while duplicating the "freeze frame" so common to injuries and problem states, the client verbalized what they felt when in this state. From there we melted the freeze frame by once again moving, and we tapped into the wisdom of the body when it felt free to move and express. The client's body knew what it wanted and needed and the messages it offered up to the rational mind were of great emotional importance.

The body can be considered to be a form of ongoing communication, a shaping of and container/containment of all of the messages (chemical, electrical, nutritional, verbal, muscular) that we receive and transmit in the course of our lives. When considered as such, we understand that the way we use our body affects our emotional state and is influenced by past experience and by what we believe. Some of our deepest beliefs are those that we are not consciously aware of having.

The Language of the Somatic Self

A client comes to discuss his "utter failure" in his new job as a marketing manager. As he talks I note that his shoulders are rounded forward, his body is tilted somewhat backwards, he rocks just ever so much from

side to side, his head is tilted towards the left, and he talks rather quickly while breathing in a shallow manner. I wait until he has told me his story and then I gently say to him, "Please change your somatic language so that you can foster greater success in your business activities." He is willing to comply so I suggest that he open up his chest and round his shoulders back slightly, tilt his trunk forward ever so much, rock gently from front to back, and tilt his head towards the right. Once he has initiated all of these changes I say to him, "Please tell me what you feel in regard to your work situation now that you are embodying a different somatic conversation." Basically what I have done is asked him to shift each component of his somatic language that he was embodying while feeling stuck, so that his body could communicate differently which in turn will help to generate a new verbal conversation, and a different set of beliefs.

As he begins to speak I have to remind him to maintain the somatic shifts that I have suggested. His initial response to my reminder is, "I have trouble talking while sitting like this." This is just what I would expect him to say, because his somatic communication as suggested by me is no longer a match for his verbal conversation. I encourage him to proceed nonetheless so that we can learn from this experience, and he starts to talk once again while maintaining the different somatic conversation that I have suggested. As he continues to recall his past "failures" while maintaining a different physiology, his somatic shifts lead him to spontaneously shift his explanation of his work experience. He starts to talk about how his new job has given him the opportunity to learn unpleasant yet powerfully important lessons in regard to marketing, and how he is beginning to realize how many of his past marketing assumptions needed to be changed to match the conditions of the marketplace. He spontaneously begins to "reframe" and change the meaning of his work experience, and after a short while he states how he realizes that "not being right" has been tough on him, but that he actually is becoming a much better marketer than he was in the past! He is beginning to understand on a deep experiential level, that when we change our physiology we change our somatic conversation, which in turn leads us to change our "relationship to" what transpires and the

“meaning” that events have for us. Reframing the meaning of our experience in this manner, usually begins outside of our conscious awareness, and it is a natural and spontaneous response to changes in our physiology and somatic language.

The language of the somatic self is wired into our system at birth and forms the foundation of our memories, verbal communication, learned responses, and our ability to live and sustain ourselves. This somatic language is at least as sophisticated, systematic, and complete as our native tongue. This language of the somatic self, which we begin to understand while still in our mother’s womb, is what allows us to make meaning out of our experience prior to learning our native tongue, and it remains our primary meaning-making language throughout the course of our lives. Candace Pert (1999) says that there are receptors (sensing molecules that exist throughout our system) and ligands (substances that bind to the receptors and help to create all of the chemical reactions necessary to run our system) that can be considered to be “information molecules.” She refers to these molecules as the basic units of a language used by cells throughout the organism to communicate. Dr. Gershon (1999) says that neurotransmitters are the “words” nerve cells use for communicating. These renowned scientists are telling us that we all “speak,” “listen to,” and understand more than one language. This “other” language is what I am calling the language of the somatic self, and it is highly organized, systematic, and graced with many fine nuances.

The language of the somatic self does not use or require verbal language although it interacts with it continually, like a music group improvising with a singer, or a horse and rider traversing a path in the forest. The language of the somatic self is the pre-verbal communication that helps us to connect to the outside world, and allows us to make meaning out of our experience prior to learning our native tongue. It is part of our mammalian consciousness; it is intuitive and relational in nature and seems to direct us to join with other life; and it remains our primary meaning-making language throughout the entire course of our lives. This language forms the foundation of our memories, verbal communication, learned responses, and our ability to live and sustain our-

selves and connect to others. Like words that are systematically joined together in infinitely varied combinations to form the content of our verbal language as used by our cognitive self, the various components of our sensory experience are systematically joined together in infinitely varied combinations to form the language of the somatic self. This language “spoken” by the body makes it possible to understand and direct all of the massive information exchange that it takes part in, in collaboration with the brain in our skull. This is a language of immediate experience as compared to verbal language being a communication of abstractions.

Translation and Transformation

In another instance I was working with a teenage boy who compulsively overate pizza. I asked him to, “Please move your right hand back and forth from the table to your mouth, as if you are eating your eighth slice of pizza and move your mouth as if you are chewing . . . But do so a good deal faster than usual . . . As you continue to move . . . tell me what your body would say if it could translate your movements into words.” In a couple of minutes time my client translated his body’s movements into the following words, “I am really getting worn out by all of this activity. I need to take a rest.” I said to my client, “Please continue to move for a little while longer, and then when you are ready . . . suddenly freeze your movements with your right hand somewhere held in space . . . And have your body translate its feelings into words.” He froze in mid-air and his “body” replied, “Enough is enough. Stop eating! I feel like you are attacking me with all of this food.” As soon as these words were spoken, I urged him to begin moving again, but to do whatever movements felt best to his body. After about one minute’s time, I asked him to translate the movements he was making now into words. This led to a meaningful conversation with the client saying that no matter what he did in life, his parents seemed to be standing there saying, “Enough is not good enough. You need to do more and better!” As he took some deep breaths and continued to move he said that he was now understanding that it was important for him to live up to the needs of his body and

his emotional self, even if what he needed did not match the needs of his parents.

The movements, posture, breathing patterns, tilt of one's head and neck, and the body's flexibility or lack of it, form the basis of somatic language. The body knows the meaning of this language, and when it is asked to translate this language into verbal language, the results are most often poetic or metaphorical in nature, and somewhat astounding to the cognitive mind.

Our body translates and transforms all of the communication and information it receives in the course of our lives, both from our own internal world, and the external world as well. This ability of the body to constantly carry out complex translation and transformation processes requires a highly sophisticated "somatic intelligence." This intelligence of the body can be considered to be our "mammalian consciousness" and tuning into this consciousness brings forth our relational, intuitive, poetic, and feeling qualities.

Cognition, Soma, Mind, and Emotions:
One Complete and Indivisible Unit

"Bill" comes to me concerning problems he is having in his marriage, and as a secondary issue he reports suffering from dangerously high blood pressure. I notice that as he sits facing me and begins to talk about his work, he begins to rock ever so slightly forward and backward, and is slouching just a bit, with his head ever so much tilted to his right. I also notice that he tends to hold his breath when he pauses, and his face gets red at these times in particular. After a few minutes I distract Bill by asking him about his recent fishing trip to Russia. He really enjoys telling me a few fishing tales, and I notice his posture straightens up ever so much. He is now moving his trunk in a barely perceptible, gentle, right-to-left rocking motion. He tilts his head slightly to his left, and breathes deeply each time he pauses to regale me with another story. Having noticed all of this, I ask Bill if we can get back to his original issue while I stand behind him and place my hands gently on his head and neck. Bill is familiar with my work and he is thus comfortable with this form of interaction. (Otherwise, gaining much more rapport and further explana-

tion would be necessary before I would offer to engage in helping him with "hands on" work.)

Thus far, Bill has no idea about what I have noticed concerning his rocking movements and posture, because in this instance I do not want him to try and consciously change what he is doing. Bill is a perfectionist and I don't want his need for "perfection" to get in the way of his somatic intelligence. I am hoping to help him bypass his usual habit patterns as a first step toward learning something new.

As Bill begins to again tell me of his business difficulties, he again unconsciously moves his trunk forward and backward, and starts to slouch. I gently guide him with my hands, without words or any other form of logical explanation as to what I am doing or what I want him to do. I subtly suggest with my hands that he very gently change his posture, and without any verbal form of acknowledgement, he does so. I let his change in posture stabilize and then I begin to suggest with my hands that he move his trunk ever so much from right to left (the way that he tends to move when he is enjoying himself) instead of from front to back (the way he tends to move when he feels stuck.). Most of this time Bill continues to talk. Next, my hands suggest that he tilt his head ever so much to his right like he does when he talks about fishing. Now he finds himself discussing his problem while sitting and moving in a way that is quite different from his usual way of eliciting his problem. In working together with Bill, his cognitive self begins with a focus on his problem state, while I help his somatic self to begin to elicit a state of well being. In this way, his somatic intelligence becomes a context for dissolving fixed problems and allowing new solutions to arise. His body leads his brain, which changes his mind, and thus his emotional reaction. Indeed, after a short while Bill states that somehow the problems in "our" marriage don't seem to be quite as insoluble as before. (He unconsciously switches from "my" problems to the "our" problems of he and his wife). He says, "Funny as it might seem, I am already beginning to imagine some potential solutions." As he starts to generate some initial solutions his head becomes more balanced over his torso and he is definitely breathing more fully than before. At some point I take

my hands off of him and come around to sit in front of him while he continues to think and talk in a solution oriented manner. Now I begin to use various Self-Relations processes to assist him in melding his "new" somatic experience with the cognitive understanding that will help him to actually go out and utilize what he has learned. He comes back for a follow-up session in a week's time, and reports that he and his wife have been doing better, and he feels like there is definitely hope for a better future. I work with him some more in the same manner as I did last time, but this time filling him in some on what is taking place. Towards the end of the session I teach him two relaxation exercises and send him home to practice. Ten days later I get an email from him which says, "Went to the doctor and my blood pressure was down for the first time in six months! Wouldn't you know it, getting along better with my wife and lowering my blood pressure were bound to go hand-in-hand."

In Seishindo we believe that changing the condition, usage, and awareness of the body helps shift emotions, cognition, and behavior, and brings the entire self into a state of greater balance and well-being. We don't so much try to get our clients to maintain a somatic-emotional balanced state, as we teach them how to get back to this state when they find that they have strayed and are suffering dis-ease.

In Seishindo we usually don't create a sharp differentiation between body/health issues, and psyche/psychological issues. Indeed we find that when clients come with psychological issues, the first positive change they notice is in the condition of their overall health and body usage. The same is true "in reverse." Clients come suffering from the pain of a car accident or a lingering sports injury, and they might likely report feeling happier and more at ease in life in general, a week or two prior to noticing any physical improvement. Cognitive intelligence, somatic intelligence, mind, and emotions are all woven together into one indivisible and highly creative whole. For educational purposes we can talk about body and brain, intellect and emotions, or conscious and unconscious mind, as if they were separate, but in the living of our life it is just this sense of separateness that is a sure sign of a living system out of balance.

Learning and Adapting with a Dual Perspective

Self-Relations suggests that people tend to identify with one of two basic perspectives when perceiving and understanding life — their somatic self/mind or their cognitive self/mind.

The cognitive self is associated with the brain in our skull, thoughts, strategies, mental abstractions, and descriptions of one's life. The cognitive self understands life mainly by passing it through the filters of verbal language and socially constrained thinking. The main avenue of communication for the cognitive self is one's native language, used in both intrapersonal (internal dialogue) and interpersonal conversations.

The somatic self, on the other hand, is associated with embodied knowing, poetry, emotion, intuition, movement, a non-verbal felt sense of nature and one's experience, and the archetypal presence of the collective experiences of all human beings. The language of the somatic self is based on a "felt sense" of the present moment, emotional states, bodily reactions, and the relational connections to all we come in contact with. The somatic self communicates its experience nonverbally yet systematically.

In Self-Relations terms, we are advised to tune into "the tender soft spot in the belly" in order to integrate the somatic and cognitive selves. The somatic self's ability to sense what is taking place, along with the cognitive self's ability to negotiate among various distinctions, words, strategies, and abstractions allows for the evolution of a mature "relational self." The ideal is to embed the experiences of the somatic and cognitive selves, one within the other, and in the process to create a new and different experience that includes and at the same time transcends both.

An Alternative Model of Psychotherapy

Somatic psychotherapy attempts to influence clients at their somatic level of experience. They are asked to lead with their body and follow with their rational mind. Since Somatic Based Therapy assumes that much of what we understand cognitively derives from our verbal interpretation of our somatic language, we tend to

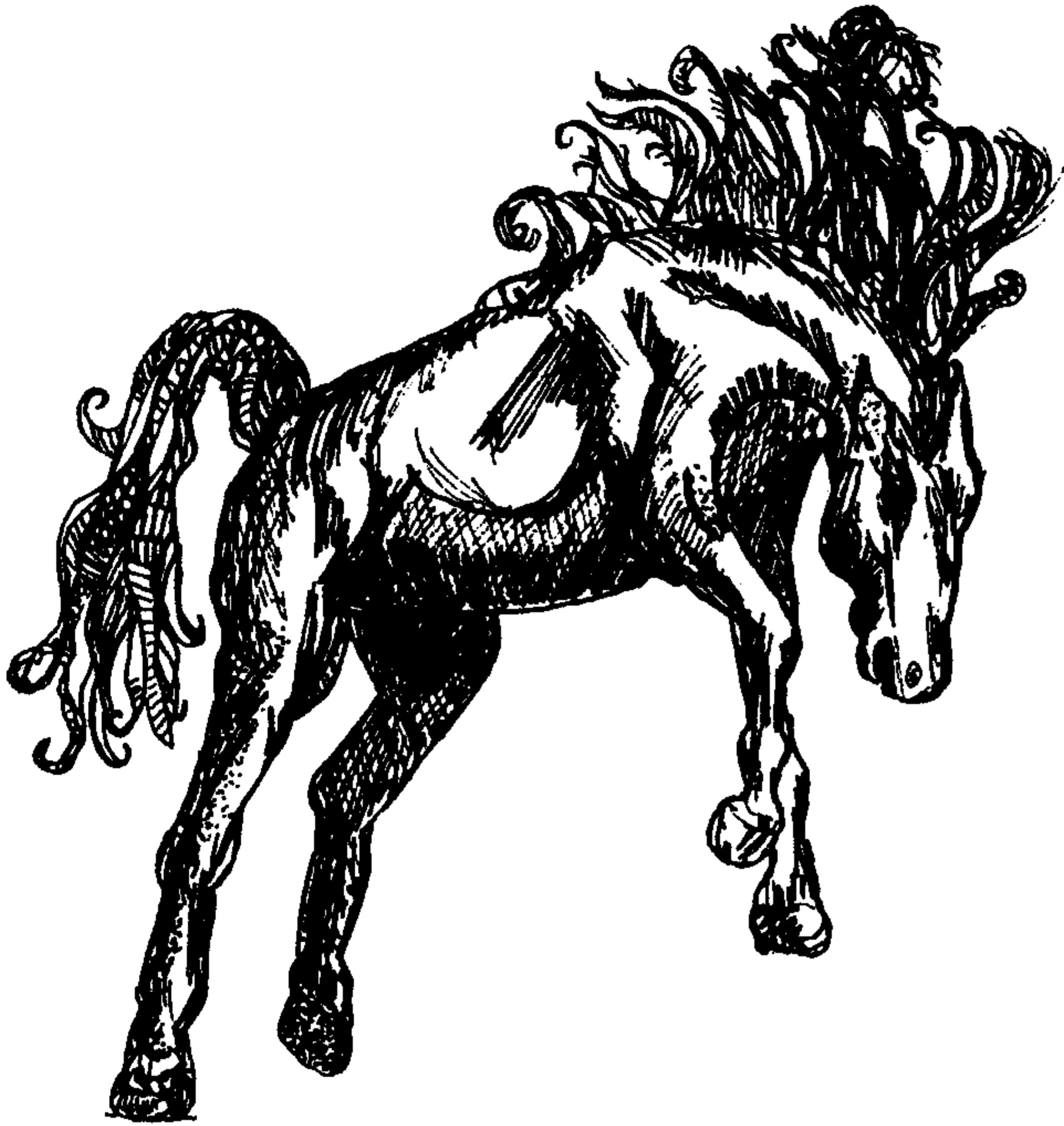
look first at the body in order to understand the psyche. We begin with both the client and the practitioner getting a felt sense of the communication of the body. Then we look to enlist the help of the client's unconsciously generated somatic intelligence to bring about meaningful change. This change is wrought by the client's innate and preverbal sense of what needs to be different somatically in order to bring about a greater sense of psychological health and well-being. Once the somatic experience has begun to change, I create a deeper conversation using the various processes of Self-Relations therapy to integrate our dual intelligence into an experience of the relational self.

I hope that what I have explained in these few pages leads you to experiment more with somatic based forms of therapy and have a greater appreciation for your somatic intelligence. Please keep the following in mind. First, I have offered a simple explanation of phenomenon that took me years to understand and are actually quite subtle in nature. Learning how to help people change their unconsciously generated movements and posture usually takes quite a bit of training.

If you don't do it just right, people feel like you are simply pushing them around. Second, each person manifests their movements in their own particular and unique manner. Some people tend to move in various oval shapes, and others weave a bit of a figure eight. Some people are very stiff in their neck but move their trunk a good deal. Other people are fairly rigid in their trunk and move their head and neck quite freely. Still others move in a richly varied combination of ways that defy description. Third, changing your posture and the way you move and breathe has a marked effect on your emotional state and your psyche, but just as importantly, all of these changes will help to facilitate one's relationships with others, and an overall sense of belonging in the world. The guiding principle in this work is that we already possess or have access to all that we need in order to live a "successful" heartfelt life. When we respectfully approach our clients and experience their true magnificence, we can enter into a relational loop that will help the both of us to realize that we have the potential to live life more fully than we usually realize.

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*Therapy as a Dance and Dance as a Therapy:
A Cross-pollination*

Jessie Shaw is a practitioner of Chinese Medicine with a Master of Science degree in Acupuncture and Herbology. She graduated from the Tri-State College of Acupuncture in New York City. She continues to supplement her education in Chinese Medicine by studying classical approaches to acupuncture and herbs with Jeffrey Yuen and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallee — both scholars of classical texts written more than 2,000 years ago. She is also studying Mandarin Chinese, Tui Na, and Cranial Sacral therapies. Prior to her studies in Chinese Medicine, Jessie worked in advertising where she was a Senior Vice President at Young and Rubicam, a major worldwide advertising agency. She has a B.A. in music from the University of Southern Colorado, and an M.B.A. in marketing with a minor in statistics from NYU's Stern School of Business. She has studied Self-Relations with Stephen Gilligan for the past 6 years, and has been a student of classical ballet for more than 10 years, her primary physical practice. She lives and practices in Greenwich Village of New York City.

Bill Hedberg is the Director of Gyrotonics on the Hudson where he works with dancers to guide them toward the realization of their full physical and artistic potential. He has a rich foundation in the structure and function of the human body with degrees in Anatomy and Kinesiology, Laban Movement Analysis, Myofacial Restructuring, and Deep Tissue Massage. Bill also has degrees in Neurolinguistic Programming and Hypnosis and has been a student of Self-Relations for the past 7 years. He integrates its core precepts into his work on a daily basis.

THERAPY AS A DANCE AND DANCE AS A THERAPY: A CROSS-POLLINATION

Program Notes

This article is a lecture about heaven. It discusses the interconnection between the practices of dancing and Self-Relations. Our desire is that it will pique the reader's interest and curiosity enough to abandon lectures about heaven. May all its readers go off in pursuit of a body-based practice that will help them discover and deeply feel their own aliveness and bring their unique gifts into the world.

The authors bring these thoughts to you based on their own experiences with dance and SR. Jessie Shaw is a practitioner of Chinese Medicine and has studied SR with Stephen Gilligan over the past 6 years. Although not a professional dancer, she has intensely pursued classical ballet as her physical practice for more than 10 years. Bill Hedberg has been a student of SR for the past 7 years. He uses the principles of SR coupled with his own past experiences as a professional dancer to guide and inform his teaching and training of professional dancers at his studio, Gyrotonics on the Hudson in New York City.

The Overture

A discovery is said to be an accident meeting
a prepared mind.

— Albert Szent-Gyorgyi (Cameron, 1992, p. 64)

As human beings we all carry with us woundings, strengths, and longings that propel us through life, like a large wave under the board of a surfer. Sometimes we experience the peak of riding the wave, sometimes we experience near falls off the board, and sometimes we purely crash and burn fighting against the strong undertow that feels like we will be forever lost. This is called the cycle of life. It's so easy to talk about as our "story," but it can be both euphoric and agonizing in the flesh of daily living. SR is a practice that helps one navigate the rapids of life: the joys, the tragedies, and the sufferings that life entails. It is a process of transformation that entails the full owning and full being of all that one is, in a fashion that is open and all inclusive, on a second-to-second basis.

This article doesn't spell out the principles of SR. Stephen Gilligan (1997) has already done so in *The Courage to Love*. We use his principles as the underlying epistemology for this article, like an alphabet that can be strung into many different sentences, phrases, paragraphs and stories. Taken in this light, the principles and practice of SR, while originally proposed within a psychotherapeutic context, can be extended across many contexts that comprise the state of human living.

One such context is the world of classical and contemporary modern dance. Dancing is a vivid metaphor for the principles of applying SR because it is by nature

a combination of the body, the mind, and an audience. Dance is a discipline, a practice and a way of life, that when done well, epitomizes the essence of SR. For to dance well, one must develop the ability to hold multiple awarenesses at the same time: somatic self (body), cognitive self (mind), and the field (audience). It is the kind of dancing we experience at a phenomenal performance when an artist captivates us through her ability to express a deep emotion with the simple turn of a wrist, or the mere showing of her back.

Realizing the SR principle of mind-body unity, shown in the cognitive self and the somatic self integrating into a generative relational self, is one of the differences that makes a difference in achieving human excellence in any field of human endeavor, whether it be dance, art, choreography, music composition, athletics, theatre or scientific thought. It seems to us that no matter the field, excellence cannot be achieved either from a purely cognitive or somatic position. Only when the two are connected and in communion do great performances or works of art occur. This is why Gilligan's (1997) references to great individuals in a variety of fields seem so relevant: Einstein's descriptions of where his ideas came from; Michael Jordan's "zone"; Mozart's perfect musical offerings. Inspiration and genius are clearly at work, but these giants also achieve a connection between body, mind and the collective unconscious that takes their endeavors to a level higher than what seems humanly possible.

This article seeks to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the SR principles through the metaphor of dance and the actual practice of dancing. It also examines how the use of SR in performance based dancing (whether it be classical ballet, modern, or jazz), can take us beyond "good dancing" to the realm of extraordinary peak experiences — into the world of "magic performances." Thus, the first step in the practice of SR might be considered "remedial" (training, taking class), with the next being "generative" — applications that lead to advanced creativity and "in the zone" experiences. As an old Zen teacher remarked, "Enlightenment is an accident, but a good practice makes you accident prone."

Toward this enlightened end, the article discusses the principles of SR and their relation to dance. Specif-

ically, it addresses: the formation of the relational self and its importance to dance and expressive movement; the inherent difficulties in feeling and connecting with the somatic intelligence of the body; a practice the dancer or artist can use to help build connection and relationship between the cognitive and somatic selves; a discussion of pain and physical injury, and how dancers' approaches to healing these traumas is analogous to the healing of emotional pain and suffering as discussed in SR; health and healing as an ongoing process that dance and physical practices greatly facilitate; the addiction inherent in "high states" — of which dance is one; and finally, a discussion of how dance or other body-based practices can facilitate heightened awareness and spiritual consciousness.

Act I, Scene I:

There Are Two of Us

What I am actually saying is that we need to be willing to let our intuition guide us, and then be willing to follow that guidance directly and fearlessly.

— Shakti Gawain (Cameron, 1992, p. 47)

We have observed in our experience in the field of professional dancing that some dancers progress quickly, while others who train as hard or harder, make little or no progress. We believe that the more successful dancers are able to better meet the considerable challenge of connecting their somatic and cognitive selves, and to feel and achieve the middle ground of the "relational self" (Gilligan, 1997). In the dance world, we believe the relational self corresponds to what is referred to as one's "performance presence," i.e., a heightened state of awareness where one is able to track numerous internal and external inputs (music, other dancers, audience response, breathing, choreography, story line, images), while also listening to and sponsoring the creative impulses that arise from the somatic being (discovered emotions, spontaneous musical phrasing, unpracticed nuances in the shape and expression of the body itself). The underlying concept of the relational self or of having performance presence is that there are two of us occupying the space of our being: (1) a cognitive self that

is primarily the verbal, visual mind, and; (2) a somatic self that can be experienced primarily through kinesthetic sensations (emotional and physiological) of our body. The intelligence of the somatic self is perhaps the most difficult to understand, and can perhaps best be explained through an example. When one slips on a set of stairs, the hand will automatically grasp out for the railing. The question might be, "Who saved you?" This reaction is not the working of the cognitive mind, but is the physical intelligence of the somatic self at work. It automatically, without the intervention or direction of our mind, grasps firmly to protect our life. In dance, it appears that the somatic self is up to something more than "protecting." It is longing for freedom, spontaneity, non-verbal expression, and connection. Thus, the somatic self comes to life in dance by guiding the positioning, spacing and angling of the body, the timing of the movement, breath, and musculature contraction and release — all synthesized into a pure celebration of movement.

The interacting of these two selves in dancing can perhaps be exemplified by William James' metaphor of the horse and rider (James, 1950). Taken first from the traditional perspective of mind over body, one's conscious mind or cognitive self might be seen as the rider giving instructions to the somatic self, the horse. The cognitive self, using visual and auditory symbolic representations, instructs the somatic self where to go next, and the position or shape of the body to achieve. The somatic self interprets these instructions through having rehearsed the sequences and positions and understands, in its non-verbal fashion what is expected. From a Neuro-Linguistic Programming modeling perspective, one might hypothesize that simply using the "natural," most eloquent images or auditory cues to inform the body could be enough to create art and that sense of grace that one sees in good dancers. However, this is not the case, because artistic, expressive dance does not come from a mind over body perspective. All that the use of this model ensures from a dance training perspective is that the dancer will move across the stage at the right time using the right positions. It does not guarantee or predispose the dancer toward an artistic, graceful performance that connects with the audience. And it does not address two equally disturbing dance states where the relational self is not present: dancing that is

stiff and mechanical (cognitive dominance) or dance that is overly emotional and self-indulgent (somatic dominance) (Gilligan, 1997).

For artistry to occur, the artist must create the experience of a relational self, where mind and body interact, work together, and are equally guided by each other. This relational self does not occur until the cognitive self surrenders into a relationship with the somatic self in such a way that both are equally present at the same time. Returning to the horse and rider metaphor, one must take into account the nature of the relationship between horse and rider. In great myths of heroes and their trusted steeds, such as *The Lone Ranger and Silver*, or *Xena, Warrior Princess* and her beautiful stallion, the two go in search of adventure with a joined intention and responsibility. The two work as a team, each with his or her individual strengths and intelligence. The rider treats the horse as an equal and allows the horse to take initiative, and at times lead him. It is not a dominant or abusive relationship; but rather one of love and respect. The rider learns to listen to and heed the horse's intuitions. The horse and rider become one, and act with a shared intelligence.

This is the state of being that the true artist strives to achieve, and it is an apt metaphor for the relational self emphasized in the SR model. It is more than an advocacy for self love. It requires that the dancer have an inherent curiosity, respect and appreciation for this ultimate intelligence that resides within his or her body, and the discipline to undergo the training that helps cultivate a loving relationship with it. This can be a challenge in many ways. Not only does it require an awareness that this other intelligence exists; it also requires a great deal of commitment and trust to develop the connection.

Act I, Scene II:

Lose Your Mind, Come to Your Senses

No longer conscious of my movement, I discovered a new unity with nature. I had found a new source of power and beauty, a source I never knew existed.

— Roger Bannister, on breaking the four-minute mile (Cameron, 1992, p. 185)

To gain a felt sense awareness of somatic intelligence one must first be willing to feel. It is only through the conscious mind's felt sense of the somatic self that the harmonized intelligence of both systems can be generated. In actuality, few of us orient to the feelings of the somatic self willingly. After all, the somatic self is typically numbed, abused and ignored in our cultural and familial histories. We typically do not listen to the calling and feelings of our somatic self until it is "leaking" so badly that we can no longer ignore it, e.g., through a symptom such as depression or anxiety. SR emphasizes this "problem as the solution," that "something is waking up" within the person (Gilligan, 1997). Our typical reaction to the awakening of the somatic self is to try to ignore or numb it further. We rarely welcome or bless the difficult and uncomfortable feelings that arise within our beings. Often, it is only when we can no longer turn away from the somatic self that we finally open to deeply connecting with it. At such times, hopefully, a person can find a safe place, e.g., therapy, body work or a body-based practice, to learn to associate rather than dissociate from the somatic self.

Learning to "lose the mind" of cognitive control and trust the somatic self is especially crucial for dancers, who rely on it for their art. Most dancers practice and develop a basic level of connecting their somatic and cognitive selves because of the pressures of the performance environment. They train to not be disturbed by negative emotions that might overwhelm them in a performance, such as anxiety, fear, and memory blocks. Because such states can throw a dancer right out of his or her body with disastrous results in the midst of a performance, practicing repetition in the studio becomes a crucial part of training both to build endurance and to generate pure muscle memory. If the mind totally blanks during a performance, the only hope is that enough time has been spent in the studio in connection with the somatic self. Because the somatic self has its own unique intelligence it can remember how to keep going until the cognitive self can re-engage. It can pull a dancer through those rough moments. This is one type of a "lose your mind" state that confronts most dancers, and that they all address out of pure need.

However, there is another type of "lose your mind" experience that is more generative in nature. It

is a learned state of "being present" in the studio and on stage where the deep self or soul can be touched and expressed through the movement. This is the aspect of the art of dance that is the ultimate challenge. It is an exploration through the choreography and movement whereby the somatic behavior or positions act as a rolex through different selves. It is the idea of exploring oneself through the choreography, and becoming aware of the feeling tone that reveals a moment of a self with each movement, gesture or body posture. Some of the selves revealed will be "neglected selves" (Gilligan, 1997), or parts of the self that the dancer feels uncomfortable feeling. Or it could be a self or feeling tone locked in the past that the dancer especially likes to feel, despite its lack of maturity, e.g., a young self that loves being reassured and praised, or an indignant self that would like to act out in rehearsal when things are not going well. The generative artist is one who can feel and express all of these different selves and not lose him or herself in the experience. It is the concept of "not too tight, not too loose" (Gilligan, 1997), the capability to hold the present self and the neglected self at the same time.

One way of thinking about this practice that the artist follows in order to build this capability is shown in Figure 1. The stages of the practice are: (1) fully feeling the neglected self; (2) adding a mature presence and understanding to know the neglected self is not "all" of them but a "part" of them; (3) holding both of these felt senses at the same time to facilitate; (4) bringing the neglected self into the "land of the living" in a sponsored way so that its presence can be integrated and transformed (Figure 1).

The failure to integrate the energies of the somatic self can be quite frustrating. In the world of dance, this corresponds to times when the performer falls too deeply into their emotionality on stage, so that the audience feels a sense of over indulgence that causes them to disconnect from the performer. Even though the performer may feel that he is expressing his deepest truth or soul, the audience is not able to witness the event. The only way a performer can get beyond this hurdle is to connect the somatic feeling with a cognitive, mature presence so that both may be present at the same time and expressed through a soulful, caring touching of the somatic tender soft spot. When this somatic self is

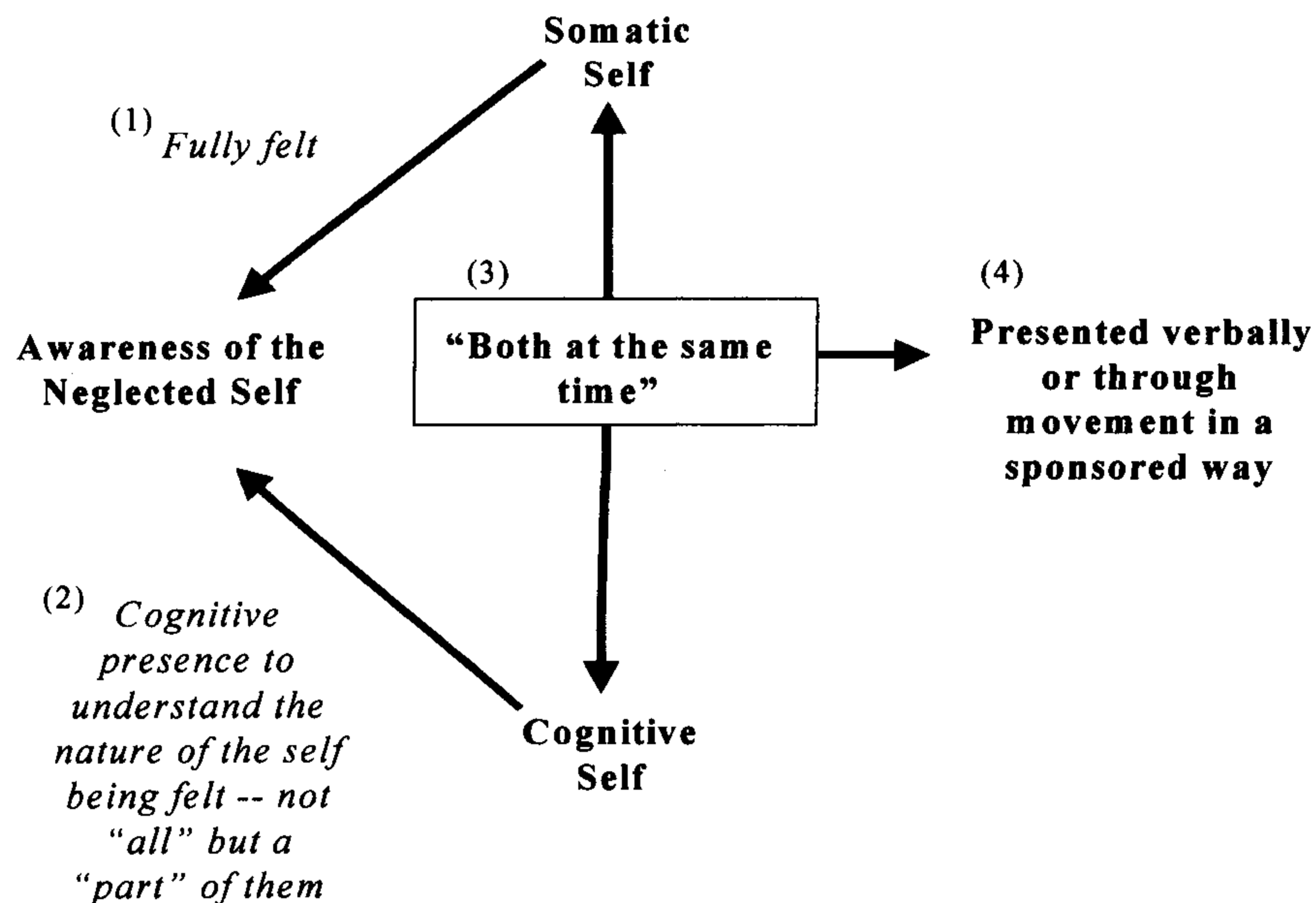


Figure 1

sponsored and connected with a mature presence, it can be felt in the world and the audience is able to empathize and co-feel the emotion being expressed. Without the soundness of this type of cognitive-somatic connection, the audience may not be able to empathize with the emotion being expressed and may even feel like they are being imposed upon or violated. This will usually cause them to disconnect from the dancer and from the intention of the performance itself.

Artists talk about the experience of a relational self in different ways. They may describe having a really juicy part or character to portray. Or they may describe a state wherein there is an experience of release in the body, such that movement takes on an unselfconscious grace where the body, core, and limbs integrate and express themselves in an effortless, united way. The artist

who has gained experience in connecting and holding these two presences may take the experience a step further by asking, "Is this the appropriate self to touch at this point in the choreography? Is it the part of myself that best expresses the emotion or story I want to tell at this point in the dance?" This is where the art of dance and the creative process begin to reveal themselves for both the artist and audience alike. It is the generative application of the practice of SR.

**Act I, Scene III:
The Pain of Pain**

Our suffering is us, and we need to treat it with kindness and nonviolence. We need to embrace our fear, hatred, anguish, and anger.

My dear suffering, I know you are there. I am
here for you, and I will take care of you.

— Thich Nhat Hanh (1998, p. 28)

Another reality of being a dancer relevant to SR work is physical pain. Pain and injury are daily realities of the professional dancer. A dancer tweaks muscles, compresses joints, puts parts of the body into spasm, and often deals with chronic exhaustion and fatigue. When a dancer is on tour and doesn't have an understudy, there is no choice but to perform. Thus, the dancer must learn how to delve into the proper naming of the message of pain, and learn how to re-open condensed tissue. Many names exist for a negative body reaction to pain or injury. In SR, it might be called "neuromuscular lock" (Gilligan, 1997); acupuncture describes it as "blocked energy;" and in dance, it is referred to as a muscle in spasm. Whatever it is called, it represents the instinctual response of the somatic self to "condense and close" to pain resulting from some type of trauma. In professional dancing, this blockage has to be re-opened both for the safety of the body and for graceful expression. To have blockage in one area will restrict movement throughout a far larger area and cause only greater injury. Thus, a dancer does a great deal of work to place cognitive awareness in damaged or pained tissue, e.g., by extending mindfulness inside an aching knee. The dancer is in essence blessing the wound or traumatized area with human presence in order to open it up to the field of life around it — one's dance partner, gravity, weight, musicality, breath — so that it can begin to heal. This approach to re-open and heal dance injuries correlates with the aspect of SR that encourages actively touching and connecting with emotionally painful areas. SR advocates that we be with our injured emotional areas in a healing way so that they too can open back to the field of life, back to weight, gravity, relationship and all the metaphoric relational components that one experiences in the "dance of life." It is what SR refers to as "effective suffering" (Gilligan, 1997). The effectiveness of this approach in dealing with physical pain and dance injuries seems to validate further its application in the psychotherapeutic context.

For the dancer, the most difficult aspect of re-opening a physical injury is to trust that it is O.K. to feel into the pain, or to go into the pain of movement when a joint is traumatized. Again, the dancer must understand that the message of the pain is not life threatening or career ending, but is purely the message of "ouch." They must have faith in their ability to heal, and in their power to regenerate, in order to work out the sprain in an ankle or to continue to flex and extend spinal musculature when it is in spasm, massaging it out through movement. Many of the healing practices used by dancers stimulate the life force in the body, to re-engage it to the flow of life. For example, the practice of acupuncture doesn't overtly take pain away: When you poke a muscle with a needle it stimulates or calls life (qi) to flow through it. The flow of that life energy is what sweeps away the blockage, and consequently the pain. Most dancers prefer not to follow the traditional Western medical model of treating the symptom with pain killers, because such drugs do not address the larger issue of re-engaging the injured area with the rest of the life force moving through the body. And unless the blockage is re-opened to the flow of life, it will not heal, putting the dancer at greater risk of an even more severe injury.

It seems that the psychotherapist's role is in some cases similar to that of a skilled massage therapist, acupuncturist or dance coach. It is first and foremost to provide the message that this pain is not special pain. It is an ordinary pain of life, not to be taken too personally. And it is pain that is safe to relax into it. The therapist's role is also to help the client reengage the injury with the flow of life. Emotionally, we as a species tend to withdraw from pain, cut it off and avoid all stimuli that would activate the pain, thereby preventing it from being connected to the flow of life. Thus, when a client withdraws from emotional pain, the therapist guides him or her into the experience and connects it back with the flow of life. It is the natural healing process by which the body and spirit can begin their natural course to regenerate and heal. In both dance and psychotherapy, the natural ingredient that activates the healing process is human awareness of the felt experience of the pain.

Act II, Scene I:

Healing is a Process, Not a Finite State

The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.

— C. G. Jung (Cameron, 1992, p. 35)

We all long for our own uniqueness and gifts to be seen by others. It seems an inherent part of the human psyche that is played out in many of our myths and stories, from Cinderella to Luke Skywalker. Dancers are a rare breed in that they often get to fully experience and exhibit their own uniqueness through their chosen art form. Dancing gives them a place in their lives to feel the variety of their different selves, to learn to sponsor them with their cognitive presence, and to have them witnessed and seen by the world. Thus, dance provides many opportunities for emotional healing and growth.

Of course, "healing" comes in many forms. Clients visiting psychotherapists may want to "get rid of something bad," or "make this bad feeling go away," or "help me kill 'it' off." In contrast, the healing we are referring to is based on the SR sponsorship principle of integrating a neglected self back into our core being (Gilligan, 1997). It is like the ancient practice of Shamanism where through the ritual of soul retrieval, the Shaman journeys forth into the three worlds and uses his aides to help retrieve the parts of the soul that were lost through trauma, illness or some other type of deep wounding. He brings them back to the light of the upper world where they can be integrated back into the whole of the person (Matthews, 1995).

Dancing can provide opportunities for this type of healing in various ways. For example, a dancer is on occasion asked to portray an element of him or herself which he or she would prefer to neglect. This neglected self can thus be given some personal air time in rehearsal and in performance, where its truth can be seen and blessed. This in turn may allow the complementary personalities of the dancer more time to come through in daily life. The same is true of using SR in psychotherapy. The role of the therapist is to help the client become aware of the hidden character or feelings that are

a part of their being. The therapist also helps to give these neglected "selves" airtime where they can be brought out into the world, to be seen, heard and blessed so that the client can begin to sponsor these parts of their being, both in the therapist's office and in real life.

Another way that the practice of dance facilitates healing is through its inherent physicality. The whole process of dance can bring health and vitality, a kind of somatic well being, that helps in bearing the wounded selves in one's being. If you can feel your own vitality, you will be more able to feel and heal your wounds. In the words of Buddha, "To keep the body in good health is a duty . . . Otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear."

Act II, Scene II:

Ineffective Suffering and Bad Trips

Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage. — Anaïs Nin (Cameron, 1992, p. 156)

Dancing's extraordinary potential for healing is not always realized. It is our experience that dancers, in general, have a greater felt-sense awareness of their own physical and emotional suffering, primarily because they are required to spend so much time in their bodies. They are trained in acting and psychological techniques to access and isolate core parts of themselves — specifically the animal power of their raw somatic self, which is often accompanied by the sides of themselves that yearn to be seen as special. It can become terribly addictive to source one's most powerful selves, in the service of special states of consciousness. These states involve high levels of arousal and excitement, which present the problem of how to "come down" into calmness. To continue obtaining these "high" states, some dancers will do anything to quiet and escape the host of neglected selves that are concomitantly accessed. Cigarettes, alcohol, and caffeine abuse abound. Anorexia is common. Other substance abuse occurs as well as a number of other evasive techniques (not unknown to the layman), such as dissociation and trance states.

The only path out of these types of dissociate behaviors is through the hard core realization that we can

never “rid ourselves” of these bad or uncomfortable feelings, and parts of ourselves that arise. We can only, in an ongoing fashion, sponsor and integrate them. (See Figure 1.) It is a daily practice of feeling the feelings, connecting them with our mature presence, and expressing them in the world. As Gilligan (1997) notes, the expression may initially be quite “fressen,” but in continuing the practice and integration these energies mature and become more “essen” in nature. Professional dancers are given more overt opportunities to practice this process of connecting with their neglected selves. Unfortunately, due to the experiential demands and traditions of their profession, many subsequently react with a more pronounced aversion to the feelings that arise in their personal lives and attempt to control and ignore these feelings through addictions and forms of substance abuse.

Act III, Scene I:

Cultivating “Specialness”

Here in this body are the sacred rivers: here are the sun and moon as well as all the pilgrimage places . . . I have not encountered another temple as blissful as my own body.

— Saraha (Cameron, 1992, p. 187)

Little worth is placed in our society on exploring and cultivating one’s soul, uniqueness or individual gifts. In fact, many distractions and forces of alienation are in place to keep us from noticing our internal being and its potential. Our societal pace is so fast and the economic pressures so great that we often fear to feel the natural rhythms of our somatic self. This sets up a split between the inner and outer realities, and between the cognitive and somatic selves, such that an inner connection to the somatic self can be taken too far, to the point of self-absorption and self-indulgence. There is the risk of connecting to the somatic self without being grounded enough in the rational world — forgetting to take care of worldly needs like having sufficient income, caring for one’s family, and completing mundane tasks like grocery shopping and seeing the dentist. Also, dancing can be exploited as a means to an end: to achieve fame, fortune, or love. These are serious considerations. A

balance or middle path is very important. But in its purest form, the exploration and felt sense seeking of our unique gifts is both the means and the end, and potentially the fulfillment of our deepest longing. It is by experiencing ourselves that we can come to know others. And it is by feeling our own somatic aliveness, that we are also able to feel it in others. In the words of Lao Tzu, “Knowing others is wisdom; Knowing the self is enlightenment” (Feng, 1972, p. 66).

Discussing dance as a personal practice to explore and develop a richer connection with one’s self is not to elevate it to some kind of spiritual panacea. Nor is it to suggest that dance is “the way” to achieve such a connection. It is just one of many body centered practices that can provide a path to take one closer to a more sacred experience of being. Martha Graham (2001), despite her strong bias for dance as *the* pathway, beautifully summarizes the importance of the pursuit:

There is a vitality, a life-force, a quickening
that is translated through you into action.
And because there is only one of you in all time
this expression is unique.

If you block it, it will never exist through any
other medium and be lost.
The world will not have it.
It is not your business to determine how good it is
nor how valuable it is;
Nor how it compares with other expressions.
It is your business to keep it yours, clearly and
directly, to keep the channel open.
You do not even have to believe in yourself or
your work.
You have to keep open and aware directly
of the urges that motivate you.

Keep the channel open.
No artist is pleased.
There is no satisfaction whatever at any time.
There is only a queer, divine, dissatisfaction,
A blessed unrest that keeps us marching
And makes us more alive than the others.

— Martha Graham
(www.cybernation.com)

Why does establishing a connection with the somatic self matter? Because it is the part of us that is truly *alive*. This consciousness in our body is literally our life force, our qi. It is the force that moves through our physical body — our physical awareness, our physical reality. It has a presence and awareness different from the cognitive self. It is the part of us that sees and feels the beauty inside the rose, its life force, its redness. It senses the aliveness in a cheetah running at incredible speeds. It feels the beauty of a sunset. SR emphasizes the felt sense experience of one's own unique life force, as well as the felt sense of the life force in all other beings and objects, such as the life force running through a rose (Gilligan, 1997). Achieving this felt sense experience, feeling deeper and deeper into the somatic energy, is to commune with something spiritual. It's why making love, intense athletics, martial arts, dancing, and meditation can be such rich, fulfilling experiences. They are a communion with the life force running through us.

The purpose of establishing a body-based practice is to put in place a daily ritual that enables us to connect with this aliveness in our beings. It is our somatic self that touches and connects with the energy of the world around us. It is through this way of being that we can begin to explore the depths of our longing, to discover the riches and special uniqueness we hold, and to bring these gifts into the world. Through this way of being

we connect with something larger than ourselves — the whole of life, the energy of the universe, the collective unconscious. Getting back into our bodies is the gateway. Without having a body-based connection — an ongoing communion with the life force running through us — life quickly becomes empty and meaningless. The step toward establishing a body-based practice may seem small but it is filled with the wonder of possibility. As Murray Louis (1980) expresses it:

When I reach too deeply, I can feel him. I can feel his presence. I can feel him reaching out, and I close my eyes and let him enter me. I dare not look. I am afire, I flame, he passes through. I hear him round the bend. I can breathe again. I am flesh again. I open my eyes to see where he has been, to see what he has touched. What if some day I should innocently open the wrong door and stand face to face with him? Would I be consumed? Would I be terrified of whom I might see? Is this why I close my eyes and open my senses when he appears? When he possesses me, whose eyes do I use? I know it is his handiwork when I cannot explain what I have done. Does this vague visage know me any better than I know him? Who would recognize their own soul if they should meet it? (pp. 80–81)

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POETIC INTERLUDE 5

As If

(Dvorah Simon)

it was as if
it was a thing
that came to live with us

and none of us wanted
to give it a name
but we gave it many names

the way a husband and wife
speak of each other, to their child, not as,
my husband, my wife . . . but
your father,
your mother.

it was as if
it was
everyone's child

and it tore into
the unborn children
our bodies never bore,
and it woke the dead, the strange,
the uncle we were afraid of,
the old woman
with bad teeth

screaming and incomplete,
it was not
polite.
it respected
none of us,
though it forced a way

for us to respect each other
and ourselves.

but we feared it,
and it touched
our fear.

as if we held,
an ugly child
and found our arms
bloody and raw.

even as
we nursed it, achingly.
even as we rocked it,
and lay awake, after,
panting,
straining to learn again the sound
we make,
when we turn to bless each other,
and ourselves.

it was as if we found
these things
in the mirror of
each other's eyes
and in the belly pit of our
grief

over and over touching
each other in this darkness
over and over reaching to find
a common breath
straining for that word that would bring
release . . .

it's time to heal
the mirror is broken
and put away
let daylight come: it was only a dream
dark thing though it was, real
though it was: it ends

the child wakes.
and we are rapt,
here, finally,
in our connection.

we find, startled,
it was our own breath
that screamed so loudly
in the night —
it was our own name
we refused to hear
and the same name
that was the sound, finally,
of blessing and release.

this is a good thing,
this passage. a bloodied thing,
but a good thing nonetheless.
this is a child
that had to be born.

sing. gently, but sing.

nightmare thoughts linger.
they will.
even so.

Blessed

(Mary Michele Mulvihill)

Light a candle
for her —
the one who
ate the poisonous
apple, that
little soul.

Say a prayer —
an intercession,
for the return of
her lost guardian angel,
brother of Michael,
blown too far away
to make out.
So faint now.

Lift up her heart.
Point it
in love's direction.

Breathe in
the dark, hideous
red air
around her.

Light a candle
for her —

Mary Michele Mulvihill, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and poet who lives in La Jolla, California. She is a Research Professor in the Graduate School of Public Health at San Diego State University, where she designs physical activity interventions tailored for different cultural groups, especially the Mexican immigrant community. She credits *Self-Relations* with facilitating the emergence of a deeply creative voice.

the one who
thought only she
was the source of the evil
the whole family felt.

Recite a psalm —
a lamentation,
bend down to
take her hand.
Anoint her face
with your finger.
Touch softly
until she

Lifts up her head
to find
the stars in your eyes,

Breathes out
the glowing turquoise
stream, twinkling with
little white lights.

Light a candle
for her —
the one who
knew how
to make friends
with the devil.

Sing a hymn —
a celebration,
a song flung
up to heaven,
for Lucifer's
prodigal daughter
as her heart melts
together all of its pieces.

Lift up your voices.
Ring them
to the ends of the earth.

Sigh deeply, in concert
as you hit
the healing harmonic
of release, united.

Hear her reply —
beyond joy or mourning,
sound back
from the mountains,
deserts, even
the grieving ocean,
rinsed clean,
at last, with this
good hard cry.

Listen for the way
the music
echoes,
uniquely so,
along the steep walls
of the green canyons,
resonates
with all living creatures
for one, keenly felt
vibration
and then, very
gently, settles itself,
with barely suppressed
wonder, back
exactly where
she always belonged,
resting sweetly
in peace.

Light a candle
for her.

For This One Night

(Bonnie Scot)

For this one night
Set free the mysterious stranger
Who resides within and
Dance as if your very life depended on it.

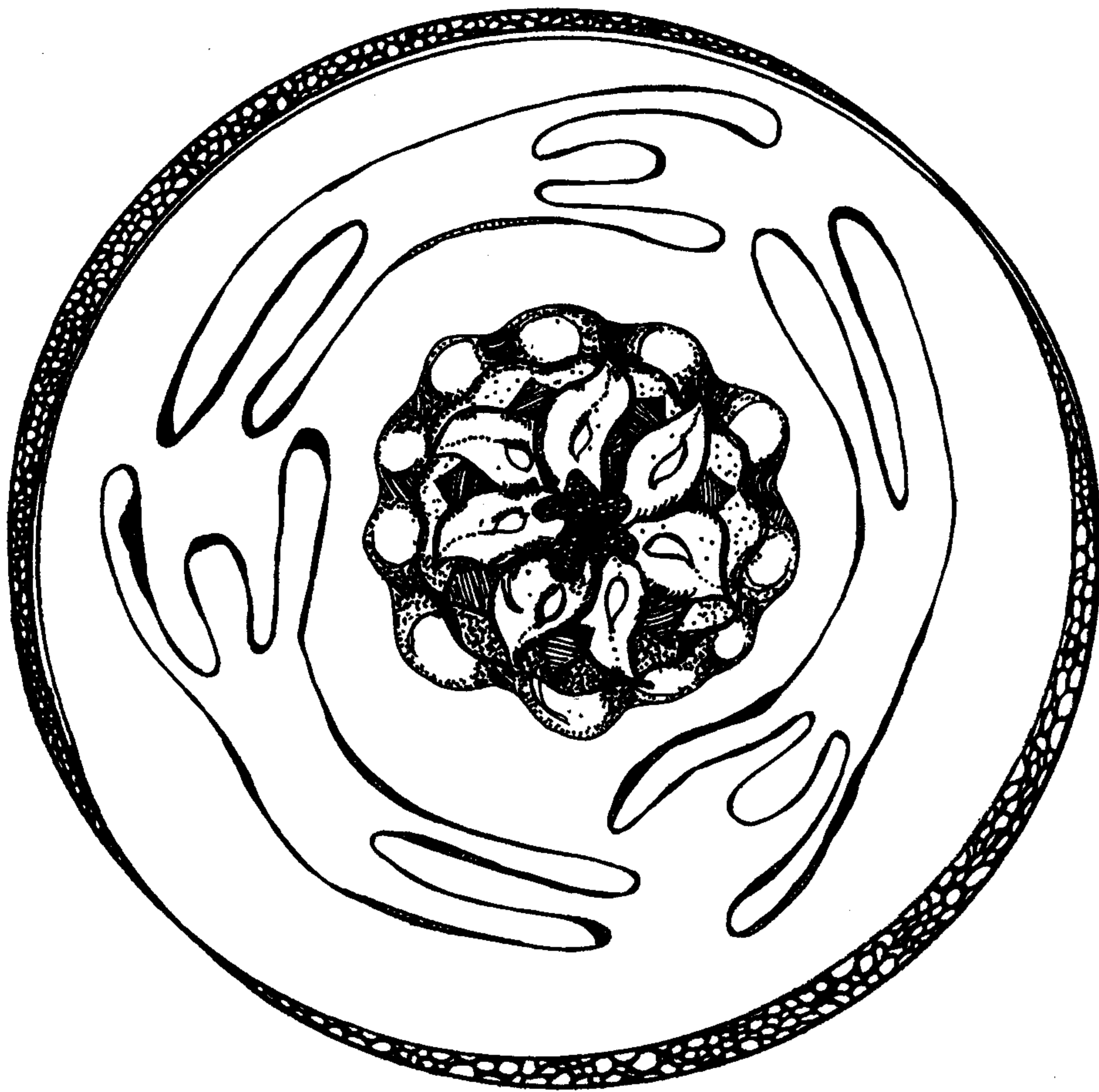
Give up your fantasy identity
Constructed for the sake of others
As if you could convince them of the
Absence of this longing.

Give up the pretense of
Responsibility, maturity,
Archetype, and role.
Give up your gender, nationality,
Philosophy, beliefs.

And dance
For this one night
As if your life depended on it.
Because it does, my friends,
It does.

Bonnie Scot, B.S., is a spiritual counselor and hypnotherapist living in the upper midwest. Her work is based on the knowledge that spirit and soul are vital partners in the dance of creativity and consciousness.

CODA



*Midnight Musings on the True Nature
of the Rose: The Complementary Approaches
of Carl Whitaker and Self-Relations
in Working with Families: A Tale in Three Parts*

When not bowling, **Stephen R. Beck, M.S.W.**, is engaged in private practice in Portland, Oregon, where he lives with his wife Emily and their two daughters. His first love is family therapy. The genius and compassion exemplified by the work of Carl Whitaker has always been an inspiration and a standard for the power of human presence to promote healthy change in psychotherapy.

MIDNIGHT MUSINGS ON THE TRUE NATURE
OF THE ROSE: THE COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES OF
CARL WHITAKER AND SELF-RELATIONS IN WORKING WITH FAMILIES:
A TALE IN THREE PARTS

*Between the conscious and the unconscious,
the mind has put up a swing:
All the earth creatures, even the supernovas,
sway between these two trees,
And it never winds down.
Angels, animals, humans, insects by the millions,
also the wheeling sun and moon;
Ages goes by, and it goes on.*

*Everything is swinging: heaven, earth,
water, fire,
And the secret one slowly growing a body.*

— Kabir (1989)

Dude Here!

The healthy family is an ever-changing, constantly evolving organism. Like the individual, it is involved in a continual process of unfolding and renaming itself, never static, always expanding as it moves through the course of life. This paper will suggest ways the Symbolic Family therapy of Carl Whitaker and the Self-Relations model can work to complement each other in facilitating the family's ability to meet the challenges it encounters and sponsor the flexible claiming of evolving identi-

ties, roles, and values. The tale will explore “the swing the mind has put up” between the individual and the family, a swing that moves deeply within and around the family, and how the individual can claim his own voice and thus his rightful place in this generative and flexible family field. With respect to the spirit of a healthy family, the tale promises to be a loving and playful adventure.

**Part 1: The Presenting Problem:
“To Be or Not To Be”**

Suppose you went to bed one evening and while you were asleep, a miracle were to happen, albeit a dark miracle, and when you awoke something had drastically changed, and the world as you had known it, and the self as you had defined it, were gone forever?

Now suppose also, that as a result of what you were told, you began hearing voices — voices that were as strong as the voices that bore your ancestors and as recognizable as those of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark.

Well that is exactly what happened to me when Beck told me I was a nobody, a nothing, insignificant, made up!

But I'm getting ahead of myself. It might help if

you had a little background on who I am and how this situation came to this point. Most folks call me Dude. I'm 48 years old. I don't work too long at any one thing, although I can get work whenever I want working for a friend of mine at his landscape business. I didn't finish college because I was drafted during the middle of my sophomore year and sent to Vietnam where I served a total of 8 months aboard an H-60 as part of a MED-EVAC unit. Believe me, 8 months of being the third man off the chopper in a combat zone was more than enough for one lifetime. Due to de-escalation of the war, I was reassigned to hospital duty over in Germany. Germany was pretty cool. Except that spending three years of doing nothing but partying seemed to de-escalate permanently my sense of how I fit into the world. Upon returning to the States I wasn't really able to work up the enthusiasm for getting any life sort of gig going and my once-strong idealism seemed endlessly stuck in the morass of the 60s. So I have sort of drifted from one opportunity to the other. Somebody once described my life as a "walking train wreck." Some days, even this Dude could not argue with that assessment. That is, except when I bowl. Bowling is what I live for!

Picked up the game over in Germany and have been hooked ever since. I bowl almost every evening at the Hollywood Lanes. And when I am not bowling, I'm reading about it or surfing the net and the myriad of bowling websites and chat rooms. The Internet has been a real reawakening for me! It has allowed me an outlet for some of my opinions — I was beginning to open up to a world beyond Hollywood, and for the first time had back that feeling of aliveness that I had felt back in my teens. So, while surfing the net is not bowling, it had become for me "that field that connects" bowlers! And it was on this issue of Internet access that it all started to come to a head between Beck and me last summer.

Now Beck is my roommate. Actually, to be honest, Beck is married and lives in a house with his wife and two daughters. I now live above the garage that sits on the corner of his property. I'm not sure why we are still together. While I can not really remember a time in my life when Beck was not there, I can honestly tell you that it seems we started to drift apart about the time I

left for the service. We hooked up again when I got back to the States but we really have not known what to do with each other. I sometimes think his wife keeps me around because she thinks I'm fun to hang out with. Beck, a psychotherapist, on the other hand, is serious about everything! Which is what led to me losing Internet access last year. One evening Beck got mad over how someone posted to him on the list-serve and he just pulled himself not only off the list but also off the Internet totally!

Now, not all of my experience in league play could have prepared me for the gutterball that came my way when I lost Internet access. To say that my life began to deteriorate in an unexplained fashion would be an understatement — man, it fell apart like a 7-10 split! In the month following my loss of Internet access, I increasingly began to experience isolation and detachment. I responded to this by over-involving myself in summer league play, but I found that my conversations at the lanes were just going in circles and I was even beginning to question what I was doing at the lanes. I mean, bowling is my life! But even so, my drinking increased, and with it my disenchantment, isolation, and preoccupation with sex. At the end of my fall, I'd spent four days at the Free-Way Motel with a long-legged Italian babe named Angel sucking on white russians, smoking Columbian, eating Mexican take-out, and listening to Celine Dion CDs on a pink Barbie boom box, while she continued to "take me around the world." I awoke late one morning to find myself walking down Sandy Boulevard wearing a badly wrinkled bowling shirt, a stiffening pair of chinos, and sporting a United Nations hangover.

While lying in bed the night before I had decided that if I was going to live in this hedonistic hell that everyone calls the 1990s, that I should do it as tastelessly as possible. To this Dude, that meant getting back on the Internet — maybe even getting a website. And if that meant selling my soul to the Devil to get it, well then, so be it!

So as life sometimes works, when you go out looking for something, it finds you. Being a bit hung over, I wandered into McDonalds and there sitting at the back of the restaurant was the Prince of Darkness himself. He motioned me toward his table and we began a discussion that began to greatly change the way I understood

the world, even the Devil himself. He told me that originally he had sat in God's inner circle. That his original role was to be dispatched out to help those who had fallen off their more righteous path and to use whatever means necessary to hold up the darkness for viewing so as to allow the person to reconnect to the light. Thus, his rightful given name was "Lucifer," as he was one who stands in the light. He was, in a sense, the archetypal magician, responsible for showing the injured a connection to their wound, and then beginning to show them the different faces, personas — images, if you will — that demanded that they stay present with the dangers of the current situation, but do it in a way that was centered in God's loving energy.

As fate sometimes dictates, about the 3rd century A.D, the Christians decided that to survive against the Romans, they needed to create a diversion. They changed Lucifer's status to being associated/valued with the darkness (Pagels, 1995). They split his consciousness away from the forces that give life, and made him a fundamentalist outcast — as a presence of the "dark other" whose presence was diametrically opposed to all that was human, life-giving, and loving.

He had become enchanted with the Self-Relations psychotherapy model because it looks to sponsor a loving connection with the "other," and had been actively participating as a Lurker on the list-serve. He couldn't buy my soul because the soul envisioned by a SR practitioner was not tangible, but a larger animating presence that lives within and all around us. Using a plastic Furbee that came with a Happy Meal, he painted a picture of what Jung termed the persona — *a kind of mask, designed on one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other hand, to conceal the true nature of the individual* (Jung, 1953). Jung saw this mask as a sacrifice each person makes to come to terms with the external world and pointed out the danger that over-identification with the persona can lead to a situation in which the animus — the person's hard logic — dominates, and the anima, that generating force beneath the surface personality, remains hidden and unclaimed. Jung further suggested that cultivating the relation between these two complements promotes the development of a healthy person.

The Devil was enchanted with SR as a model pre-

cisely because it promoted the idea that the river of life runs through us. He saw that when the field was held with a tender and loving presence a person could be sponsored to stay present in their experience, avoiding a splitting off into their logic, and thus stay open to the animating field that was working to make the person whole.

Now this Dude left the restaurant that day with a whole new appreciation for who he was. Following the Devil's advice I went home and had a conversation with Beck. Although it took some time for Beck to move out of his fundamentalist mindset, Internet access was restored. As for me, I was a new man. Happier I guess for some of what I had been reconnected to in my conversation with the Devil. I started taking better care of myself. I stopped drinking. I began to read again. Most importantly I began to reach out to others again. Including Beck. And maybe that is why it got to where it did yesterday. You see, while I was out tilling in the garden yesterday afternoon, Beck came out in a fit of rage, shouting about a post I had made the night before and told me we were through! Finished! He couldn't live this way! Had enough! I stood there stunned as he went on for about five minutes. As he turned to walk away, he threw the crumpled remains of last night's post to the ground and yelled out a statement that literally shook the life from me — "I don't know why I ever made you up. Get your things out of here by tomorrow night or I will forget about you completely!" And maybe that is why I've got a call in to the Devil to meet me down at the Hollywood Lanes later this afternoon and hopefully, help me sort this all out. You see, after Beck left me I barely made it back into the house. I just sat in my Barco lounge, motionless, watching the headlights of passing cars. My mind a blur. It was much later, sometime in the middle of the night that I began hearing the voices. At first as an inaudible chill. And then, as clear and cold as stars twinkling in the night sky.

*To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die — to sleep,
No more; and by sleep to say we end*

*The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream — ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come?*
— Shakespeare (1994)

I don't know what dreams didn't come but sleep was a scarce commodity that night. What sleep I did get came with no relief and I awoke to a deepening emptiness about noon. It was an empty and defeated Dude who walked that afternoon into the gray overcast skies of Portland towards his meeting with the Prince of Darkness. It was a tired and aimless wanderer who first noticed the front of the nose of the stretch Lincoln limo lumbering out of the front end of the car wash as he approached the Hollywood Lanes. It was a wide-eyed and sobering malcontent who moments later saw a well tailored Armani sleeve reach out the window towards me and motion me towards the car. Since the Devil is a man of many influences I shouldn't have been as surprised to see that we were not alone as I climbed into the car and sat in the opposite facing seat, as he'd brought his friend and sometimes co-therapist, the late Carl Whitaker, along with him.

I looked at Carl and then back to the Devil and back at Carl. He was bigger than I had imagined — and certainly more alive! The car started to move. I looked back at the Devil and he greeted me, "Hey Dude, you look like you've seen a ghost!" Both men started to chuckle.

"That ain't the half of it," I responded. "It's Beck again. Came out to me in the yard yesterday, angry about a post that I had written and then just started taking me apart, man. He told me he was tired of me. He told me I had to leave. Worst of all he told me that he had made me up. He threatened that if I didn't leave by tonight he was just going to forget about me altogether."

I looked across at Carl. His eyes were warm but playfully firm and steady. When he spoke, they began to twinkle invitingly, "Sounds to me like you are having a family problem! There is water in that refrigerator. Why don't you grab us all a bottle."

I grabbed three bottles and handed one to each of my two companions. The limo was passing the Pagoda

and turning right onto Broadway and we were now stopped at the light. "Where are we going?"

Carl looked at me and smiled. "Good therapy conversations are generative. We'll know when we get there." I looked at him in a way that must have shown my confusion. He took a sip of water and began speaking, "Look Dude, *I don't believe in individuals, I believe in families* (Whitaker, 1989). *Individuals are just fragments of families*. It would be easy here to point the finger at Beck the individual but you need to look a little beyond your normal understanding of the terms individual and family. Consciousness, your individual reality, generates in different phenomenological fields. Terms like individual, couple, family, and community are all 'distinctions' which name the field in which consciousness is experienced. So in a basic sense 'family' is a container for both generating and experiencing reality."

The car passed by Memorial Coliseum and onto the Broadway Bridge. The tires began to roar on the metal grating and Carl paused until we had gone beyond the bridge and were entering into the gallery district. "Remember Hillman? Hillman (1989) notes that the word 'familia' is a roman legal term which means *the land and all belonging to it*. He suggests that the family is a function of the house. The house functioning as a 'locality' where the house is not only a container of multiple values, behaviors, and intimacies — a supportive psychic system that allows for the family to care for their members needs — developmental, temporal, and spiritual. In essence, the family is a mature container that 'grounds' the members in the present and allows them to connect to the larger field, both social and psychic. Unlike traditional psychotherapeutic models that mark individual growth by the severing of family ties and the strengthening of ego, families provide a container that can connect the individual to the larger field of ancestors, family and cultural myths, and ongoing multigenerational sponsorship to connect to the multileveled doorways of the psychic world. While I do find the 'individual field distinction' useful I do not believe that it affords the opportunities for fully experiencing life's complex intimacies as does the 'family field distinction.'"

I sat blankly looking at Carl, my eyes solidly connected to a body that was experiencing the confused 'individual field distinction.' The limo was now weaving

through the congestion of traffic on Burnside and I wasn't sure if the queasiness I was feeling was from the confusion of what he was saying or if what he was saying was leading me back to that pain of feeling alone and disconnected that I had felt earlier. And then the voice came back to me:

*For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud mans contumely
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworth takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With bare bodkin?*

— Shakespeare (1994)

Like a bowler beginning to understand for the first time that a split is sometimes an irreconcilable disharmony in the field of pins but afraid or unable to speak to it I asked, "What does all of this have to do with the presenting problem?"

The Devil leaned forward and placed his hand on my knee, "Take a breath, Dude. You need to trust that we will get through this together. The family is a container for both experiencing and generating reality. The onset of the presenting problem represents the changing nature of the relationship between the family and the field to an injury, developmental challenge, or event currently being experienced. As the family moves through the life course, its language changes as its logic (text) interweaves with its experience (soma/under-text) of living and relating to each other and connecting to the larger field. As such, the ongoing process of living in a family is the task of 'holding on and letting go.' When the forces of life generate to a level beyond which the family is able to stay in relation to their cognitive and somatic experience, a state of anxiety will develop in the field and a neuromuscular lock of sorts will possess the family, and a symptom/presenting problem will be identified, as the family members logically organize to maintain autonomy. The family loses its flexibility to cooperate and generate new solutions. Gilligan (1985) offers a clear explanation of how the presenting problem is generated in the field as a part of the process of daily living. He suggests *that the reality that we experience is self-gener-*

ated by a process that is circular, and thus unconscious. This self-generated reality is the result of an individual's ability to make 'distinctions.' He suggests that distinctions always represent the values and the intentions of the distinguisher, marking the respective identity as autonomous (self-regulating) identity within the community. This autonomous 'self-regulation' does not separate us from the field but distinguishes an individual/family as being 'a part of and a part from' the field. *Problems become chronic when a person/family (mis)identifies the worth of one complement (x or x') and devalues the other complement. Such self/family (mis)identification initiates a vicious cycle of devaluation, which cannot be changed through any consciously attempted solutions. (Mis)identifying with one complement, a person (mis)perceives the other complement as a threat to their identity and therefore devalues it as the 'opposition' (the position of acting against). This self-generated devaluation is (mis)attributed to the 'reality' of the 'world out there,' thereby severing 'inner' and 'outer' (self/other) complements. Severation becomes perseveration, and the individual (family) becomes locked in 'cells' of their time frozen pattern, barred from spontaneously participating or directly experiencing the natural domain" (Gilligan, 1985).*

"That presentation," affirmed Carl, "is exactly what we often see when there is an adolescent that has developed symptomatic behavior that seems totally 'unresolvable' in the family. The more they try to resolve it, the firmer the members dig in. They have lost their connection to that deeper sense of themselves and the ability to develop new connections, new rules, and understandings. Like Erickson, Gilligan (1985) identified a 'core personality' that needed to be aligned with to stimulate therapeutic change. This core is not phenomenologically apparent so it is often missed. He suggested that the 'generative autonomy' of the individual (family) is generated, maintained, and expanded by co-operative expressions of complementary forms. In essence, gently feeling into the field of the family and holding the complements that generate with a reverent both/and logic, in this manner beginning to distinguish and name the gods generating in their household."

This actually made some sense. I started waving my hands to get their complete attention. Precociously, I began my summary, "So what you are saying here is that if the family's response to the symptom is to see it

as a threat, instead of something 'waking up or generating' within the system, that a psychic neuromuscular lock of sorts will develop and they will balance to more logical operators, separating the family members from the other half of their individual fields (unconscious processes) and from the larger collective field that holds and suggests possibilities for growth. The invitation to the family therapist is to facilitate a process that honors the conscious skills already available to the family and generate an exploration of unconscious issues, connections, and resources — a process that should lead to healthier ways of holding the complements that are generating within the family field (instead of devaluing them). This will in turn result in the lessening of tension and eradication of the psychic neuromuscular lock, the sponsoring of a new family identity, as well as promoting a flexible interaction amongst family members and with the rest of the community."

Both men laughed. The Devil rolled his eyes and smiled, "Very good, Dude!"

Part 2: What is Therapeutic

"To Be With"?

The limo came to 23rd and took a left. We were now moving up a steep incline through a forest of high rent highrises. At some point soon we would have to commit ourselves to entering the expressway or turning right into Washington Park. "Where are we going?" I asked again.

Carl looked at me amusedly, "Wherever the conversation takes us, Dude! You need to trust the process of the conversation and let go of your preoccupation with outcome. You seem to be trying to handle all of this from your head. At this rate, this session could go on forever. Then of course, I've got some time to kill!" Both men again laughed wildly. A moment later the car turned right, into the park.

After a moment the Devil collected himself and began to speak. "What you need to understand for our discussion is that these are two very different models based on different approaches sharing several assumptions about therapy, although they are stated in different languages and practiced by different means. Key to both models is the idea that this process is not 'magical' but 'generative,' as the field of consciousness is populated by

humans who, as Gilligan suggests, 1) make distinctions that separate and connect, and 2) experience a field that is more than just 'local' — thus unconscious. Consistent with the thinking of Carl and Hillman, this 'generative core' of the family is seen as a container that holds both psychological and spiritual processes and sponsors their connection actively to the larger field. Symptoms represent a 'break in belongingness' and are seen as a 'waking up' or 'movement towards growth' in the field that requires sponsorship or 'mature parenting.' As both approaches suggest, this animating core of the family is a 'generative field' that can be navigated, explored, held, named, and given a human presence in a way that is therapeutic and somewhat technical — although both models are driven by the therapist experiencing a thought/felt connection to the family. As Connell (1999) suggests, the goal of any successful intervention in family therapy is to create a symbolic experience that flips the family's way of thinking about itself, one that expands and enriches the symbolic world of the family, and leaves the members of the family with an anchored sense of this emergent identity."

The limo continued its climb through the park. At the reservoir it turned right and chose the roadway that would take it to the Rose Garden. Carl looked over to me. His eyes were ever so slightly dewed with mistiness. It was not a sadness he wore upon his face but a fullness, the kind you might see when a father willingly gives his daughter away to the groom on her wedding day. "You know, Dude, our culture has rolled psychotherapy a 'short pin' by predominantly framing it as a technique to combat pathology. Psychotherapy should be seen as a process of inducing and sponsoring greater mental health. A humanness of being fully present, true to one's self, and spontaneous — be it good, bad, or indifferent — a generative experience that potentiates life. Psychotherapy is effective when it holds a mirror up to human nature — and to effectively do this the therapist must be experiencing the session in a mature mind and a mature body. Otherwise, the connection with another will be superficial and technical."

By now the limo had wound its way up to the Rose Garden. As we drove by the first parking lot, all three heads turned to take in the view. Down below the lot was the two-acre international rose test garden

that sat loftily 800 feet above the city in the river valley below. Beyond the city, framed in the matting of evergreens, stood Mt. Hood. The view was literally the most famous postcard people sent from Oregon. At the end of the second lot the car turned left and into the lot and proceeded back towards a canopy of tall firs where we parked and took in the view of the valley below. The Devil picked up the phone and said something inaudible. "Should have been someone here to meet us with a courtesy car. They should be here in a minute."

The Devil took a sip of water and waited until Carl and I were done interacting before he continued to speak. "Now this next point is essential to grasp when you are working the field during family conversation. A general principle of Self-Relations is that everything contains its opposite. Gilligan (1997) suggests that if a relational conversation is allowed to develop over time, a deeper unitive experience will emerge. This holding of two complementary truths gives birth to a new experience of the family, one that 'transcends yet includes' each of its members. The key point here is that the therapist needs to be 'mindful' to hold a felt space for the other half of the complement that shows up in the field while working with the family. This is in part due to the way experience presents both horizontally in the logic of splits and vertically in the logic of multiple realities and forces. Gilligan (1997), borrowing from Wilber (1995), suggests a view of consciousness where each distinction is both a 'part' and a 'whole.' Each distinction contains other distinctions and is in relation to other distinctions at the same level while at the same time being part of a distinction at higher (or lower) level. Thus everything is connected to everything, though there are different levels of distinctions. One can move through the field and still remain relational and whole!"

"That is what Gilligan (1985) was getting at in the 'Generative Autonomy' article when he suggested that any point in the field of a presentation can be considered a center point," I interjected proudly.

"Yes, Dude," responded the Devil, "as long as the therapist is willing to hold the generating experience with a loving curiosity, the experience that is awakening within the family will gradually come into view. In *Sex, Ecology, and Spirituality*, Wilber (1995) suggests a four-quadrant description where the top two quadrants are

interior-individual and exterior-individual respectively. The bottom two quadrants he defines as interior-social and exterior-social respectfully. Families are given a position in the exterior-social grouping along with other such distinctions as galaxies, planets, and nation states. Wilber seems to limit his consideration of consciousness between what is individual and what is not individual. What I would suggest is that, for therapy purposes, the more appropriate complement for individual consciousness would be family consciousness!"

Carl sat straight up in his seat and smiled, "Would you mind if I stand up and be the Devil's advocate here?"

"You might need to get in line!" the Devil shot back playfully. "Now Wilber may be right about the way he has things laid out, but the way I am suggesting seems to honor the argument of locality that you make, respecting the integrity of the family, and the Self-Relations notion that everything contains its opposite."

To our right up pulled a white courtesy car, a four-seated golf cart with white cushy seats and a white canopy. The driver walked to the Devil's window and handed him the keys. The Devil thanked him by stuffing a fin in his hand, rolled up the window and turned back towards the two of us and continued speaking. "What I would like to suggest is that it is helpful for me when I sit in on a family with Carl to imagine the field as presenting this way (see Figure 1 on following page).

"These graphs are not intended to portray an accurate description of the field, which in its animating and metaphoric sense defies this type of description. I have, however, found them a useful depiction of three different aspects of a therapist's experience when using the model to hold the context of the field while working with a family."

The three diagrams suggest possible representations of how the family therapist might both configure a context for the field and hold "flexibly" the experience that moves through it. Consistent with our deviation from Wilber, diagram 1 presents the field as consisting of four quadrants, the top quadrants being family exterior and individual exterior and the lower quadrants being family interior and individual exterior respectively. In this depiction, a cognition or experience generated from one

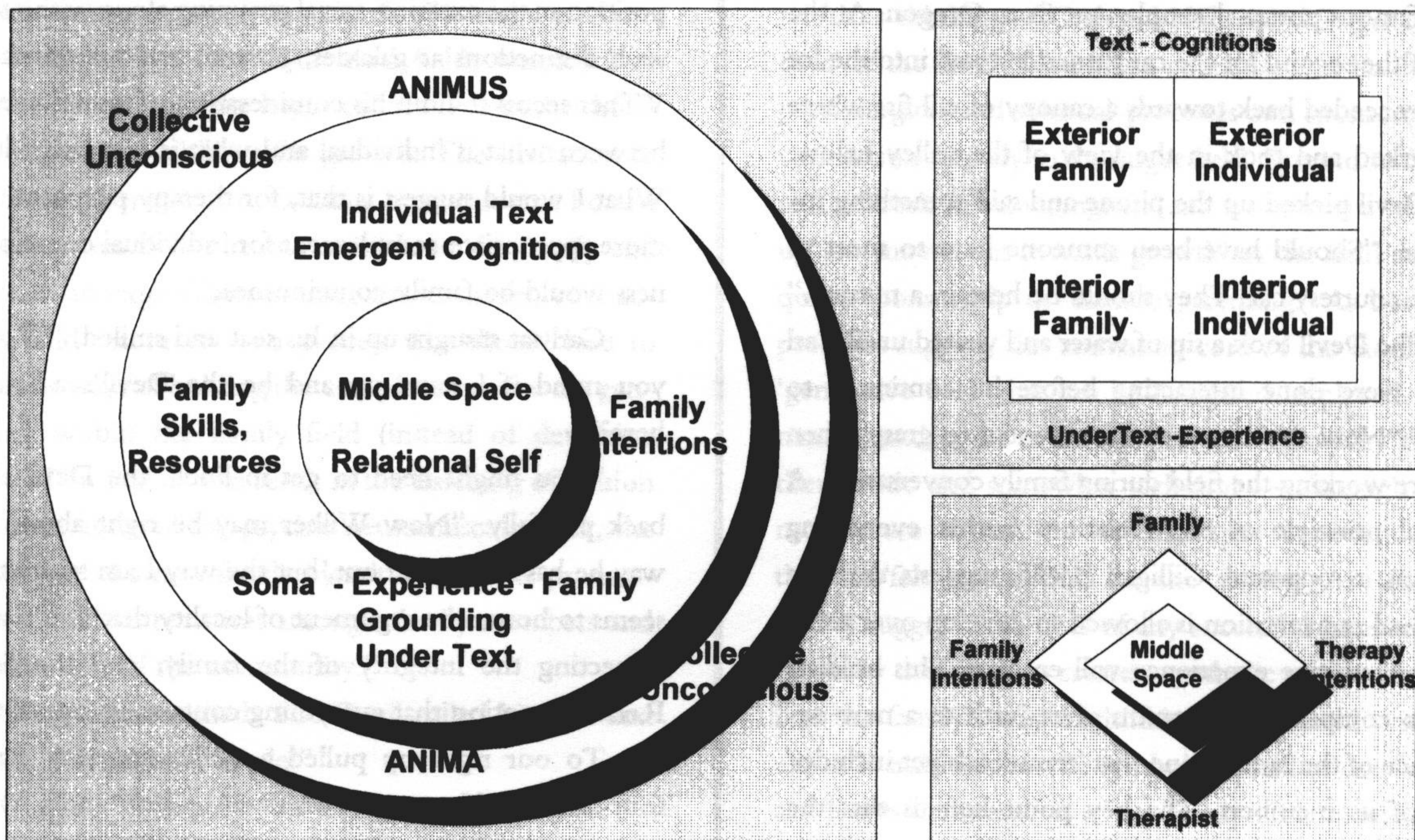


Figure 1

quadrant can be held as a “complement” from anywhere else in the field. This view is consistent with the idea suggested by Gilligan (1985) in “Generative Autonomy” that a reality is ‘self referential’ — it refers back to its maker and that it defines an identity as autonomous within a ‘common-unity.’ So the graph suggest a “family identity” where there is 1) a marked state, 2) an unmarked state, 3) a correlational boundary, 4) and a deeper common-unity. Thus any point in the field of conversation can be a center point, as it is held in a relational context to the others. As Bateson (1987) noted, *the complementary function of distinction is not only to ‘distinguish from’ but to ‘connect us to (two)’ the other.* It also suggests that the field of family identity is “animating” or moving continually from quadrant to quadrant. Graphs number 2 and 3 represent practical considerations of the family therapist working within a generative family field.

First, their representation mirrors the therapist’s basic vertical experience in the field with the head sensing the “text,” the belly the “under-text experience,” and the heart/chest holding the “middle space.” This space is experienced both vertically within the therapist and extended out horizontally into the phenomenological field of the therapy.

Second, it is an easy way to keep the therapist mindful of learning to hold a space in the field for the complement or “other value” that is currently under discussion or being somatically experienced, or to stay open to both.

Third, it has been my experience that when I get stuck working with a family that having the “four points of reference” (cognition, soma/experience, family skills/resources, and intentions) allows me to take my current present experience and expand it to another point. For

instance, let's say a dad is chewing out his adolescent son unmercifully and I am feeling a growing tightening in my belly. By allowing my experience/breath to go down to my belly and then to extend to another point in the field where I feel connection, I typically begin to experience an expansion of the field and an extension horizontally of my relational self/presence back into the field. It is worth noting here that it is that very movement horizontally and vertically that begins to give the therapist clues as to how the text is being experienced emotionally by the family, the sharing of which families typically find useful and normalizing as therapy progresses.

I would like to be perfectly clear that these graphs do not represent a format to be superimposed upon the field. Self-Relations uses the felt connection to generate a relational field that can move beyond the fixations of the presenting problem. What the graphs represent is one way of thinking and experiencing the field during the session. Typically, using the felt connection to the family, I will let the session unfold with no predetermined agenda. What I will then do occasionally is let one of the graphs extend out into the field. This allows me to get a sense of the more formal therapy components (goals, intentions, where the family is developmentally) and then move back and experience more of what is generating in the session. Repeating this process works to give me a nice balance between the thought and the felt, and more adequately guides me in "sponsoring" the family through their transition.

Typically during the course of a family session I have learned to follow this six-step SR protocol. It is only a suggestion. It can be superimposed over any family model you are comfortable using:

1. Establish a connection to the self and extend out into the field.
2. Invite conversation.
3. Experience the field.
4. Begin to interweave my experience/their experience.
5. Name and invite holding of the thought/felt experience.
6. Pass through again.

Again, I would like to stress that the diagrams and

protocol are only suggestions of how to work in the family field, as the phenomenological experience of the family session can generate from any direction, often from two directions simultaneously, out of the shadows, and even empty spaces. The family therapist's job is to "stay open," hold their experience of it, and weave that experience into the conversation with the family.

"That sounds complicated," I responded.

The Devil looked back to me and nodded his head affirmingly. "There are times when it is, Dude. The trick here is to gently and patiently begin to work the 'splits' that show up in the field of conversation, making space in the therapy field to hold the complement. It is useful to remember Bateson's (1987) idea of 'double descriptions' and work with the family to generate such, initially between the textual (exterior) quadrants, and as the therapy progresses, to weave between the interior and exterior worlds of the members. Double description is both 'metaphoric' (viewed from different multiple points) by nature and 'sacred' in that the 'other' is seen as 'a part of,' complimentary, and vital (or integral) systemically to the health of the family. I have found that families benefit from this information about the therapist's experience as it is going on, in the form of specific coaching on how to hold an experience that represents in a circular fashion, and as a sharing at the end of the session. The latter is often useful in generating homework for the week and all three work to sponsor the family in a different holding of their emotional experience."

"Two typical phenomenological presentations experienced during family therapy are neuromuscular lock (NML) and splitting. I sometimes experience these occurring 'simultaneously at the same time' and to each I offer these suggestions. The onset of the experience of NML with the field of experience of the therapist typically indicates that it is generating somewhere within the family presentation. I suggest a holding of gentle attention to your belly (gentle because the family's often isn't) and begin the process of making somewhat concrete inquiries to the family about their experience. This may take several passes over the course of the session or several sessions until you have begun to sponsor a fuller response. The development of a split within the phenomenological experience of the family is usually experienced by the therapist as spaciness, sometimes with

NML. When this occurs it is usually helpful for the therapist to let their attention settle into their belly as they begin to explore with the family different cognitive complements (within the text of the discussion). Carl would call this gaining access to their symbolic world. Next, the therapist would slowly begin to weave their attention back down into their somatic responses. If either of these two suggestions don't work and you begin to feel stuck, don't worry. Re-establish your connection to your cognitive and experiential self and reconnect with the family."

"And if that doesn't work," Carl barked, "take a deep breath and be yourself! There is no more genuine technique than being human."

There was a pause in the conversation. We seemed to be nearing an end point that the other men already understood. Realizing that I had no other choice than to ask the Devil what I was thinking, I cleared my throat and asked what may have already been obvious. "So how does a family therapist know when what he is doing technically is working?"

"Well, technically, Dude, a Self-Relations therapist prioritizes connection over technique. To put it simply, when the family and the therapist have developed a process that has made a space for the cognitive (observer) self and the experiential self to explore its process in the current moment, the therapist and the family will notice the 'locking tension' fall out of the field and the therapist and the family will experience a field that is fluid, safe, expansive, and flexible in exploring the issues at hand. The field will literally be experienced as unitary! It will seem almost effortless because everyone is working together to honor the dynamic relationships of the members and their interconnectedness to the larger field of generations, community and the social, and that enables the family to experience the larger collective consciousness of the larger river of life that is moving through them."

Part 3: Promoting a Relational Human Presence "To Be 'With in' and To Be 'With Out?'"

Carl looked across the limo at me, "Are you ready to begin our pilgrimage?" Before I could ask him what he meant the driver was opening my door and we were out of the limo walking towards the courtesy car. The

Devil got in front and took the wheel while Carl claimed shotgun. I climbed in the back and positioned myself, and the car began to move north across the parking lot. Momentarily, the sun was blocked by a large cloud, dimming both the temperature of the air and the contrast of the visual panorama. The yellows and blues that had been dancing in the visual field were momentarily taken over by a cool gray contrast, seemingly cutting the flowers away from the field of greenery that held them, like flowers pasted to the screen of a black and white television. The distant pecking of a helicopter could be heard faintly to the south. It flashed through me that in Germany they had sometimes referred to cemeteries as rose gardens. A moment later my own distant voice was being drowned out by the roar of engines and I was again the third man out following my cover and moving frightfully towards the wounded. It shouldn't have surprised me that my next companion in this experience was the return of the voices:

*But that dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all? . . .*

I sat there seemingly alone, shivering. What was I doing here? The passing of the cloud and the gradual returning of the sun's warmth was doing little to ebb this feeling of aloneness when Carl spoke up, "You've been 'slow to roll' and share with us that you have been hearing voices — and no less than Hamlet himself. You're never going to find what you are looking for unless you make a commitment to move that unconscious material into the field of our human presence." I sat there lost in my emotions and did not respond. Carl continued, "You know, Dude, Shakespeare did not create Hamlet's troubled life for its own sake but to present the idea about the dual nature of humankind, that a person contains both good and evil qualities. Critical to the play is Hamlet's recognition of evil in himself, and his attempts to reconcile this with the goodness of his nature is the central theme of the play."

I sat there taking this all in as the Devil turned the

cart east down a small slope that ran adjacent to the amphitheater that was situated next to the Rose Garden. The Dude had last seen Jerry Garcia there for an acoustic concert a few years ago and now he was dead too. The car turned sharply to the right, and, as if he had been doing this everyday of his life, the Devil drove the car up a ramp and onto the stage and invited us to get out.

As if I had been doing this all of my life, I got out of the car and walked away from the two men and over to the front of the stage, peering over the edge and across to the empty seats of the theatre. I was standing there taking it all in when Carl resumed speaking, "The voice of Hamlet has been moving through you to offer you some guidance, some companionship of sorts in the field of your life. The trick is that you have to begin to relate to it so that it can become your own. It's archetypal. The danger is that you could lose yourself and become it and we all know that would probably lead you back to the Freeway Motel!" There was now urgency in his voice, firmness one hears in the voices from the stage, where the words of the actors resonate deep from within their body, from their total character. "You need to turn and face me, Dude. This really is something that will have more significance for you if we do it together."

I turned and looked at him and the Devil. The Devil's left arm raised and motioned me towards them. There we stood, about five feet from each other, at center stage. "Let's take a look at what the soliloquy has been trying to present to you. 'To be or not to be' is pretty straightforward. A man in turmoil, his identity in transition, his experience tossed around by winds of fortune. What is interesting here is the invitation. 'To die — to sleep; To sleep perchance to dream — ay, there's the rub'. You're a bowler. Do you know what rub means? *In lawn bowling it's a term depicting an obstacle that diverts a ball from its true course (Macrone, 1990).*"

"Exactly," responded Carl. "Hamlet's worldview, his logic, is totally overturned by the events surrounding his father's death. As result, life is inviting him into a relationship with his unconscious, a relationship his logical mind does not believe that it can trust or control."

I started to open my mouth to ask where he was going with all of this when the Devil's eyes met mine and told me to just stand there and take it all in.

The second section offers you yet another mirror of

human response to crisis. Given the 'the scorns of time, the oppressors wrong, the pangs of despised love, the laws delay, and the insolence of office' you are presented with the choice "he himself might his quietus make with bare bodkin."

My frustration got the best of me and I responded, "There is nothing in bowling that has anything to do with bare bodkins, except maybe in the men's room."

Carl looked at me with little amusement. "Here, 'his quietus makes' means something like *even the balance or settle his accounts for good!* Interestingly, he is not suggesting family therapy, as a 'bodkin' here means a *dagger!* (Macrone, 1990)."

Like a boss who knew he could get your full attention during your yearly review, Carl held my eyes with his before he continued speaking. "That violent option to kill a part of our self in response to pain has been around for quite some time! In the final part of the soliloquy Hamlet was left with the option to follow his logical consciousness or surrender to something foreign and unsponsored: 'but that the dread of something after death, the undiscover'd from whose bourn no traveler returns, puzzles the will' — and a land to which he was not familiar, the active underworld of his unconscious."

Carl took a sip out of the bottle of water that he had brought with him from the limo. "Now we all know the story of Hamlet. Isolated, alone, driven by the logic of his duty to avenge his father's death, he is tossed emotionally from scene to scene as he comes to terms with his destiny and death at the end of the play. But for our purposes, Shakespeare has offered us a more interesting invitation. The scene following Hamlet's soliloquy is where Hamlet denies affections for Ophelia and offers the famous command 'get thee to a nunnery,' which either could be taken to mean a convent or a house of ill repute. Regardless, with these words Hamlet seals his tragic fate. His logic (animus), driven by duty, scorns the 'balance' that life is offering to him, the field of a relationship with Ophelia (anima), thus supplying him with the foundation for 'familia,' a container for sponsoring, holding, and integrating those archetypal forces that were moving through him. In essence he voted for his persona and lost the spiritual connection that could have come through developing a relationship with his deeper experiential self."

The Devil began nodding his head in agreement, "And as a result lived through a life that can be a 'living hell' when one is reacting to life as opposed to relating to it. Dude, do you know what 'to sin' means? Besides the religious sense that is so unfairly associated with my presence, it has an early use as an archery term that depicted being 'off center.' Actually, in its Germanic origin it means 'truth' or to 'be true.' So much of what we have been talking about today has been about life's invitation to hold an intimate conversation with an 'other' about one's thought and felt/experienced truth in the moment. An experience of mind and body that when held by two with openness and respect creates a middle space that is generative, in essence generating a *wholeness* that is sacred! So where Hamlet chose to live out his fate alone and in spiritual isolation, others — Romeo and Juliet — chose to commit to this other 'generative relational truth'! One of my favorite scenes in Romeo and Juliet depicts this animating spiritualness so beautifully:

- J.: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much, which mannerly devotion shows in this; For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, and palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
- R.: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
- J.: Ay pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
- R.: Oh then, dear saint, let lips do what hands to; They pray; grant thou, let faith turn to Despair.
- J.: Saint's do not move, though grant for prayers sake.
- R.: Than move not, while my prayers effect I take.
- R.: Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purg'd.
- J.: Then have my lips the sin that they have took.
- R.: Sin from my lips? Oh trespass sweetly urg'd. Give me my sin again.

"I have always liked how it so wonderfully represents the moving nature of the field, and with it the metaphoric and ever-changing meaning of words and experience held in relationship between two people." The Devil stopped speaking. I could see a glint of tear forming in the corner of both eyes. Truly he did feel touched by this passage. He drew in a deep breath and turned his body away from us. I stood there quietly as he collected himself. Quietly, he turned back toward us, his face

now adorned in a warm spackle of human tenderness.

I didn't have to wait long for my next cue. Carl spoke up, "So, I am having this fantasy. The WWF match of the week. It's 'Beck, the German Commando' versus 'Dude, the Invisible Man.' The first round is quite amusing. Beck with all of his logic and strength cannot figure out how to fight someone he cannot see and you keep tripping him up and throwing him against the ropes."

I couldn't believe what he was saying, but I was sort of getting into it.

Carl continued. "Second round, you start taunting him for shaming you in the garden. He is yelling at you. Getting frustrated. You are literally wearing him out."

I was really liking this. I could feel my chest expanding with life, as there was a part of me that wanted to act out this way with Beck. What Carl invited me to do next took me fully into the experience.

"So it's round three, Dude, go after him. Show me what you want to do with him."

What happened next I still have a hard time believing as in an instant I was the invisible man flying across the ring tackling Beck while I was still in the air. But instead of it being Beck who I actually tackled was the Devil! We went rolling across the stage. When he stopped I was on top of him. Carl shouted at me, "Tell him what you want from him!"

Before I could the Devil threw me off of him. We were now both standing locked in an immortal embrace and I was trying desperately to take him down by tripping him with my left foot. Carl shouted out to me again, "Where are you trying to trip him to, Dude?"

At that very moment my left foot got under the Devil enough so that our bodies fell to the stage floor, me on top. I just started saying, "I want him to be a kid again. I want him to be a kid again." I took in a deep breath, "I'd trip him back into being a kid again." My head began to fill up with emotion and I began to weep. My pin on the Devil loosened but he just remained under me.

"When we were young we used to stay up all night watching monster movies. You know Frankenstein, Wolfman, the Mummy. Just being young, having fun. Beck would always get scared. I would always comfort him. We were friends. That was the way our

relationship worked until we left for Vietnam. For some reason, we stopped playing together.”

A sudden wave of life moved through me. There was nothing left to think about. “He didn’t make me up. He forgot about me! I’m the fricken neglected self!”

What happened next is not totally clear. I do know now that I left the stage and started running south towards the rose garden. I entered on the lower level. I was only aware that I was now walking fast and that I had tunnel vision. The path now turned into a concrete and brick walkway. The longest bowling lane I had ever seen. It now seemed narrow. I was afraid of falling off. After I had walked 40 yards I was suddenly aware that I was at the midway point and that this was not just any walkway, that it was the royal walkway of the queens of Roseria. Still afraid that I would fall off, I was now torturously aware that I was stepping on the names of the princesses.

The struggle to stay in my head was intensifying, as the effort to walk became more exhausting. The consciousness in my body was literally being pulled down. It was like walking with my feet below the surface. Slowly, deliberately, grounded deeply to the earth, I continued down this anima highway. The end of this walkway emptied into a small enclosed garden. This garden contained a variety of bedding flowers and other ornamental bushes, with a walkway leading up to a marble wall at the other end. On this wall was an inscribed picture of the Bard, Shakespeare himself. Inscripted on the wall next to his likeness was his statement “Of all the flowers, me thinks the rose is best.”

I stood there alone for what seemed like 20 minutes, although I am sure it wasn’t that long, just trying to take it all in. What my mind could not comprehend, my body already seemed to understand. I could not deny liking who I was — and I couldn’t deny the growing feeling of connection that I felt animating towards Beck in my mind and body. I felt a hand on my shoulder. The touch was warm and freely given. I felt like I was being seen and held freely. It was Carl. The Devil was standing next to him. I tried to say something but could not make any words.

“Take a breath, Dude,” the Devil said gently.

A moment later I managed to get out, “I’m feeling hurt. Why aren’t relationships more logical?”

The Devil responded gently, “The invitation of life’s intimacy, ultimately its humanness, is symbolized by the rose. Rooted deeply, seemingly everlasting and perpetual. But to hold the bloom one must also hold the stem — and with it the thorns. As the saying goes in *Self-Relations*, ‘not too tight, not too loose.’ It is a process held in the commitment to stay present in the moment and relational to the ‘other.’”

Without thinking I responded, “I need to go have a talk with him.”

Carl, his hand still on my shoulder, spoke next, “Dude, let us take you home to Beck and the Family.” We began walking, leaving the Bard and his altar behind and into the larger field of the garden. Someone once said ‘all the worlds a stage,’ but I was now opening up to the possibilities of being human in the garden, and open to walking further into the field of roses.

As the three of us walked together back to the limo Carl offered me this one last piece of counsel. “I usually offer this advice to couples but it seems fitting here. *The process of learning how to love and how to become part of a ‘we’ without destroying yourself is a long-term project. It begins with learning how to love yourself and then learning how to love someone like you, and moves on to the courage to love someone different from you, to learning how to tolerate the vulnerability and the struggle over the problem of how to be all that you are, which must include a significant other. Thus marriage becomes not a bilateral adoption in which two 16-year-olds unite to make one 32-year-old, but a real team process — a Ph.D. in human relationships in which one contracts to become more and more totally related to another individual so that one can find the total expression of one’s whole self. As Martin Buber says, this total expression of the whole self is only possible in a free relationship to another individual. In contracting not to escape from the struggle, one finds more and more of one’s own strength and more and more of oneself. Thus, in a dialectic fashion, ‘I’ become more and more of who ‘I am’ by becoming more and more a part of who ‘we are’*” (Whitaker, 1989).

To this Dude it was easy counsel to take in, as I felt the spirit of life moving through me and all around me. The rose garden was alive in the moment and with deeper connection to all that had lived before. By the time we got back to the car I knew I wasn’t quite ready to leave. I turned to my companions, “I think you two

should go ahead. I think I need to stay here awhile longer and take it all in."

The Devil gave me a slight smile. "Something tells me you are no longer afraid of ghosts — even in this cemetery!" A slight smirk began to make its way across my pilgrim lips, "I am beginning to sense that the difference between seeing a ghost and experiencing an angel is all in how the field is held." As he turned to hand the keys of the courtesy car to the attendant I noticed a large tear in the right arm of his suit jacket. He must have torn that upon impact when I tackled him to the stage floor.

"Looks like I ripped your jacket. Sorry about mistaking you for the bad guy in my experience."

Still smiling he responded, "That's O.K., Dude. It is an occupational hazard that I've come to expect." He threw me a quick wave goodbye and climbed into the back with Carl, who was already seated with one arm hanging out the window.

Carl raised his arm and pointed at my heart fondly, "See you next week!" Both men began to laugh as the car slowly pulled away from the curb. I watched as the car went to the edge of the parking lot. Instead of turning right to go down the hill it jerkily turned left and swung back into the lot, stopping a little beyond me, with Carl looking right at me. His eyes were warm and lovingly soft and open. If I hadn't known better I would have said they were possessed with an 'Irish twinkle.' His eyes held me and then he spoke, "Dude. Be sure you get something out of this for you."

Just as quickly the car pulled away, this time turning right and down the hill. I turned back towards the garden. Momentarily feeling the loss of their company, I was quickly drawn into the field of the garden and beyond to the fir-matted view of the city and the valley below. As I began to walk slowly into this experience, I began to feel something coming from below me. Consistent. Like a faint heartbeat, gradually transitioning into an inaudible dirge. As I stayed with it, it gained melody, and eventually the words began to move through me . . .

*There's nothing you can do that can't be done
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung
Nothing you can say but you can learn how to
play the game.*

I took another breath and let it flow through me a little more.

*Nothing you can make that can't be made
No one you can save that can't be saved
Nothing you can do but you can learn how to be
you in time
It's easy . . .
All you need is love, all you need is love, love,
love is all you need . . .*

— Lennon & McCartney (1967)

Part of my experience filled with images from the 1960s. They had been a good time in my life. One of the best periods of my life. But something had fallen short and I had left them disappointed and disconnected. The thought occurred to me that along with that "love" John Lennon was singing about, "ones life" also needed the blessing of "mature sponsorship."

I took another breath and walked a little further into the field. The view was full of life. Down in the valley the limousine was weaving its way through the streets and people who lived below. I stood there and watched for the next 5 minutes as it moved over the contours of the land and in and out of the shadows before it seemed to disappear below the surface and out of sight. My feet planted firmly to the ground I felt a slight heave of sorrow move through my heart. Yet my heart was happy. I took a deep breath and let my gaze move out towards the horizon, into the fir-framed panorama. I swear for a moment I saw a swing moving between those trees. Another breath filled my chest. The secret one slowly growing a body. It felt good to not be alone. It was time to go home to my family.

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Stephen Gilligan, Ph.D., is known internationally as an author, a teacher, a presenter — and the creator of the Self-Relations Approach to Psychotherapy. His work is designed to reconnect mind–body processes and encourage and support radical change. Steve Gilligan is the author of numerous articles and books, including *The Courage to Love* and, most recently, *The Legacy of Milton H. Erickson*.

Dvorah Simon, Ph.D., is a psychologist and poet. Since 1985, she has worked at the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine as a researcher and clinician in the field of brain injury and stroke rehabilitation. Her primary professional focus is on modes of therapy that begin with the premise of the inherent resourcefulness of the client. She is the author of a chapter on “Solution Focused Therapy as a Spiritual Path,” which appeared in the *Handbook of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy*. For five years, she published *news of the difference*, an international newsletter for Solution Focused, Ericksonian, and related therapies. Self-Relations Therapy satisfies her quest for a way of working that embraces a robust and generous definition of the self.