

The Wise Brain Bulletin

News and Tools for Happiness, Love, and Wisdom
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Featured Article:

Nature's Wisdom to Save Our Souls – A Beginning Reflection on Thirty Seven Years of Vision Questing

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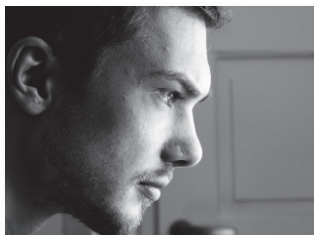
We should understand well that all things are the work of the Sacred Mystery. We should know that the Sacred Mystery is within all things; the trees, the grasses, the mountains, the rivers, all the four-legged animals, the winged people. And even more important: we should understand all this deeply in our hearts then we will be, and act and live as the Sacred Mystery intends.

- Black Elk, Lakota holy man

A learned friend remarked years ago on the absurdity of NASA's attempts through sophisticated monitoring equipment to pick up signs of transmissions from intelligent beings from other galaxies. "Isn't it ironic," he said, "that we spend millions of dollars trying to find these weak transmissions from somewhere far off in space, when there is a field of intelligence that we are actually embedded within and which surrounds us at all times?"

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Greetings

The Wise Brain Bulletin offers skillful means from brain science and contemplative practice – to nurture your brain for the benefit of yourself and everyone you touch.

The Bulletin is offered freely, and you are welcome to share it with others. Past issues are posted at www.wisebrain.org/bulletin.html.

Rick Hanson, PhD and Richard Mendius, MD edit the Bulletin, and it's designed and laid out by Laurel Hanson.

To subscribe, please contact Rick at drh@comcast.net.

Gregory Bateson, author of *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, calls this intelligence “a seamless web... an interactive wave system of multi-leveled, multi-dimensional connectedness that constitutes a field of consciousness that is to be found in the water, vegetation, earth, mountains, and the very air that we breathe for our lives.” This is the living world of nature and the Gaian Mind that has regulated and sustained our planet in a homeostatic balance throughout its

billions of years of its existence. Our brains, our nervous systems, our consciousness itself, evolves out of this intelligence and lives enmeshed within it.

Our indigenous ancestors world-wide learned and lived its wisdom teachings, for understanding it ensured their very survival. This understanding along with the contemplative practices and ceremonies it engendered – which emphasized the sacredness of reciprocity with the powers/energies/spirits that give us breath, food, water, shelter, light, warmth and protection – forms the foundation of shamanism, humanity's oldest form of relationship to the spiritual. We have forgotten these wisdom-ways and suffer as a result, imprisoned in socially conditioned, linguistically-based boundaries of “yours and mine,” “inside and out,” predicated on identification of self as separate from the field of non-human intelligence in which we are embedded. Unaware of the distortions through which we perceive the world around us

we struggle for health and wellness in a fear-based, patriarchal civilization dominated by male elitism and consumer-based, corporate capitalism emphasizing profits and economic efficiency over people and life on this planet. Caught up in media-induced distractions and sideshows, we have lost our soul and pollute our own nests, fiddling in banalities, as Nero did, when Rome burned.

Yet an integral view of Nature's wisdom teachings is still alive in the knowledge of remnant indigenous cultures such as the Huichol, a shamanic people of north-central Mexico with whom I have worked since 1981 who still follow their traditional ways dating back to Paleolithic times. The Huichol say we are “perdido,” lost, that we have forgotten that the earth is alive, that all life is sacred, and that it consists of an extended kinship involving mutual, reciprocal responsibility to care for one another thus maintaining balance and harmony of the whole.

We in the modern world have forgotten this interconnectedness with nature and so treat it, and ourselves, as separate and removed from one another. Our very designation of nature and the environment as “out there,” as “wild,” as “wilderness,” is indicative of the depth of our alienation.

Ironically it is “out there” that we find our best hope for reconciling our relationship with nature because it is there that we most easily discover that we are not separate from it, that we are part and parcel with it. In the natural world the only input is what nature creates, thus it is there that we can experience on all levels of our being the encompassing dance of inter-relatedness. On the summits of the peaks, in the desert, the forest, far out at sea, our egos are humbled, artificial boundaries dissolve, and one begins to realize

the “smallness” of who we are as defined by our egos and how boundless we are as part of nature, part of the “bigger picture” and intimately connected with all of existence – trees, clouds, mountains, animals, plants. This realization seems to induce our stressed-out, over-worked fight or flight responses of the sympathetic nervous to release their tension-wracked hold on our bodies and our minds. We can relax into being, relax into being part of a greater being, and just be. Our parasympathetic nervous system gives a vociferous “ya-hoo!”

People throughout history have immersed themselves in the natural world, the “wilderness” as we call it, to discover, attune, commune, reconnect with and cultivate the relationship of their deeper being, their soul, with the numinous mystery of creation. Through eons of time indigenous youth entered the sanctuary of the natural world as a vital part of their rite of passage towards spiritual adulthood, towards taking ownership of the fact that they are

sacred worthy beings, here with purpose from a sacred creative force of the universe.

The laws of nature reveal themselves to anyone who takes the time to open to their teachings. Reflective inquiry, intention, receptivity, patience, respect, humility, gratitude, courage, perseverance and attentive mindfulness serve as keys to open the door to “wilderness wisdom” and its compelling lessons for strategic stewardship sustaining healthy biodiversity on our planet. At home in the “Mother Matrix”, one can experience what the Lakota people refer to as, “WOKSAPE WOKIKTA” – Awakening to Wisdom.

I witness this every time I take a group of people out into a wilderness setting. Over the days and nights of living in accordance with natural rhythms, people gradually become entrained to them and get more relaxed, more peaceful, slower, feel saner, more open, see more, enjoy the simple gifts more, become kinder. In the wilderness the truths of birth and death,



balance and harmony, the interconnectedness of all beings and the wonders of creation communicate eloquently to the senses, to the deeper psyche and to the soul. It leads to a natural movement from what Heidegger called “calculative thought” to “contemplative thought.”

I recently returned from my thirty seventh year of vision questing in the High Sierra. I go up each September, after the people and mosquitoes have left the mountains. I take a small group of folks. We backpack in to a secluded valley surrounded by soaring cliffs with small trout pools in her granite belly. Each person spends at least two days and nights creating sacred space, through fasting in solitude in a spot that has called them for their time of being alone. Taking time to step out of your comfort zone, your socially defined role definitions and obligations is an experience that can open you to the core.

It offers opportunity to downshift from Doing-State to Being-State, allowing the high-jacked brain to unwind, a time for self-reflection, self-confrontation and self-expansion; an opportunity to re-experience our shared human primal heritage – a natural being in the natural world. This opportunity is a challenging doorway for us westerners – we are so addicted to our time schedules, our activities, our busyness, our distractions, that it can be quite anxiety-producing to have totally open time to just be. Time itself seems to

slow down. The sun moves so slowly across the sky, the moon so slowly through the night. Minutes seem like hours. The test is to learn how to be present with just being, ashkanka – “here and now” in Nahuatl – enjoying the gifts of the ordinary.

Hunger, boredom, anxiety, weather extremes ranging from unrelenting heat during the day and below freezing at night, the effects of fasting at altitude, isolation and loneliness, and the slow passage of time combine synergistically to “thresh” the psyche. During this middle, liminal stage of what takes place in all rites of passage – preceded by the call and severance, and followed by the return and incorporation stages – the questor is worked day and night by what emerges through the trials he or she endures.

For example, fear – “Was that stick cracking in the dark the bear whose fresh tracks were down in the mud by the creek this afternoon?” – takes you into facing your death, into confrontation with your shadow, your darkness, your habituation, your addictions.

These are the guardians that stand at the threshold of the gifts that lie within – a deep sense of peace and acceptance of what is, how the universe works, how nature unfolds her mysteries of creation. Over time and through surrender, questors connect with their hearts, with their souls, their deeper strivings, values, and what truly matters to them. Through emersion in the natural cycles of day and night, through slowing down and staying in one place, senses sharpen, people experientially get their connectedness with the web of life, seen and unseen. Souls are nourished, equanimity deepens.

Perspectives on Self-Care

Be careful with all self-help methods (including those presented in this Bulletin), which are no substitute for working with a licensed healthcare practitioner. People vary, and what works for someone else may not be a good fit for you. When you try something, start slowly and carefully, and stop immediately if it feels bad or makes things worse.

Daytime visions and night-time dreams bring forth the archetypal and numinous as biorhythms gradually attune with the rhythms of nature. Slowly, sometimes painfully through cathartic release, people come into a state of well being, a feeling of “at-homeness” that emerges from knowing you belong here, are a part of here, and have something meaningful to contribute to the circle of life.

Two spiritual themes or “medicine teachings” emerged from my most recent quest. The first began in the parking lot in front of my office as four other men, one woman and myself held hands in a circle in front of our cars for a departing prayer. A call from a woman passing by for her appointment at a physical therapist, broke our concentration. “Hey Tom, what are you doing here?”

After greeting the wife of a dear friend who had died just over a year ago and explaining that we were just about to leave on vision quest, she excitedly told me she had some of his ashes in her car and that he would “love to go to Yosemite with us.” I took the small container and told her I would be honored to spread them out in the mountains where we were headed.

Several days later on the first night of solitude, I had a dream about a man being executed. In the dream I was amazed at his composure, his complete serenity as he spoke to the executioner explaining where in his skull he wanted the bullets to go. He then knelt down to meditate as peacefully as if he was at home in his garden relaxing on a Sunday morn. The executioner then placed the gun where he requested, pulled the trigger and the man slumped to the ground, his life in this world over.

I awoke in a sweat. I thought about the synchronicity of meeting my friend’s wife just before we left for our quest, about her giving me some of his ashes, about how two members of our group had found a tree high up on a ridge overlooking a steep cliff, a tree that held items from people that had died with a book in a metal box under a stone at its base, a book with pictures and stories about the deceased whose sacred objects were



now waving in the breeze on branches of a tree high in the Sierra Mountains, a tree we dubbed “The Shrine Tree.”

I thought about how I had shared with questors on our last night together before heading out for our time of solitude that songs or chants might come to them to help them through challenging times. I mentioned that many indigenous peoples used singing to help them to die consciously by facing death with honor and courage and that on vision quest it was good to be prepared to die to old ways of being that no longer

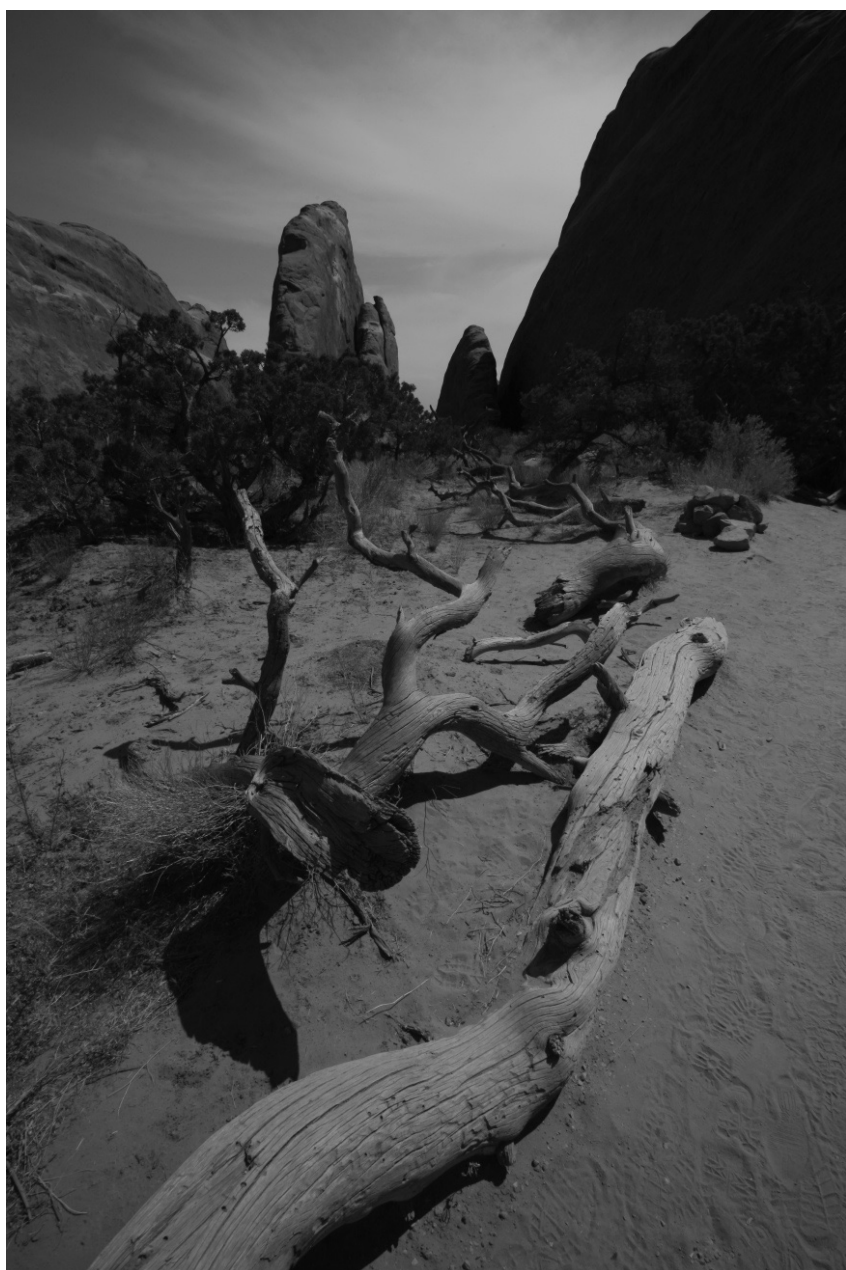
served so new ways could be born.

My dream plunged me into examining how well I would face my own death by whatever means it might come and what qualities the executed man in my dream called upon that enabled him to be so peaceful as he faced his death. Peter Matthiessen in the book *The Inner Journey: Views from Native Traditions* states that “Seeking manifests itself to the very end, as in the Death Song ... which is a celebration of existence” that helps one “achieve a transcendent state of mind in order to face death ... It was very

important to the Indian to die well, for one’s dying was not only a part of living but an expression of one’s life, completing the circle.”

Contemplation on this theme brought me back to the truism that one often dies as they have lived, so that if you want to die a peaceful death, trusting in the process of surrendering into mystery, one needs to live that way every day, working those “surrender muscles” so they can be called on and respond appropriately at a moment’s notice. I had my first assignment for quest #37.

The second “wisdom theme” of “medicine guidance” also came through a dream. In it I was shown the importance of using power in creating a safe world in which everyone would feel protected and secure in bringing forth their life-nourishing gifts. It didn’t take long for this opportunity to manifest in our own group. The very next night I sat before the Fire with the returned questors sharing our experiences,



the lone woman in our group spoke last.

She had been working with healing childhood trauma. She shared how a song had come to her that was of immeasurable help in her process but that she didn't want to sing it with us because it would sound "hokey." Forewarned by my dream, I got that hokey was a code word for not feeling safe.

Moved by the power I felt in her as she spoke about the impact of her song, I stepped into the breach.

"Sister, I think the song you got was not just for you but needs to be heard by all of us here in the circle. It was given to you but also through you for others as well. I offer you an invitation to sing it for us with that understanding, recognizing that you share a gift and honor us and your self as Sacred Woman by doing so. If this doesn't feel right to you, then it is OK to not sing the song and I accept that as you doing what you need to do to take care of your self. But I do want to extend the invitation."

I sat back to see how she responded. For long minutes she gazed silently into the Fire. I was curious to see what she would do and felt fine about whatever her choice turned out to be. The fire crackled, the wind moved softly in the night. Suddenly she looked up and started to sing, softly at first but gaining in strength and volume as she went on. The tenderness and courage of her song touched us all. By the time she finished several of the men were in tears.

"Wow, that was beautiful" I said. "Thank you for your courage in bringing it through. It truly is a medicine song, a power song that needs to be sung for more people. You have been gifted with something that is 'wakan', sacred. May you carry it out into the world for it will help others in their healing as it has helped you and touched us all very deeply."

Gratitude welled in my heart for this double gift from the Mystery – first, the gift from the dreaming and



second, the opportunity to start bringing into practice what the dream had called for, using power to create safe space for healing gifts to come forth and feed life. This parallels the Buddhist practice of training mindfulness, virtue and wisdom, along with the neural states of learning, regulating and then selecting ways of action – thinking, feeling, being – that flow from the Cosmic Field of Intelligence which honor the sacred gift of life we are entrusted to hold and sustain for future generations.

I sit at home now reflecting on the years of medicine gifts and “assignments” from my times on quest. I see that this writing is but a first step in dipping into the gift box to share more of what I have been fortunate to receive through this ancient but still relevant shamanic pathway to a soul-based and heart-centered life.

A voice from listening during star-filled cold nights on high mountain peaks, a voice that speaks from steaming hot jungles in the Amazon rainforest, echoes deep within:

Hear me Two Leggeds, I speak the truth. You are my children, but so too are all the Lived. You must relearn to walk in respectful harmony with all your relations or by your own hand, not mine, you will destroy your only home and take many others with you. Hear me Two Leggeds, come out to what you call the wild places and sit with me awhile. I will fill your soul with nourishment. I will help you remember your true identity, your wholeness and your holiness, your purpose in being here. But I need your help, your cooperation. For your sake, for the sake of All, please hear my call.

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Tom Pinkson, Ph.D. is a psychologist in private practice focusing on spiritual healing and conscious aging. One of the creators of modern vision fasting quests, and the founder of Wakan – a shamanic-based spiritual community dedicated to relatedness, social justice and environmental sustainability – Tom leads vision quests, retreats, workshops, and pilgrimages to places of power around the world. A frequent keynote speaker, he has authored *The Shamanic Wisdom of the Huichol: Medicine Teachings for Modern Times*, describing his forty years of transpersonal research, including a shamanic apprenticeship with Huichol Elders in Mexico. He also wrote *Do They Celebrate Christmas in Heaven? Spiritual Rite of Passage Teachings from Children with Life-Threatening Illness*; Tom helped start the second hospice program in the United States, and worked with Dr. Jerry Jampolsky at the Center for Attitudinal Healing for thirty two years. His current work addresses the challenges and opportunities of aging consciously, skillfully and purposefully.

Tom can be reached by email – thomas@microweb.com – and through his web sites: www.nierica.com and www.anewvisionofaging.com.

The Power of Intention: How It Can Benefit Couples

© George Taylor

I've been working with couples for twenty years, and I continue to be amazed at the positive results that can come from them having clear intentions for their work together.

Basic intentions such as to be honest, to be compassionate, to find new ways to resolve conflicts can open up exciting conversations about how the couples want the relationship to grow. Over and over I watch the beauty of couples moving from conflicted, separate states to more connection, joy and intimacy.

They learn to practice authentic vulnerable communication, the sine qua non of couples therapy. But how do they do this?

One dictionary describes 'intention' as an 'aim that guides actions.' The root is the Latin for 'to stretch towards.' When couples verbalize their intentions, they 'stretch towards' a feeling of greater safety, a prerequisite for deeper levels of connection. They build a container, or an operating system, for the relationship; they relax together in a common movement towards consciousness.

Client Story

Barbara came into counseling with her husband, and they both described the subtle energetic barriers that can grow up between partners in a long marriage. They wanted to return to a state of harmony, and we began by outlining their goals and creating some intentions.

After a couple of months, Barbara came in glowing with new found insight. She looked younger, thinner. She said, "Once Harold and I started talking more deeply, I realized how repressed my anger has been, and how my resentment was contributing to the cloud between us. I've been getting madder, haven't I honey."

Harold smiled a little and laughed. "I'll take a rain check on my answer."

"But even more interesting to me," Barbara said.

"I began to see how my issues with food and with weight were part of the resentment. I repress anger and gain weight. I've lost ten pounds in the last month, I want to go to the gym, and I feel great."

And truly a certain vitality was coming off of her skin, as she described how her work with intentions had guided her to new patterns of communication and self-concept.

Key Intentions for Couples

I start with the following basic intentions;

I'm willing to create a safe relationship, so we can talk freely.

I'm willing to reveal myself to you.

I'm willing to be self-responsible in my communications with you.

Often as sessions continue, couples create their own intentions together, based on their issues and opportunities.

Using Intentions in Couples' Sessions

In working with couples in session for twenty years, I have noticed three consistent reactions, when they talk about intentions:

Fear of change. (Big surprise—our ego is happy being stuck and defended.)

Excitement for the possibility of change. Enthusiasm and happiness.

Movement of energy in the body.

I find this last outcome so interesting. When couples state intentions out loud to each other, they often report warmth in their chest, tingling in their hands and arms, or excitement in the stomach region.

Brain research shows that creating intentions makes new neural pathways, so it may be that this movement of energy is related to new neuron connections, leading to changed thoughts and behavior.

Wilhelm Reich, associate of Freud, taught that character structures and habits were contained in the body-mind as bands of energy, and it seems possible that a commitment to healing intentions can free us from some of this stored or repressed energy as well.

Client Story

Marty and Ann are a couple whom I have been working with for a few years. They came back to counseling after their kids had gotten a little older, and Marty reported, "When we remember our intentions, I know that we create an environment for safety. We forget, so it's good to come back to you for a reminder."

Marty continued, "When we can work together to resolve conflict. When we fight, I know Ann will eventually move towards consciousness."



Ann gives him a look, and he laughed. “Or I will have to take some responsibility for my reactions. It’s the intentions that put us on the same page, working together.”

Resistance to Change

When I do the exercise below with couples in sessions, many people feel resistance. Part of their internal psychology doesn’t want to change in this way. This resistance shows itself in fear, in numbness, and in behaviors which further old habits.

Making this resistance conscious is one of the key functions of creating intentions. Once the fear and the negative behaviors are identified, they can start to change, as each person begins to ‘stretch towards’ growth and consciousness.

I learned the language of the intentions above from my mentors, Drs. Gay and Katie Hendricks many years ago. Their use of the word ‘willing’ takes into account our own imperfection. All of us will take two steps forward on the spiritual or healing path, and one step back. Again, an intention is a hope, not a law or a commandment.

Current Brain Research

Research in neurobiology verifies some of these empirical findings:

1. Humans have an extraordinary capacity to read the intentions of others. This process is complex, and engages many different functions of the brain.
2. When we read the intentions of others as benign, we feel ‘emo-

tional resonance.’ A cascading set of chemicals are released in the brain.

3. This emotional resonance leads to feelings of safety and connection.
4. When we feel connected, we have access to deeper experiences of empathy, and intimacy. Studies show “people who feel emotionally secure, who feel that there is someone to whom they can turn... are more sensitive to the suffering of others.” (Begley, p. 185)
5. Basic attachment theory suggests that a child’s ability to explore the world is built on feelings of safety. The same is probably true for adults wanting to explore the inner world of themselves and their partner.



San Rafael Meditation Group

Open to beginners and experienced practitioners, we meet on Wednesday evenings in downtown San Rafael. "Early-bird" meditation starts at 6:45 with formal instruction at 7:00; meditation ends at 7:30, followed by a brief break, and then a dharma talk and discussion, ending at 8:30. It is led by Rick Hanson, and for more information, check out www.WiseBrain.org/sanrafaelmeditation.html. Newcomers are always welcome!

Couple's Exercise with Intentions

1. Couples find quiet place to be together.
2. The couple decides on which intention to work on.
3. One person reads the intention out loud a few times and then sits quietly, mindfully noticing any feelings, images, or memories that arise.
4. He/she reports what is arising to the partner.
5. Partners switch and the second one does the exercise.
6. Partners share freely afterwards.

The beauty of working with intentions in this way is that the partner just listens. All the material for conversation arises from inside the heart mind of the one doing the exercise. (Neither one can say, "You made me feel it.") So the conversation can be more full of curiosity and empathy, rather than charged with blaming and defense.

Resources

The Mindful Brain

Dan Siegel

Buddha's Brain

Rick Hanson (with Richard Mendius)

Conscious Loving

Gay and Katie Hendricks

Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain

Sharon Begley

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George Taylor, MFT has been working with couples for 25 as a body-oriented psychotherapist in San Francisco and Marin County. He is still amazed at how the body stores secrets, as conditioning and as habit, and how those secrets can be revealed and healed through mindfulness and compassion. He has seen thousands of students and clients create new lives full of meaning and love.

He works with the power of intention, in sessions with couples and individuals, and in his men's groups, to free up compassion and creativity. George's main teachers are Jack Kornfield, Steven and Ondrea Levine, and Drs. Gay and Katie Hendricks. George has been married for 30 years to Debra Chamberlin Taylor, a Spirit Rock Meditation Center Teacher. Together, they have led couples workshops for over twenty years. They are ardent students of questions like: How can the practice of relationship be a path of awakening? How can a transformational relationship contribute to world peace?

For information about George's workshops and psychotherapy practice, you can email him at Geotaylor08@gmail.com, or go to www.courageto love.com.



Thinking Outside the Box

Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of imagination.

John Dewey

Dogen's view is uncannily close to Heidegger's: being is always and only being in time; time is nothing other than being. This turns out to be less a philosophical than an experiential fact: to really live is to accept that you live "for the time being," and to fully enter that moment of time.

Living is that, not building up an identity or a set of accomplishments or relationships, though of course we do that too. But primarily, fundamentally, to live is to embrace each moment as if it were the first, last, and all moments of time. Whether you like this moment or not is not the point: in fact liking it or not liking it, being willing or unwilling to accept it, depending on whether or not you like it, is to sit on the fence of your life, waiting to decide whether or not to live, and so never actually living.

I find it impressive how thoroughly normal it is to be so tentative about the time of our lives, or so asleep within it, that we miss it entirely. Most of us don't know what it actually feels like to be alive. We know about our problems, our desires, our goals and accomplishments, but we don't know much about our lives. It generally takes a huge event, the equivalent of a birth or a death, to wake up our sense of living this moment we are given — this moment that is just for the

time being, because it passes even as it arrives.

Meditation is feeling the feeling of being alive for the time being. Life is more poignant than we know.

Dogen writes, "For the time being the highest peak, for the time being the deepest ocean; for the time being a crazy mind, for the time being a Buddha body; for the time being a Zen Master, for the time being an ordinary person; for the time being earth and sky... Since there is nothing but this moment, 'for the time being' is all the time there is."

Norman Fischer, NY Times, 8/7/09

No one walks through a psychotherapist's door without wanting something to change. But what if the change that actually has the power to end suffering is realizing our true nature? What if the peace we long for comes in discovering we do not need the moment to be different? What if the very transformation we imagine will bring our happiness only comes about by Being who/what we already are? What if the love we so desperately seek outside turns out to be within us?

Being is always becoming, but trying to "become" before knowing what it is to "be," often ends in frustration. It could be said, a bit simplistically, that spiritual teachers emphasize "being," and psychotherapists emphasize "becoming," but in reality we cannot separate either being or becoming.

Experientially, there is no realization of our true nature without being, which is a cessation of becoming.

**The Wellspring Institute
for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom**

The Institute is a 501c3 non-profit corporation, and it publishes the Wise Brain Bulletin. The Wellspring Institute gathers, organizes, and freely offers information and methods – supported by brain science and the contemplative disciplines – for greater happiness, love, effectiveness, and wisdom. For more information about the Institute, please go to www.wisebrain.org/wellspring.html.

Paradoxically, there is no flowering of that realization without becoming, which is our willingness to be transformed by our realization.

Realization is not an attainment of ego; it is the end of trying to get somewhere or be somebody.

When there has been a true awakening, it is the Mystery and not the “me” that then begins to transform our thoughts, our heart, and our actions, including the functioning called “psychotherapy.” It is at this point that many seekers move away from what they have realized and return to the mind to try to figure out how to live from this truth.

However, as soon as we go back to the mind’s thoughts about “how,” we have departed from the mystery of Being, which is the source and agent of living more deeply, directly, and simply from what we are.

Dorothy Hunt and John Prendergast

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but

the perception. When my perceptions are remov’d for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions remov’d by death, and cou’d I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I shou’d be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is farther requisite to make me a perfect non-entity. If any one, upon serious and unprejudic’d reflection thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I call reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu’d, which he calls himself; tho’ I am certain there is no such principle in me.

Douglas Hume

**Grateful Wonder:
Seeing Through the Box**

Maybe the limitations we presume actually have no basis – or less of one than we might think . . .

- One of the most mindblowing optical illusions

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap091004.html>

- Intricate filigrees of lace – 60 trillion miles across:

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap091025.html>

- A zoo of galaxies:

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap091026.html>

- The universe ten billion years ago:

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap091028.html>

- Which is bigger, the earth or a sunspot? (And watch the sunspot change!)

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap050216.html>