



PATHWAYS

TALES FOR THE SPIRITUAL SEEKER

INSPIRING TALES WITH
PRACTICAL WISDOM &
GUIDED REFLECTIONS.

JANICE M. PUTA

Comments from Readers

"This collection of provocative short stories is long on spiritual lessons. I was inspired to follow each journey diligently and with great anticipation of what it would teach me about myself. The lessons were priceless."

-- Sheen Perkins, investor and entrepreneur; Nevada

"Jan's creative short stories are followed by thoughtful and heartfelt questions which help put focus on those nagging questions of 'Who am I?' 'What am I here for?' and 'How can I get there?' If these have ever been your questions, read on and enjoy."

-- Anita Meyer, retired social worker; Wisconsin

"Pathways: Tales for the Spiritual Seeker is like a cool, refreshing drink of water on a sweltering day. These tales will slow you down, nourish your spirit, and bring you a lovely sense of calm. You'll turn to this book many times. Enjoy each word and quiet joy."

-- Lynne Klippel, author, publisher, host of www.WebSororityTalkRadio.com;
Missouri

"These contemplative stories and exercises provide an opportunity to regain perspective in a distracting world."

-- Sherri Lynn Kelly, corporate manager; Wisconsin

"Each of these tales evokes an emotional reaction that leads me to further investigation and understanding of myself. The rich details form a clear visual in my mind that I can return to in an instant, whenever I need to. There's a story here for every situation, and I find it soothing to focus on the parts of each one that are relevant to the events in my life."

-- Dana Weekley, writer, blogger, entrepreneur, mother; New Jersey

"Sweet and wise, these are lovely stories that comfort and teach us each time we read them. Thank you for this gift, Janice!"

-- Phebe Vance, M.S.W.; Wisconsin

"The stories are charming and will be very useful in group work or for retreats. I think that young teens would especially benefit and grow from the discussion of these tales. Puta makes complex spiritual concepts accessible to all!"

-- Susan Ciesla, fmr exec. dir., Fond du Lac Center for Spirituality & Healing;
Wisconsin

"These short tales of wisdom took me on a path of recognition to the places where my soul's journey has been and places within that have yet to be explored. Truly an affirmation for me that I am not alone, that I am connected to a source of oneness and spiritual wisdom."

-- AnnaMaria Casper, Reiki Master/teacher; Wisconsin

Pathways:
Tales for the Spiritual Seeker

**Inspiring tales with practical wisdom
and guided reflections.**

Janice M. Puta

eBook edition

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Dedication

For my Mom and Dad, Gertrude C. (Novak) and Ruben W. Puta, who gave so much of themselves and their own lives in providing a Christian education for me from grade school through college.

Thank you for introducing me to the mysteries of the Divine and supporting me on my spiritual pathways.

Foreword

The Master Teacher

The master teacher has three dimensions. The master is a storyteller, a moral guide or mentor, and a spiritual director. All three are necessary because the master is a holistic teacher. The master touches on all three levels of existence—the physical, mental and spiritual—all at the same time, sometimes without the student's awareness. This multi-dimensional relationship of the master with the student is a developed gift, like most attributes of the master.

The master touches the physical plane of existence with the images and literalness of the story the master weaves. The story touches the sensory fabric of life, permeating reality with the concrete presence of tastes, touches, smells, hearings, and "seeings" that print indelible images on the circuitry of the brain. These sensory implantations make the presence of the teacher palpable, always consciously present, especially when other sensory experiences trigger the newly formed circuitry.

The master brilliantly uses these physical realities to formulate mental insights and understandings that become models for correct and nurturing actions later, when the master is not around. The master knows how to cleverly set up systematic activities and practices that allow the learning process to continue long after the initial images subside. The master allows the student to continue learning independently, becoming the ever-present mentor.

The master teaches beyond image and model. The master connects with the student on the spiritual level. The story and the model pattern become the framework for the real work—the transformation of the student's spirit. The master, simply because the master was once a student, knows that all of life is Triune—physical, mental, and spiritual.

Janice Puta is a master teacher. Her stories fill the pages of her book with vivid and life-giving images full of the five senses. They lead the reader beyond the physical and mental world into the world of spiritual transformation.

In her “Savor the Experience” section that follows each story, Jan asks the reader to mentally reflect on the images in the story. This mental process is necessary to open up the brain circuits to the personal meaning the story has for each reader.

Jan encourages the reader to look at the bigger picture—in other words, to examine the holistic and spiritual significance of the story by repeating internally part or the whole of a statement. This is the ancient practice of desert monks, called *Lectio Divina*. This contemplative practice was used also by the monks in the Middle Ages to let the truths of the sacred readings sink into the deep unconscious mind of the spiritual aspirant. This process opened the practitioner to the deepest corners of the inner world and provided entrance to the soul, the spirit of life within. This led the practitioner to rest in the presence of the divine.

After a time of contemplation while in this very sacred world, insights and blessed understandings surface, forever to be remembered through the journaling process.

Jan masterfully leads the student in that process, and the student will never be the same. Transformation will unfold.

In a very concrete way, Jan has put together a number of stories that bring us to the heart of our inner world. She gives us the opportunity to uncover realities of our deepest self in the context of private joy and personal happiness.

May your journey with this master teacher bring you to valuable and enlightening places.

*Michael A Ketterhagen, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Theology, Marian College
Spiritual Director of the Fond du Lac Center for
Spirituality and Healing Fond du Lac, Wisconsin*

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Introduction

Where My Book Began

From the time I was in high school, I remember wanting to be a writer. As the divine plan for my life unfolded, it would be almost another 30 years before I actually began writing my first book, and another 15 years before I put it together for publication.

Back in 1991, I was an administrative assistant at the Jesuit Retreat House in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Having immersed myself in that environment, I was fond of the annual eight-day directed retreat as my “vacation” time for my body, mind, and soul. Retreats were my favorite times to journal, reflect, take long walks out in nature, and restore my creative energies.

I don’t remember what prompted me to begin to write tales based on spiritual themes, but the earliest stories date back to September, October, and November of 1991 and were saved on my first computer. Several years later, when I upgraded to another computer and an Internet connection, I rarely used anything stored on the old hard drive.

A world of spiritual wisdom and practices opened up for me over the next 15 years. My pathways led me through retreats, days of reflection, centering prayer, meditation, *Lectio Divina*, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, yoga, tai chi, meridian tapping, releasing trauma and suppressed emotional energies in cellular memory, connecting to High Self and clearing subconscious programming, chakras, soul records, and past life discordant energies. In some practices I spent more time and effort than others, occasionally becoming a practitioner to guide others through specific paths of spiritual wisdom and techniques.

In July of 2006 when I moved, it was time to deal with my first computer and all the old data I didn’t need and hadn’t used for all these years. I knew I wanted some of the poetry and

ideas for a manuscript off that hard drive. In December, I was fortunate to connect with Nat Ciesla, who transferred all the data from the hard drive onto one CD! It was then I noticed a folder labeled “Stories” but had no idea what was in there. When I opened it and read “Wind Walker” and “The Light Within,” the passion for these stories leapt into a roaring fire and became the energy behind this book.

From December 17 through December 30 of 2006, I encouraged myself to listen and wait for any new stories that wanted to be written to supplement or complete the earlier themes. Every few days, I wrote another one of the five additional stories included in this edition.

What My Book Offers You

In order to satisfy our innate spiritual hunger, we choose many pathways and support systems on our journey back home to the Divine Source.

From my background and experience, I have selected for you clear, concise, effective, and transforming wisdom. These stories present options for you to experiment with or to include in your own spirituality. They introduce you, your family, friends, clients, retreatants, and listeners to:

- » meditation, centering prayer, and contemplative stillness;
- » reconciliation, forgiveness, and solidarity;
- » owning and affirming your inner Divine Spark;
- » serving with wise boundaries and good self-care;
- » growing your inner child and befriending your shadow self; and
- » practicing clear insight and self-empowerment.

How To Use My Book

Here is a spiritual companion, easy to take with you and comfortable to work with. It doesn't matter where you begin

in this book or where you are on your spiritual journey. Each tale is a different pathway inviting you to:

- » explore the wisdom and practices of the spiritual life;
- » enjoy a refreshing, inspiring, and personally satisfying story;
- » discover layers of meaning in symbolism, metaphors, and characterization;
- » journal or work through the reflections and exercises at the end of each story;
- » read a page or read the whole story;
- » savor your favorite quotations;
- » recreate the story in your imagination and become one of the characters; and
- » tap into, rejuvenate, and nurture the depth and awareness within your own soul.

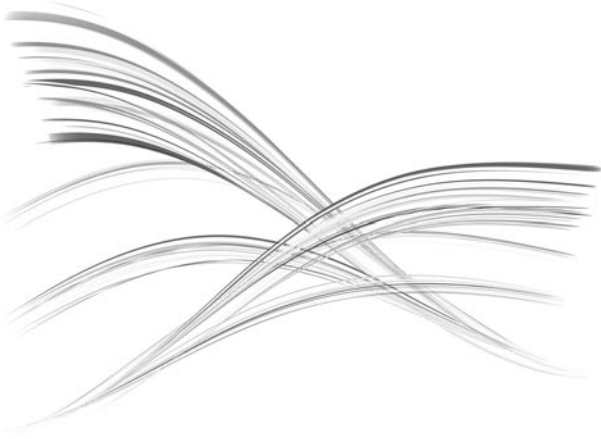
Read these tales out loud to small groups, or use them as openers for meetings and conferences. The pace of each story, the repetition of major concepts and the presentation of a problem and its solution or a question and its answer, hold attention and draw interest around the practical wisdom being presented.

Use the reflections and exercises at the end of each story as activities for prayer groups, days of reflection, retreats, 12-step programs and recovery and rehabilitation programs focusing on a spiritual foundation.

Whether this book is your own spiritual companion, a gift to a friend, a tool for your client or a resource for your group presentations, may it continue to give over and over again from the many levels of truth and wisdom layered in its stories.

How to Give Me Feedback on My Book

Whether you read one story or all of them, work with some of the questions and exercises or none of them, feel free to send your comments about what you've read and your experience to: Janice@OurSpiralJourney.com or Janice M. Puta, 114 S. Main St. #122, Fond du Lac, WI 54935.



*Wind Walker:
The path of contemplative stillness.*

“Jan Puta brilliantly takes age-old wisdom and weaves images and lessons into parables that warm the heart and sing to the soul! Her stories are timeless, appealing to people of all ages and spiritual beliefs. *Pathways: Tales for the Spiritual Seeker* will bless all who choose to ‘walk with the wind.’”

-- Tana Borron-Jerde, M.S., Certified Clinical Competence
Speech and Language Pathologist; Wisconsin

Chapter 1

*“Search for the stillness in your heart
where the Holy and Ancient One is waiting for you.
Say to the Holy and Ancient One,
‘Here I am. I am here for You.’”*

Wind Walker: The path of contemplative stillness.

A long, long time ago, there was a place where it was always summertime. The people who lived there didn't know theirs was a special land. Everyone was so happy, no one ventured out into the far-away places.

Everyone lived in small villages. Each village was like a large family. Several older men and women taught the children about their traditions.

One of the sacred teachings of each village was the beautiful story about the wind. No matter how often they heard this story, children and adults wanted to hear it over and over again. It was as if hearing the story satisfied a hunger inside of them.

To them, the wind was the breath of the Holy and Ancient One, who made all things and now sustained all things by breathing over them. The wind was life. That's why no one built huts or houses. Everyone lived outside, sleeping under the trees where, even at night, the wind breathed over them.

When they cooked their meals over an open fire, they fanned the wind into their fires to carry the fragrance of their cooking back to the Holy and Ancient One and to receive, in return, a blessing of health and prosperity.

They did all their teaching, singing and dancing out in the wind where the wind could carry their sounds to the Holy and Ancient One. Then, as they paused and waited in silence, they felt inside themselves a rush of joy and peace as the wind came back from the Holy and Ancient One.

It was no wonder the people had great respect and reverence for one they called the Wind Walker.

As the story went, many of the people were sure this was the only person who walked on the wind and went to see the Holy and Ancient One. The Wind Walker traveled from village to village and stayed among the people for some time. So it was that one morning, the people of one village awoke to see the Wind Walker sitting in the glow of the rising sun, waiting quietly for the wind to blow the sun up into the sky and to announce the start of another day.

The people jumped out of their sleeping places under the trees and forgot all about eating or drinking anything. Making a large circle around Wind Walker, everyone sat down on the ground and waited in the stillness for Wind Walker to speak to them. But some of them were not very good at waiting.

"Tell us," someone cried out, "tell us how you walk on the wind."

"Yes, yes, yes," someone else spoke up, "and tell us how to find the way to the Holy and Ancient One."

"I do not walk on the wind," Wind Walker gently answered. "I walk with the wind." Knowing the questions in their minds,

Wind Walker went on to teach them many things. "I do not go to meet the Holy and Ancient One, because the Holy and Ancient One is already here for you and for me -- the Holy and Ancient One always comes to meet us and wait for us!"

"The wind waits for us to make ourselves ready to walk with it. It's not a matter of putting on -- putting on wings or putting on flowing robes. It's a matter of taking off. Leave behind your blanket and your cooking pot. Leave behind your wife, your husband, your children, your mother, your father, your best friends."

"Go alone out into a quiet place where the wind can touch you. There search for the stillness in your heart where the Holy and Ancient One is waiting for you. Say to the Holy and Ancient One, 'Here I am. I am here for You.'"

Then Wind Walker paused and looked around at all the people sitting quietly in the circle. They seemed like eager children, hungry to hear and thirsty to feel everything Wind Walker could teach them. With great compassion for them, Wind Walker continued throughout the day.

To this day, no one knows how it happened. As they listened to Wind Walker speak to them, everyone gathered there felt a heavy load lift from them. Then Wind Walker stood up and breathed over them. Inside of everyone, a gentle and quiet wind began to stir.

So it was they passed the whole day with Wind Walker teaching them about walking with the wind, and being with the Holy and Ancient One. Night did not come until Wind Walker heaved a deep sigh, and the sun rolled out of the sky like a giant bird flying to its nest to tuck its head under its wings and to sleep.

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

“To these people, the wind was the breath of the Holy and Ancient One, who made all things and now sustained all things by breathing over them.”

- » Notice how the people in the story “honored” what they believed in: They slept under the trees at night, they fanned the wind into their cooking fires to carry the fragrance back to the Holy and Ancient One, their teaching and singing and dancing were out in the wind, and so forth.
 - ♦ What images or beliefs do you have about who or what the Divine, Divine Source, Higher Power, God, Eternal Love, or other such spirit is for you?
 - ♦ How do you “honor” what you believe in?
- » What images or beliefs about the Divine do your family and friends have? Can you respect their diversity and personal spirituality without challenging them, confronting them, or putting them down?

“As the story went, many of the people were sure this was the only person who walked on the wind and went to see the Holy and Ancient One.”

- » Have you heard about people credited with special powers or associated with miraculous events?
- » Do you listen to both their supporters and their challengers, or do you find yourself choosing to hear and believe only what supports your position?
- » What stories, legends, traditions, rituals, and devotions do your family and friends have about the Divine as part of their personal spirituality? Can you respect their diversity and personal spirituality?



*Look at the bigger picture and
what it might mean to you.*

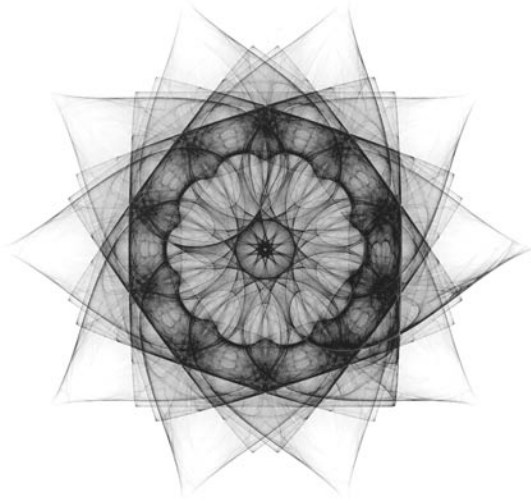
Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

- » “The Holy and Ancient One is already here for you and for me – the Holy and Ancient One has always come to meet us and wait for us!”
- » “The wind waits for us to make ourselves ready to walk with it.”
- » “Go alone out into a quiet place where the wind can touch you.”
- » “Say to the Holy and Ancient One, ‘Here I am. I am here for You.’”

Go deeper into the stillness and quiet. Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes



*The Peace-of-the-People:
The path of unconditional love.*

Chapter 2

*“Sit quietly with only one desire in your heart –
to gaze upon the compassionate eyes
of the Wise and Wonderful Person
and to allow those eyes to gaze on you.”*

The Peace-of-the-People: The path of unconditional love.

In a far away land, really closer than we realized, there lived a Wise and Wonderful Person who was called the Peace-of-the-People.

Visitors there stood in line for many hours for a chance to come in and sit down in the presence of this Wise and Wonderful Person. Sometimes the people spoke, asking a lot of questions and recounting a list of all their needs that stood in the way of what they called happiness and prosperity.

But after some time of all this rambling on and muttering, they grew very still inside of themselves and became aware of those compassionate eyes loving each and every one of them. It was only after they left the presence of the Wise and Wonderful Person, they realized they received nothing they asked for, but were blessed with everything they needed, especially peace deep inside themselves.

Upon arriving back home, some of the people got together and decided to build a house like the one the Wise and Wonderful Person lived in, so every time they wanted to

experience the Peace-of-the-People, they could sit down in this house and remember what it was like when they last visited the Wise and Wonderful Person.

Well, one thing led to another, and the plans for the building were soon out of hand. Everyone had a different recollection of what the house actually looked like where the Wise and Wonderful Person lived. There were those who argued this new building should have the best of everything, as was befitting the high dignity and esteem everyone attributed to the one and only Person who could give them the Peace-of-the-People.

Finally, a delegation was chosen to carry all their questions and concerns, their plans and revisions, and their options and alternatives to the one and only person whom they meant to please.

The time came for the delegation to take their turn in the Presence of the Wise and Wonderful Person. As soon as the compassionate eyes gazed on them, peace flooded their souls like the first rain after a long drought. They sat so still there in the gaze of the Wise and Wonderful Person that no one noticed the tears in each other's eyes, nor did they know the rhythm of their own breathing or feel their heart beat.

When the delegation arrived back among the people, there was a very short meeting. The spokesperson for the delegation quieted the people and then said:

"All you need to do is to sit quietly alone or together and have only one desire in your heart -- to gaze upon the compassionate eyes of the Wise and Wonderful Person and to allow those eyes to gaze on you. That is how the Peace-of-the-People can come to you in any place at any time."

Then, knowing the people did not understand what was being said, the spokesperson called together the delegation

and sent them among the people to draw them aside in groups and to teach them how to gaze upon the Wise and Wonderful Person in their hearts.

This became known as the time when the Peace-of-the-People came to visit and stayed among them.

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

“They received nothing they asked for but were blessed with everything they needed.”

- » Can you remember, as a child, asking your parents for something you thought you had to have, but not getting it? Can you see the bigger picture, the reason why that might not have been good for you at that time in your life?
- » Can you remember asking God, your Higher Power, the Divine, for something you really wanted for yourself or for someone else, and not getting it? Can you see a bigger picture now? Can you see some value in how things turned out for you or for others involved?

“One thing led to another, and the plans for the building were soon out of hand.”

- » Is there anything going on in your life where you are standing still or not moving forward because all your plans of how to do it, what you need to get it done or who you need to get involved are overwhelming you?
- » Is there something that you’ve always wanted to do, be, or have, and you’re not close to being, doing, or having it?
 - ♦ Name it, write it down clearly and concisely on a 3x5 card, and carry it around as a reminder.
 - ♦ Cut out a picture, put a price on it, get a brochure about it, and remind yourself “gently” and “enthusiastically” what it is that you’d like to create in your life.
 - ♦ Ask the Divine, God, your Higher Power to show you how to get from where you are to where you want to be.
 - ♦ Patiently wait, listen with eagerness, and learn to be aware of opportunities, options, and actions to take to help achieve what you want.

Look at the bigger picture and
what it might mean to you.

Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

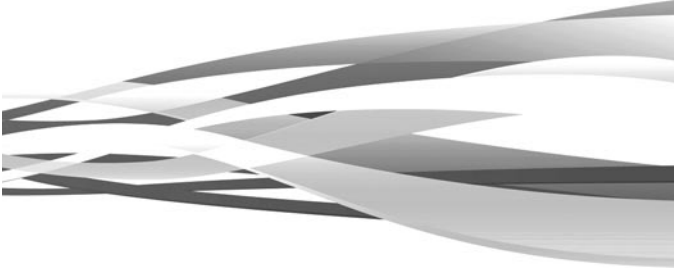
- » “As soon as the compassionate eyes gazed on them, peace flooded their souls like the first rain after a long drought.”
- » “All you need to do is to sit quietly alone or together and have only one desire in your heart -- to gaze upon the compassionate eyes of the Wise and Wonderful Person and to allow those eyes to gaze on you.”

Go deeper into the stillness and quiet. Go deeper into the awareness of being loved just the way you are now: no questions asked, no demands being made, and no strings attached. Love is totally available, accessible, and waiting for you.

Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes



A New Heart for the Willow: The path of trust and surrender.

"This story is extremely relevant for me at this point in my life. It forces me to let go of my belief in symbols and my need to have the Willow remain a Willow. I let go of that, and I can fully appreciate the changes that take place in the story. Letting go and trust are the themes I've been working on, and I love the image of the tree letting go of its roots, trusting, and allowing itself to be totally engulfed by loving energy. I imagine this story every day now, as I'm dealing with letting go of the past and moving forward!"

--Dana Weekley, writer, blogger, entrepreneur, mother; New Jersey

Chapter 3

*"It's a long journey into my heart
to find a new heart for you.
Do you want to come with me?"*

A New Heart for the Willow: The path of trust and surrender.

The willow stood at the edge of the lake and there was a severe drought in the land. "I'm thirsty," the willow said to the lake. "All this water, and I'm thirsty."

The lake loved the willow so much it let its water crawl up on the land and wet the roots of the willow. The willow sighed with relief, "Ah, that's wonderful. My roots feel so good. But my bark is dry and my leaves are curling up and falling off."

The lake rolled up a huge wave that splashed water all over the bark and the leaves of the willow. The willow was most grateful. "Ah, that's terrific! My bark feels great, my leaves love it. But inside of me it's very dry. I have no more tears; I have no more laughter. I have no more dreams; I have no more heart."

The lake gently invited the willow. "Come to me and I will give you a new heart with tears and laughter and dreams and all the water you can desire. Fling yourself into my waters and I will catch you."

The willow was unsure. "You come to me," it pleaded to the lake. "I have never left the land. I don't know how to let go of it."

Tenderly the lake moved its waters around the willow until the soil became muddy. The willow began to sway in the mud and was terrified. It cried out, "Help me. My roots won't hold in the mud any longer; I'm falling."

"Be not afraid," the lake said. "See, I'm already here to catch you. Let go and come to me."

The willow fell into the water and floated on top of the lake. "At last, I have all the water I want."

"Oh, but there's more," the lake offered, "if you want more."

"More?" the willow asked. "How can there be more?"

The lake answered, "Remember the new heart with tears and laughter and dreams and all the water you can desire?"

"Ah, the new heart!" the willow exclaimed. "Yes, give me the new heart!"

"My dear willow," the lake said, "it's a long journey into my heart to find a new heart for you. Do you want to come with me?"

The willow was silent for a long time. Then it spoke, "Yes, I want to come. Take me with you down into your own heart to find a new heart for me."

Then the lake gently rolled its arms around the willow and tenderly carried it down into its deepest waters. There the lake gave the willow its very own heart of tears and laughter and dreams and all the water it could desire.

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

“I’m thirsty. All this water, and I’m thirsty.”

- » At this time in your life, what are your deepest longings, your deepest hunger, your deepest thirst? What are your most precious dreams for yourself? What is the greatest hope, ambition, or goal you have for yourself?
- » Who do you know will listen to you when you want to talk about this?

“I have no more tears; I have no more laughter. I have no more dreams; I have no more heart.”

- » Were there times in your life when you felt you had no more tears? No more laughter? No more dreams? No more heart?
- » How did you make it through those times?
 - ♦ Who helped you?
 - ♦ How did you experience God, your Higher Power, the Divine when you were in those difficult times?

Look at the bigger picture and what it might mean to you.

Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

- » “I have never left the land. I don’t know how to let go of it.”
- » “Be not afraid. See, I am already here to catch you. Let go and come to me.”
- » “It’s a long journey into my heart to find a new heart for you. Do you want to come with me?”

Go deeper into the stillness and quiet. Go deeper into letting go and allowing yourself to be led beyond your comfort zone. Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes

Journal Notes



The Light Within: The path of connecting to source.

“I connected immediately to the unconditional love, strength, and courage of the healer. I am recalling many points along the path of my own spiritual journey, and The Great Sadness that was often sparked by some Divine assistance; all the healers that were at the ready as I walked through the valley of darkness. For all that I have learned in those dark times, I, too, dance in celebration and gratitude.”

-- AnnaMaria Casper, Reiki Master/teacher; Wisconsin

Chapter 4

*“With every breath you take,
say to yourself,
‘The light is always with me.’”*

The Light Within: The path of connecting to source.

Long ago, when people lived in small towns, each town had its own Healer. The Healer was a special kind of person who came to the town and lived among its people.

The Healer knew many things about keeping everyone healthy and happy. If anyone was sick or injured, all the family got together and planned how to carry the needy one over to the Healer’s house. But the Healer seemed to know when and where healing was needed, so the Healer waited outside until someone opened the door.

Not all sicknesses and injuries were obvious to the people in the town. There were times when they didn’t know what was happening to them -- only that something seemed strangely different.

That’s the way it was the year when the great sadness came into the land. At first, it was just in a few households. Moms and dads looked into each other’s eyes – the light they used to see there stretching down a long, winding path wasn’t shining anymore. Parents looked into the faces of their children, and couldn’t see any of the radiance that used to shine in the night

like a full moon. They stopped what they were doing. They went outside to look in the eyes of their neighbors and to search the faces of the children playing in the street.

Every day, there were more people in the street wandering aimlessly, not knowing what they were missing or what they wanted. Finally, all the people in the town gathered together in the marketplace. But there were no dances, no songs, not even a spoken word. The people sat on the ground with the great sadness wrapped around them so tightly they could not move, they could not speak, they could not even cry.

It was toward evening when the Healer came and stood among them. The Healer grieved to see everyone bound by the great sadness. Groaning from deep down inside, the Healer said to all the people, "Listen to me and do as I say. Imagine in your heart there is a small heap of ashes. With every breath you take, see the wind blow away the cold ashes in your heart and coax the faint glow of tiny embers still there. With every breath you take, say to yourself, "The light is always with me."

Late into the night, the Healer worked with everyone sitting in the marketplace. The Healer touched each person and breathed over each one until, inside, each could feel a small fire burning.

It was the early hours of the morning, but no one noticed the sun rising. Everyone was looking into their own heart to see the beautiful fire blazing there, and to sing out with all their strength, "The light is always with me."

So great was their joy and happiness that everyone gathered in the marketplace jumped up on their feet at the same time. Holding hands, circling round, and weaving up and down the streets, the people of the town danced and sang to celebrate

their freedom from the great sadness and the re-kindling of their light within.

The celebration went on for many days and many nights, but the people in the town remember it only as one long day. For even after the sun left the sky, the light within the people was so great that it lit up the night until the night was brighter than the day.

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

“The Healer knew many things about keeping people healthy and happy.”

- » What persons have been “healers” in your life experience?
 - Who was there for you with the right information, the support and encouragement, the physical assistance, and financial help when you needed it?
 - How did you give thanks, express gratitude, or otherwise show appreciation for the caring and effort, and the kindness and love of others towards you?
- » How have you experienced healing from Spirit, from a Higher Power, from God?
 - How did you thank Spirit, your Higher Power, God for this healing?
 - How did Spirit, your Higher Power, God bring healing into the lives of others through you?
- » At this time in your life:
 - What opportunities or options are you aware of for more healing and wholeness in your life?
 - What opportunities or options are you aware of being part of the healing process for others?

“The people sat on the ground with the great sadness wrapped around them so tightly they could not move, they could not speak, they could not even cry.”

- » Have you ever felt listless or restless, unwanted and useless, or rejected and abandoned, and wondered if it was worthwhile to keep on living?
 - How did you deal with those feelings?
 - Who was the “healer” who helped you through that?
- » Consider writing about your time of greatest need and how the “healer” came to help you. Write this story as a reminder and a gesture of gratitude for how someone was sent to you in your greatest time of need.

Look at the bigger picture and
what it might mean to you.

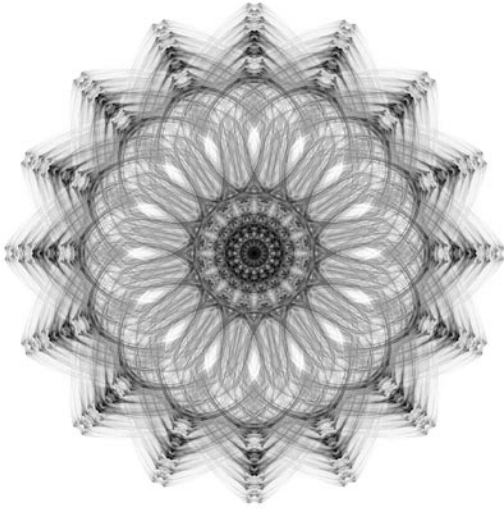
Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

- » “The Healer seemed to know when and where healing was needed, so the Healer waited outside until someone opened the door.”
- » “Every day, there were more people in the street wandering aimlessly, not knowing what they were missing or what they wanted.”
- » “With every breath you take, see the wind blow away the cold ashes in your heart and coax the faint glow of the tiny embers still there. With every breath you take, say to yourself, “The light is always with me.””

Go deeper into the stillness and quiet. Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes



*The Father's House:
The path of answering the call.*

Chapter 5

*"I am your Father.
I love you.
Come home and join your family."*

The Father's House: The path of answering the call.

From a distance, I could see the rooftops of the mansion built in the center of the city. Its magnificent turrets and domes, steeples and towers looked out over the city in all directions like sleepless eyes watching and waiting. Coming closer, I saw the huge mansion spread its wings out in all directions as if they were open arms ready to welcome any visitor or passerby. And then I was there among the people standing in the street.

Being the newcomer in the crowd, I found myself surrounded by friendly citizens who welcomed me and asked me how they could be of service. I wanted to know everything they could tell me about this magnificent mansion. They were eager to take me into their company and to give me all the understanding I wanted.

Now I'll tell you what they told me – not that you should believe me, but that you will come and see for yourself.

From the very beginning, it was a huge construction project. When the citizens asked the owner what he was going to do with such huge buildings, he said, "I have many, many children.

I want to make sure there will be room for all of them.” From that day on, everyone in the city knew him as the Father.

Every day, crowds gathered around to see the mansion being built. To their surprise, there were no doors in the doorways and no windows in the window frames. There were many stairways and many more entrances, but no locks and no keys. There were no fences, no gates, and no guards. Well, what was this for such a fine place? Didn’t the Father know what kind of folks would eventually find their way here once word got around about this?

But that’s exactly what the Father wanted. He explained to the curious crowds that some of his children were away from home a long time, others had disconnected their phones and couldn’t be reached, and still others had moved and not left a forwarding address. The Father wanted to make sure each and every one of his children felt welcomed whenever they came home.

And come they did. Every hour of the day and night, people crowded outside the Father’s house waiting their turn to join the family. No one was overlooked, not even the citizens who lived right there in the city. Many of these citizens were busy walking among the others who were waiting, answering their questions and putting them at ease. Their words and care for the poor and the needy were so kind and gracious, the Father gazed on them with great love.

“What you have done for the least of these my children, you have done for me. Come now and enter into my home. This hour I claim you and name you as my own sons and daughters. Come and join your family.”

When the streets were empty and everyone was tucked inside this warm and safe house, the Father stood outside

alone, waiting. When some of the family came out to call him inside, he said to them, "Take care of my house and my precious children. I can wait no longer. There are still many empty rooms in my house and many lonely places in my heart. I am going out into the cities and towns, the streets and the alleys, the desolate and far away places. I am going to look for the rest of my sons and daughters, and invite them to come home with me."

Someone protested, "You don't know where they moved to. You don't have their phone numbers. No one knows who they are. If you find them, what if they do not want to come back with you?"

The Father answered, "I know where to look for them because I know the hunger in their hearts. I will call them by the name I gave them, and they will answer me. I will forgive all their wrongs. I will restore to them all their rights and privileges, even as I have done for each and every one of you."

Days passed, and then weeks and months. Again the streets were full of people looking for the Father's house. When questioned, all they could say was they had heard someone call their name, or had seen someone standing outside their door. When they had asked, "Who are you? What do you want with me?" they had heard this reply: "I am your Father. I love you. Come home and join your family." So the family welcomed home these sons and daughters.

Now as I listened to all these things the citizens of the city were telling me, I became aware of a strange warmth within me and a peacefulness in my whole being. They looked at me and said, "Come. We will take you into the Father's house and introduce you to your family."



Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

“I saw the huge mansion spread its wings out in all directions as if they were open arms ready to welcome any visitor or passerby.”

- » Where have you traveled, visited, or stopped in and felt welcomed?
 - ♦ What was it about that place that put you at ease?
 - ♦ Who was there for you with the right information or the help you needed?
 - ♦ How did you give thanks, express gratitude, or otherwise show appreciation?
- » At this time in your life:
 - ♦ What opportunities or options are you aware of for creating a more welcoming atmosphere and gracious hospitality in your home for family, friends, and visitors?
 - ♦ What opportunities or options are you aware of for creating a more welcoming atmosphere and gracious hospitality at your place of work for fellow employees, clients, visitors, and vendors?

“I want to make sure there will be room for all of them.”

- » Is there room in your heart and your life for your family?
 - ♦ In your heart, can you forgive as well as bless everyone in your family?
 - ♦ If you have unresolved hurt, misunderstandings, and abuse between you and any member of your family, have you sought out a counselor, therapist, or mentor to work with you on keeping your heart open and safe with appropriate boundaries and self-protection?
- » Is there room in your heart and your life for your friends?
 - ♦ In your heart, can you forgive as well as bless every one of your friends?
 - ♦ If you have unresolved hurt, misunderstandings, and abuse between you and any of your friends, have you sought out a counselor, therapist, or mentor to work with you on keeping your heart open and safe with appropriate boundaries and self-protection?
- » Is there room in your heart and your life for the people you work with, for the managers and CEO's, clients and vendors, visitors and strangers, the poor and marginalized, and people of different races and nationalities?
 - ♦ In your heart, can you forgive as well as bless anyone and everyone in your life experience?
 - ♦ If you have unresolved hurt, misunderstandings, and abuse between you and anyone else, have you sought out a counselor, therapist, or mentor to work with you on keeping your heart open and safe with the appropriate boundaries and self-protection?



Look at the bigger picture and what it might mean to you.

Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

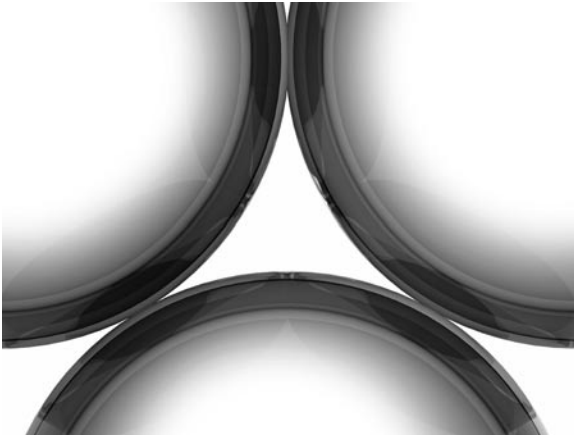
- » “The Father wanted to make sure each and every one of his children felt welcomed whenever they came home.”
- » “This hour I claim you and name you as my own sons and daughters. Come and join your family.”
- » “I am going to look for the rest of my sons and daughters, and invite them to come home with me.”
- » “I am your Father. I love you. Come home and join your family.”

Go deeper into the stillness and quiet. Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes

Journal Notes



Three Barrels of Wine: The path of good self-care.

“All it takes is love to create something extraordinary from something one might consider ordinary. This tale reminds me that we are here to love and serve; that with love and patience, we all have the capability to be extraordinary. We are constantly replenished if we are open to serving.”

-- AnnaMaria Casper, Reiki Master/teacher; Wisconsin

*"I've never been drained to the last drop.
It's a strange, hollow feeling to be so empty."*

Three Barrels of Wine: The path of good self-care.

It was the day of the great wedding, and the Bridegroom came to speak to the barrels of wine.

"The three of you have a great task to perform for me today. I am not asking you to make music nor to lead the dancing. Yours is not the task of cooking the finest feast or greeting all my guests. All I ask of you is to keep yourselves filled to the brim with the best of my wine. My stewards will measure out your treasures and serve them to all my guests."

Well, that didn't seem like such a difficult job for the three barrels of wine. After all, isn't that what they were made for -- to hold the wine and then let go of it whenever the Bridegroom needed it?

In the early hours of the great wedding celebration, the first barrel of wine was emptied out. "There must be a lot of thirsty people out there," it said to the other two full barrels. "I've never been drained to the last drop. It's a strange, hollow feeling to be so empty."

As the feasting began and more guests arrived, the second barrel of wine felt itself being tipped over and drained of its

last drop of wine. "What a lonely feeling," it said to the other empty barrel. "I didn't think I would ever be this empty."

Late into the night the dancing and the singing filled the great house of the Bridegroom. The stewards came to measure out the mellow wine from the third and last barrel. Each steward who dipped into the barrel thought this was the first measure drawn, for the barrel was always full.

Sometime later, the stewards were talking among themselves and wondering if the last barrel of wine would last through the night. It was then they realized that, even though they had all been dipping out its wine for some time already, the last barrel was always full to the brim whenever the stewards returned.

The stewards called the Bridegroom aside and took him over to the last barrel of wine. Expressing their amazement at this wonder, they waited for the Bridegroom to explain.

"My barrels of wine are very special to me," the Bridegroom began. "They were formed and fashioned for this purpose -- to hold the best of my wine until I have a need for it, then to let it go."

"But there is more to it," the Bridegroom continued. "For six weeks, these barrels stand outside in the morning dew and the evening rain. For six weeks, they fill themselves with the sights and sounds of everything in the heavens and on the earth. On the first day of the seventh week, something marvelous happens: I turn all their water into my best wine."

"All I ask of my barrels is to keep themselves filled with the water -- and I'll take care of the wine."

"Will there be enough wine to last through the night?" the stewards asked. "Already two of the barrels are empty."

The Bridegroom replied, "The two dry barrels were so busy watching you measure out their wine that they forgot how to take care of themselves. They were thinking only of what they were giving, and didn't remember to ask for what they needed. The third barrel was wise enough to ask my servant to top it off with water whenever a steward drew out some wine. I heard it call to me, asking me to turn its water into wine so my guests would not be disappointed. I was pleased with its wisdom and foresight. I blessed it with the best of my wine, and it will continue to delight all of my guests for the rest of the night."



Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

"I've never been drained down to the last drop. It's a strange, hollow feeling to be so empty."

- » At what time in your life did you feel drained or emptied out?
- » If you had to go through that again, what would you do differently to keep yourself from being so totally emptied out?

"The third barrel was wise enough to ask my servant to top it off with water whenever a steward drew out some wine."

- » Look at the difficult times in your life right now -- the struggles, the questions, the searching. Are you asking for help? Are you open to receiving help without feeling guilty or judging yourself?
- » Look around at your family members, friends, and associates. Is anyone reaching out and asking you for help? Can you give within your own means, respect your own principles for helping someone, and not be concerned about what anyone else is going to think of you?



Look at the bigger picture and what it might mean to you.

Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

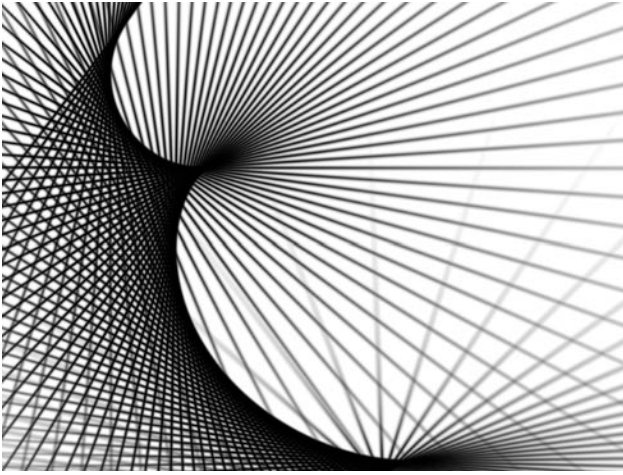
- » “They were formed and fashioned for this purpose – to hold the best of my wine until I have a need for it, then to let it go.”
- » “For six weeks, these barrels stand outside in the morning dew and the evening rain. For six weeks, they fill themselves with the sights and sounds of everything in the heavens and on the earth.”
- » “All I ask of my barrels is to keep themselves filled with the water – and I’ll take care of the wine.”

Go deeper inside. Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes

Journal Notes



*Ties that Bind:
The path of wise boundaries.*

“Ties that Bind was a comfortable and very personal re-membering of the connections that I have with the other players in this great work we call life. I am hopeful that everyone that reads this work feels the connection to Spirit. A truly inspired work!”

-- Bill Barbee, tax reduction and wealth strategist;
Newbury Park, California

“Take three deep breaths and fill up all the emptiness inside of your heart with a beautiful light -- the light of love, energy, and joy -- from the limitless supply always available to you and everyone else.”

Ties that Bind: The path of wise boundaries.

In the center of the town was a clinic where everyone went when they needed help. Some people were hungry, and some were very tired. At times they were lonely, and at times they were very discouraged. Whenever they felt unhappy or unhealthy, they came to the clinic in the center of the town.

Here is where the healers lived and worked. There were healers to help people feed the hunger in their bodies and the hunger in their souls. There were healers to help them learn how to be brave and strong again. There were healers to teach them how to be happy; others, how to be hopeful. But whatever their specific healing, there was one lesson that every healer taught everyone who came to them. They called it the “ties that bind.”

Whenever a healer met with people who were very tired, exhausted, weary, and just plain worn out, the healer said to them, “Tell me about the work you do, the places you go, and the people you meet.” Usually they answered, “I don’t like my work, I hate the long drive, and there are too many people who don’t appreciate what I do. I’m tired of waiting in lines at

the store, being overcharged, and not getting any help when I need it.”

Then the healer explained to them, “There are invisible cords between your heart and all those jobs you hate to do, all those places you don’t like to go, and all those people who don’t appreciate you or want to help you. All these cords are draining the love, energy, and joy out of your heart until you’re tired, exhausted, weary, and just plain worn out.”

So the healer taught them what to do. “Close your eyes and imagine that you are holding in your hand several long extension cords. Now notice that one end of these cords is plugged into your heart, and the other end is plugged into the jobs you hate to do, the places you don’t like to go, and all those people who don’t appreciate you or want to help you. As soon as you can see these invisible cords and their connections, imagine yourself reaching into your heart and unplugging them.”

As they did this, they began to smile. The healer continued, “Take three deep breaths and bring back all the love, energy, and joy these cords took away from you. First, take back the energy from all the jobs that you hate to do, then from all the places you don’t like to go, and, finally, from all the people who don’t appreciate you or want to help you.”

When the lesson was over and everyone opened their eyes, they were surprised at how energized they felt, and how eager they were to be up and about their wonderful lives. The healer reminded them, “Unplug the invisible cords and take back your energy every night before you go to sleep. Then, when you wake up in the morning, you will be fully charged and ready for a new day.”

Some time later, a group of very unhappy people came to the clinic and wanted some help. They had been uncomfortable and miserable for a long time and they had had enough of this. The healer said to them, "Tell me about the kind of work you do, the places you go, and people you meet." They answered, "My job is to make sure everyone else does what they're supposed to do. I always have the best of everything, so I can't figure out why I'm not happy and feeling great. I have a few close friends, but I haven't got time for anyone else in my life."

It was then the healer realized these people were the ones who were plugging into and draining out the love, energy, and joy from everyone else instead of creating their own.

So the healer taught them what to do. "Close your eyes and imagine that you are holding in your hand several long extension cords. Now notice that one end of these cords is plugged into your heart, and the other end is plugged into all the people working for you, all the places you go, all the things you own, and all your friends. As soon as you can see these invisible cords and their connections, imagine yourself reaching into your heart and unplugging them."

As they did this, the healer said, "Take three deep breaths and fill up all the emptiness inside of your heart with a beautiful light -- the light of love, energy, and joy -- from the limitless supply always available to you and everyone else. You don't need these invisible cords to draw in love, energy, and joy from any one or any thing. You can get all you need by taking a deep breath and imagining your heart filling up with beautiful light."

When the lesson was over and everyone opened their eyes, they were surprised at how energized they felt and at how

eager they were to be up and about their wonderful lives. The healer reminded everyone, “Unplug the invisible cords every night before you go to sleep. In the morning, breathe in more love, energy, and joy so you are fully charged and ready for a new day.”

As more and more people came to the clinic and learned about the “ties that bind,” more and more of them learned how to take charge of their own healing and happiness. The time came when many of the healers in the clinic moved to other towns and cities and began to teach this healing lesson far and wide.

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

“I don’t like my work, I hate the long drive, and there are too many people who don’t appreciate what I do. I’m tired of waiting in lines at the store, being overcharged, and not getting any help when I need it.”

- » Make a list of the people, places, and things that seem to draw energy out of you.
- » Next to this list, draw a picture of your heart with your name on it.
- » Draw a line from every item in your list over to your heart to illustrate all the invisible cords plugging into you.

“As soon as you can see these invisible cords and their connections, imagine yourself reaching into your heart and unplugging them.”

- » Cross through all the lines that are leading to your heart. While you are doing this, consider saying a silent or verbal affirmation like these:

- ♦ “No one takes my power away from me.”
- ♦ “Nothing steals my life force.”
- » Put lovely circles or radiating lines around your heart to illustrate how free and energized you are. While you are doing this, consider a silent or verbal affirmation like these:
 - ♦ “I call back my vital force.”
 - ♦ “I own my own energy.”

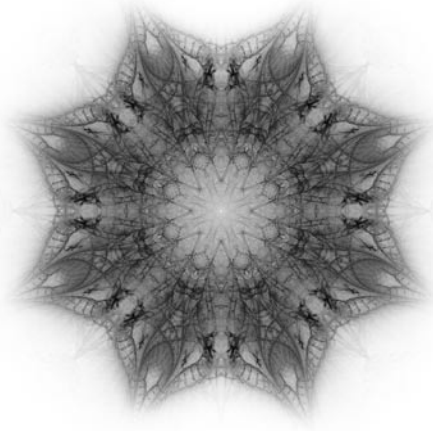
“Take three deep breaths and bring back all the love, energy, and joy these cords took away from you. First, take back the energy from all the jobs that you hate to do, then from all the places you don’t like to go, and finally from all the people who don’t appreciate you or want to help you.”

- » One by one, look at each person, place, and thing on your list. Take the time to reverently and purposefully reclaim your energy with a deep breath.
- » Consider a silent or verbal affirmation like these:
 - ♦ “I take back my power.”
 - ♦ “I call back my vital force.”
 - ♦ “I own my own energy.”

“Take three deep breaths and fill up all the emptiness inside of your heart with a beautiful light -- the light of love, energy, and joy -- from the limitless supply always available to you and everyone else.”

- » Imagine your beautiful heart space inside of you. See light pouring into your heart space as you inhale with each deep breath.
- » Imagine the light inside of you becoming so brilliant that it shines through you and becomes a protective shield all the way around you.
- » Rest quietly in this image for as long as you want to. Feel yourself wonderfully energized and protected.

Journal Notes



*The Teacher and the Dolls:
The path of growing the inner child.*

*“Every one of you is entitled to the innocence and freedom,
joy and creativity of your childhood. Your Inner Child
is your birth right, a treasure inside of you,
and needs to be protected and savored all through life.”*

The Teacher and the Dolls: The path of growing the inner child.

After many years of teaching children, correcting papers, supervising playgrounds and lunch rooms, planning school programs, and meetings with parents, the day came when the Teacher retired.

Several months went by, and then years. As the children grew up, they remembered there was someone they could trust and talk to -- someone who would listen to them. So one by one they sought out the house where the Teacher lived and came, once again, to learn from a person they loved and admired.

To everyone's great surprise, the Teacher's house was full of dolls -- dolls that looked like newborn babies, toddlers, children, and teenagers. There were boy dolls and girl dolls, dolls dressed in old-fashioned clothes and shoes, and dolls with modern clothes and bare feet. Every color of hair and eyes was there in room after room of dolls.

“What are you going to do with all these dolls?” someone asked.

- ♦ Who is there for you with the right information or the help you need?
- ♦ How do you give thanks, express gratitude, show appreciation?
- » At this time in your life:
 - ♦ What opportunities or options are you aware of for becoming a person of trust and a compassionate listener for members in your own family?
 - ♦ What opportunities or options are you aware of for becoming a person of trust and a compassionate listener at your place of work for fellow employees and clients?

“For over all those years, the Teacher came to understand the hearts as well as the minds of those students.”

- » How well do you understand the hearts of the people in your own family?
 - ♦ How well do you listen to the dreams and anxieties, the questions and ponderings of everyone in your family?
 - ♦ If you have unresolved hurt, misunderstandings, and abuse between you and any member of your family, have you sought out a counselor, therapist, or mentor to work with you on keeping your heart healthy with appropriate boundaries and self-protection?
- » How well do you understand the hearts of your friends?
 - ♦ How well do you listen to the dreams and anxieties, the questions and ponderings of your friends?
 - ♦ If you have unresolved hurt, misunderstandings, and abuse between you and any of your friends, have you sought out a counselor, therapist, or mentor to work with you on keeping your heart healthy with appropriate boundaries and self-protection?

Look at the bigger picture and
what it might mean to you.

Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

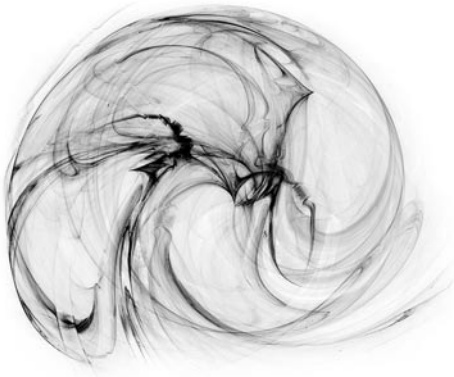
- » “For over all those years, the Teacher came to understand the hearts as well as the minds of those students.”
- » “This doll is like a memory of something precious inside of you, sometimes forgotten or left behind in the rush or the push to grow up.”
- » “Every one of you is entitled to the innocence and freedom, joy and creativity of your childhood. Your Inner Child is your birth right, a treasure inside of you, and needs to be protected and savored all through life.”

Go deeper inside and ask for your own “childlike-ness” to come to you, your joyful spirit and playful energy to talk to you, and your carefree imagination and undaunted optimism to tell you what your “inner child” needs from you. Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes

Journal Notes



*Make Room for the Dark Child:
The path of befriending the shadow self.*

*“How is your shadow child feeling today?
What does she want? What does he need?”*

Make Room for the Dark Child: The path of befriending the shadow self.

At the beginning of the school year, the teachers welcomed their students and assigned everyone a place in their classrooms. The teachers passed around the textbooks and explained the rules of courtesy and cooperation that everyone was expected to follow. Now, the teachers had done this year after year. And the students had done this year after year as they moved from one classroom to another, from one grade to another, from one school to another.

No one was expecting this new school year to be any different from any other that had gone before it, or from any other that was yet to come. No one was expecting any of the students to be any different from all the students who had gone before them, or from any who were yet to come. And the children were not any different, except for one class of children who were just learning how to name the letters in the alphabet, the colors, the numbers, and all sorts of shapes and things that were in pictures all over the classroom.

It didn't happen until several days into the new school year. The children were first becoming more familiar with each other and more trusting of their teacher. One day, after

naming all the colors, one of the children asked the teacher, "What color do I call the dark child who follows me around where ever I go?"

The teacher thought for a moment and then asked, "Tell me some more about this dark child. What does this child look like? What does this child say or do? How do you feel when this child is around?"

Now, the students were really excited to talk about this because every one of them agreed that they, too, saw and felt a dark child walk with them to school, sit next to them on the floor, and even run around with them at recess time.

"Let's all take turns talking," the teacher said. "Tell us what you see and how you feel when you are with your dark child." Just as the teacher suspected, the stories were very similar. The mysterious companion was a small child like them, but so dark that no one could see a face or anything that this imaginary child was wearing. These little companions did not speak or laugh.

"When he's around," one of the children said, "I feel sad and lonely."

"I feel like no one understands me," another child remarked.

Someone else said, "I get so mean and angry, I want to fight with everybody. That scares me."

When all the students were finished telling their stories about the dark child, then the teacher spoke quietly and gently. It was very still in the classroom as the words of the teacher soaked deep into the hearts and minds of these young students.

The teacher explained, “Everyone has a dark child. When you are children, the dark child is small and young like you. And when you are an adult, the dark child becomes a grown-up, too. The dark child is called your shadow self. Most people do not see their shadow self like you do. But they feel it when they are sad and lonely, when they feel forgotten or misunderstood, and when they are mean and angry.”

The teacher went on to explain to the students that their shadow self was going to be with them for as long as they lived. So this was the perfect time to get to know their shadow self and become friends. Once they became friends with their shadow self, they wouldn’t be afraid of it anymore, and, little by little, they could even begin to see the face of their shadow self.

Now the students were smiling and eager to learn how to make friends with these shadow children. So the teacher asked the students to draw a picture of their shadow child and to give it a name.

Then all the students sat in a circle and the teacher asked each child to show the whole class the picture of their shadow child and to tell everyone what name they gave their shadow child. And so it was that all the students in the class got to meet the shadow children of their classmates. Now there seemed to be twice as many new friends for everyone to get to know.

The teacher made a large nametag for each student with their name in big letters in their favorite color. Then underneath their name, the teacher printed in large letters the name of the student’s shadow child. That is how everyone in this class learned to name and be aware of each other’s shadow child.

Every day, the teacher sat all the students down in a circle and asked them to talk about the shadow child. "How is your shadow child feeling today? What does she want? What does he need?"

One by one, the students told their stories. Sometimes they cried; sometimes they smiled. When they finished, the teacher said: "Now say to your shadow child, 'I am sorry. Please forgive me.'"

They repeated the teacher's words slowly and carefully, with great tenderness and compassion: "I am sorry. Please forgive me."

The teacher continued, "And now say to your shadow child, 'I thank you. I love you.'" And again the students repeated the words with such reverence and innocence that even the teacher's heart was warm and full.

That's how the students learned to make friends with their shadow child, and how to own their fear and anxiety, their anger and sadness. With that awareness came the lessons in how to let go of this darkness in their thoughts and feelings. Then they began to see the faces of the shadow children. And as the darkness left, each shadow child began to smile; each shadow child became bright and beautiful.

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

According to the Jungian lexicon, the “shadow self” is the hidden or unconscious aspects which the ego has either repressed or never recognized. On the journey of wholeness, even this part of ourselves has a value and energy to share with us when we befriend it and integrate its wisdom into our life experience.

Check in with your “shadow self.” Allow yourself time to sit quietly and to invite your “shadow self” to step forward, introduce itself to you, and to dialogue with you. Feel free to simply visualize this experience or to journal it as it is happening.

- » Allow yourself to be non-judgmental.
- » Become aware of the shape and the size of your shadow self, its posture, and how it is dressed.
- » Invite your “shadow self” to tell you about itself. Be aware of how it speaks, what it sounds like, its gestures and body language.
- » Ask any questions that come to mind, and wait for your “shadow self” to reply.
- » Ask your “shadow self” what it needs from you.
- » Bring closure to this meeting by saying to your “shadow self”: “I am sorry. Please forgive me. I thank you. I love you.”

Journal Notes



*In The Land of Two:
The path of solidarity.*

Chapter 10

*“No one seemed to notice
the one, solitary figure walking alone.”*

In The Land of Two: The path of solidarity.

The Land of Two was located at the base of two mountains, on a spreading coastline so long that it touched two seas. The land was divided into two regions. Both regions were divided into two states. Each state was divided into two counties. Each county was divided into two townships. Each township was divided into two cities. Each city was divided into a north and a south side. Each north and south side was divided into an east and a west side. And so it was two of everything, right down to the number of houses and the number of streetlights on each side of each street in each part of town.

Now, the people who lived in the Land of Two understood all about “two”: it had been part of their lives ever since they were born. Every child grew up having everything in two’s: clothes, shoes, toys, pets, games, books, beds, chairs, swings, sandboxes, and even their friends. There was never, ever, anyone playing alone.

Every child went to two schools, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. In every classroom, the children sat in double rows with exactly two children, side by side, in each row. There was never, ever, anyone sitting alone. There were

two teachers in each classroom, two secretaries in each of the two offices, and two principals running each of the two schools.

Every child had two classes in the morning, two classes in the afternoon, and two study hours in the evening. Every child went to school for two days and then had two days off to do things with friends and family. Then they were back in school for two more days. And so it was two of everything, right down to the number of teams the children played on, the number of concerts they participated in, and the number of vacations they got to enjoy every two years.

As the children grew up and were ready to become adults, their parents made sure they met all the other children who were ready to become adults, so they could find their partner. For in the Land of Two, everyone had to have a partner or leave the country when they were ready to become an adult.

Everything in the Land of Two was made for two people to share together, even the beds and the chairs. All the vehicles had two steering wheels, and all the carts had four handles. All the tools were so long or so heavy that it took one person to hold it and one person to make it work. That was the whole idea of the people who created the Land of Two. They wanted everyone to know and experience how togetherness brings a helping hand when you need it, and the comfort and support of a companion on the journey through life.

When anyone was sick and had to go to the clinic or the hospital, there were always two doctors to see at two clinics or two hospitals, to make sure everyone got two opinions and the best care possible. If anyone needed a vaccination or a medication, well, of course they would have to have two of them because that's the way the system worked in the Land of Two. And so it was two of everything, right down to the

number of days you could stay in the hospital, the number of times you could work with a therapist, and, of course, the number of bills you would receive for every two appointments and two prescriptions.

Even when someone died, things didn't change that much in the Land of Two. There were two ministers who celebrated two funerals. One funeral was two days after someone died, to bless and bury the body. The second funeral was two days after the burial, and this was to bless the surviving companion and partner, who now had to leave the Land of Two.

And of course everyone knew that this was going to happen, and everyone knew what was expected of them. So partners and companions in two's came from all over the neighborhood to help the survivor pack up and get ready to move out after the blessing and farewell celebration. And so it was two of everything, right down to the number of items packed in each box, the number of boxes labeled for each cupboard, and the number of carts filled with boxes from each room.

All the carts were lined up side by side in two perfect lines. The two ministers stood at the front door of the house and blessed the survivor for a safe journey. Then two officials from the city led the way. They carried the keys to the city and walked ahead of the survivor. Friends and neighbors helped push the carts behind the survivor, who walked down the middle of the two long reception lines that started at the front door and wound around town all the way to the gates of the Land of Two. And so it was two of everything, right down to the two gatekeepers who stepped aside and let the two city officials open the two gates for the line of carts.

No one seemed to notice the one, solitary figure walking alone out the gates ahead of the perfectly matched carts.

Everyone's attention was fixed on all the carts being lined up in two rows outside the two gates to the city. And everyone was waiting for all the friends and neighbors to come back through the gates, in two's, so the city officials could lock the gates again and everyone could go back home two by two.

No one who left the Land of Two ever came back. No one ever heard from them or knew if they ever found another partner or companion. Of course, no one in the Land of Two had all that much time to think about those things, as they were busy doing two of everything.

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

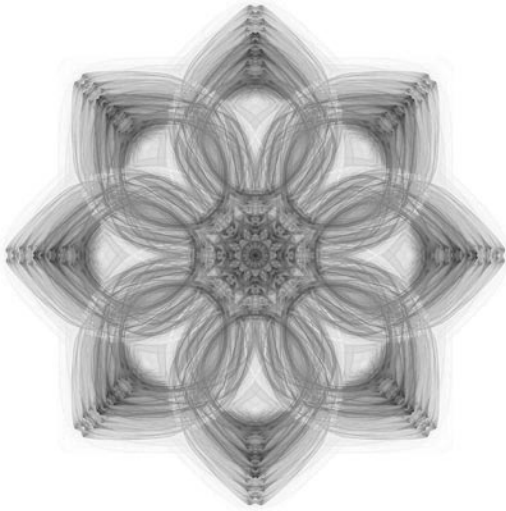
“No one seemed to notice the one, solitary figure walking alone.”

- » Have you ever felt like a solitary figure? If so, where were you and what were you doing when you felt like that?
- » How did you react at times like that? Did you find yourself wanting to shrink and hide? Or did you find yourself taking a deep breath, lifting your head up, and standing up even straighter and taller?
- » Do you refuse invitations because you don't want to go alone? Do you avoid parties and celebrations because you think everyone else is going to be paired up, and you're going to be the only one alone? If so, how can you become more comfortable with going places and doing things by yourself?

“Everyone was waiting for the friends and neighbors to come back so everyone could go back home two by two.”

- » Have you noticed a friend, co-worker, or associate sitting alone or standing around like a solitary figure at company events or social gatherings?
- » How did you react at times like that? Did you find yourself wanting to avoid the lone person? Or did you find yourself walking over and visiting with him or her?

Journal Notes



*The Healer of Broken Hearts:
The path of mending relationships.*

"The Healer of Broken Hearts reads like a familiar fable, with re-minders of some very personal experiences. I applaud Janice and this wonderful work."

-- Bill Barbee, tax reduction and wealth strategist; Newbury Park,
California

Chapter 11

*"You can only return the heart you broke,
and wait for someone who hurt you
to return your heart."*

The Healer of Broken Hearts: The path of mending relationships.

A long time ago, whenever someone was mean, angry, jealous, or stole something from another person, something strange happened inside of them. They knew they did something wrong. But more than knowing, they could feel an emptiness they didn't know how to fill.

Many people felt so sad that some of them got together and tried to figure out what to do about it. They didn't get very far with their suggestions and ideas until someone asked, "Has anyone talked to the Healer?"

"Why, of course!" someone replied. "That's the place to begin. After all, what's a Healer for if not to fill up emptiness and patch up holes."

The crowd set off for the Healer's house, right in the middle of the town. When they got there, the Healer was already standing outside the house and ready to welcome them.

"Were you expecting us?" someone asked.

"Oh, yes," the Healer replied. "I figured one of you would come to claim the broken heart I found on my doorstep some

time ago. How wonderful that so many of you are here now. I'm sure I'll have enough for every one of you."

The people looked at each other; they didn't understand what the Healer was saying. So the Healer explained it to them from the beginning.

"Some time ago, I found a broken heart on my doorstep. It was such a beautiful heart, but there was no name on it so I couldn't return it to its owner. I put all the pieces together and layed the heart on a shelf in my house, waiting for the owner to come and claim it. I was sure that someone would come for it right away, for no one can live a happy life without a heart."

The Healer continued, "The next day I found two broken hearts on my doorstep and a few more on the path leading to my house. Every day after that, I've been very busy picking up broken hearts, piecing them together, putting them on shelves in my house, and waiting for their owners to come and claim them. Now you are all here. From the sadness in your eyes, I can tell that you are missing your hearts. Without a heart, no one can live a happy life."

One by one, the Healer led the people into the house and helped each one find a broken heart on the shelf. "How will I know which heart is mine?" they asked. "You won't be able to find your own," the Healer replied. "You must find the heart you broke inside of someone when you were mean, angry, jealous, or stole something. You can only return the heart *you* broke, and wait for someone who hurt you to return *your* heart."

It wasn't very hard to find the hearts they had broken. On each of the broken hearts was written the hurt they had caused: "I was angry and I yelled at you." "I called you names and I hurt your feelings." "I was jealous of you and told nasty

stories about you to your friends so that they would hate you and like me instead." There was a different message on each and every heart, and all the people knew exactly what hurt they had caused.

As soon as they found the hearts they had broken, they lifted them carefully off the shelves and carried them over to the Healer. They told the Healer how they had broken the beautiful heart that belonged to someone else. They said they were sorry for being so selfish and proud and greedy. They said they were sorry for hurting someone else and causing such sadness. Then the Healer blessed the broken hearts and they were whole again.

The Healer told them, "Return these beautiful hearts to the persons they belong to. When you do that, turn the heart over and repeat whatever is written on the back." As they did this, they were surprised to find that every heart had the same message written on it: "I am sorry for hurting you. Please forgive me."

There was quite a commotion in town that day. As they forgave each other and pressed their healed heart close to themselves, they felt the beautiful heart melt back into place and fill up the empty hole inside.

It wasn't long before all the shelves were cleared off in the Healer's house, all the broken hearts healed, and all the hearts restored to their proper places. All the people were happy. From that day on, the people of the town gave the Healer a new name: Healer of Broken Hearts.

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

“The Healer blessed the broken hearts and they were whole again.”

- » What persons have been “healers” in your life experience?
 - ♦ Who was there for you with the right information, the support and encouragement, the physical assistance and financial help when you needed it?
 - ♦ How did you give thanks, express gratitude, and show appreciation for the caring and effort, the kindness and love of others toward you?
- » How have you experienced healing from Spirit, from a Higher Power, from God?
 - ♦ How did you thank Spirit, your Higher Power, God for this healing?
 - ♦ How did Spirit, your Higher Power, God bring healing into the lives of others through you?
 - ♦ At this time in your life:
 - ♦ What opportunities or options are you aware of for more healing and wholeness in your life?
 - ♦ What opportunities or options are you aware of being part of the healing process for others?

“Without a heart, no one can live a happy life.”

- » Have you ever felt left out, useless, rejected, abandoned, alone?
 - ♦ How did you deal with those feelings?
 - ♦ Who was the “healer” who helped you?
- » Consider writing about your time of greatest need and how the “healer” helped you. Write this story as a reminder and a gesture of gratitude for someone being there for you in your greatest time of need.



Look at the bigger picture and what it might mean to you.

Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

- » “They knew they did something wrong. But more than knowing, they could feel an emptiness they didn’t know how to fill.”
- » “I found a broken heart on my doorstep.”
- » “As they forgave each other and pressed their healed heart close to themselves, they felt the beautiful heart melt back into place and fill up the empty hole inside.”

Go deeper inside. Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes



*The Land of Many Labels:
The path of clear insight.*

"I love the land of many labels. This tale allows us to see we make our own prisons and so we can unlock it any time. Jan's simple message offers great hope."

-- Helen McCrarren, psychotherapist; Ireland

Chapter 12

*"I will act and feel however I want to act and feel.
No one has that kind of power over me
unless I give that power away to them."*

The Land of Many Labels: The path of clear insight.

At first it seemed strange, but then everyone got used to it: all the labels pinned on or stuck on their shirts and blouses, trousers and jeans. No one remembered how it all started, and no one had any idea that it wasn't supposed to be like this.

People got used to carrying around with them a stack of labels. The labels said things like "bad," "good," "sad," "angry," "mean," "ugly," and "pretty"! And there were a lot more like that. The print shops were very busy printing up these labels, and a whole lot more anyone ordered. It seemed like there were always new words coming into the print shops. The print shops were so busy printing labels, they didn't have time to print newspapers or magazines or books. That is how this area of the world became known as the Land of Many Labels.

There were labels stuck on cars and labels put on houses and shops. There were labels plastered on products in the stores, and labels pasted on anyone who did a service or a job for someone else. But the most interesting labels were those people put on each other. When someone received a "sad" or

“ugly” label, they frowned or cried and felt bad inside. When someone received a “good” or “fun” label, they smiled and felt great inside.

Even though everyone put labels on others, no one realized they could take a label off anyone, even off themselves. And so it was that many people had layers of labels to carry around with them all day and all night, to transfer onto the new clothes they were going to wear the next day, and to wear for everyone to see at work, at school, at the store, at the shop.

One day, there was a visitor in the Land of Many Labels who stopped by the store to pick up a few things. Someone from the Land of Many Labels did what everyone in town was used to doing, walked up to the visitor and pasted a “sad” label right on the visitor’s sleeve. The visitor looked at the label, smiled, plucked the label off the sleeve and tossed it into the garbage can.

Oh, my! No one had ever done that in the Land of Many Labels! Everyone in the store thought that maybe the visitor wasn’t getting the message, and didn’t know how things really worked in the Land of Many Labels. So all of them walked up to the visitor at the same time with a handful of labels and stuck them all over.

Again, the visitor looked at the labels, smiled, and plucked them all off the clothing, even the labels that said “good” or “happy” or “smile” on them. The visitor crumpled up all the labels and tossed them into the garbage can. Well, now the townspeople didn’t know what to do. Finally, one of them spoke up, “You can’t do that!”

The visitor responded, “And why not?”

The spokesperson said, "When someone gives you a label, you have to keep it. You have to act and feel like the label says. That's just the way it is."

The visitor replied, "I will act and feel however I want to act and feel. No one has that kind of power over me unless I give that power away to them. And right now, I choose to keep that power for myself. So if I want to feel happy, I will feel happy. And if I want to feel successful, I will feel successful. And if I want to feel loved, I will feel loved. I will always choose the best feelings for myself. Why should I settle for anything less? And why would I ever let anyone else tell me how to feel?"

Well, they never heard anyone talk like that. And, of course, they didn't know what to say. One by one, they looked at the labels on their own clothes. One by one, they pulled off the labels, the good ones and the bad ones. They smiled their biggest smile in years. With a giggle and even a bit of laughter, they threw handfuls of labels into the garbage cans. They quickly emptied their pockets, then opened up their purses and their briefcases to rid them of their load of labels. The garbage cans in the store were overflowing with labels.

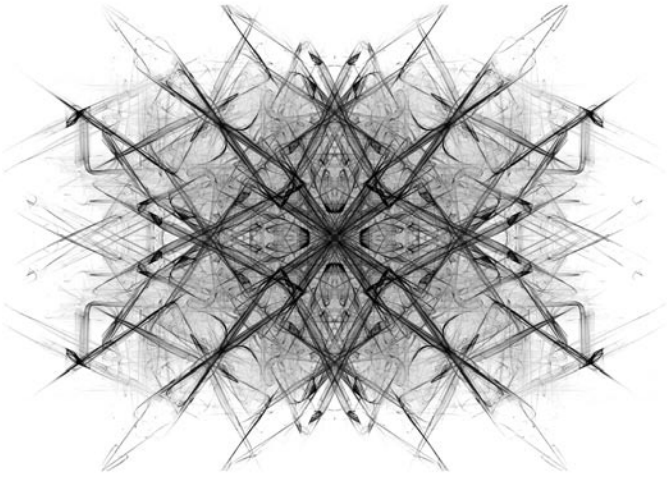
By the time they left the store, they were feeling light and free. They couldn't wait to get to their cars and houses and work places to take down all the labels that were stuck there. And once they started to take the labels down, they never put them back up again, nor did they even think of putting labels on anyone or anything else.

And of course, everyone else in town who hadn't met the visitor and hadn't heard what was said, was soon to find out. Oh, it took a while to get the word around town. But once people heard the story, they were so happy to learn that they could choose their own feelings. No one wanted to go back

“Even though everyone put labels on others, no one realized they could take a label off anyone, even off themselves.”

- » Make a list of the labels you’ve accepted over the years – names you’ve been called, and criticisms directed at you.
- » Now look at each of these labels one at a time. Use a colored marking pen or a highlighter and cross through each label as you say silently or out loud:
 - ♦ “I will act and feel however I want to act and feel. No one has that kind of power over me unless I give that power away.”
 - ♦ “I will always choose the best feelings for myself. Why should I settle for anything less?”
 - ♦ Then make a list of the positive, the “best feelings” you’d like to feel about yourself and your life.
 - ♦ Look at each feeling in this list, and one by one reverently own it.
 - ♦ Silently or out loud affirm each feeling: “I am in charge of how I feel. I always choose the best feelings for myself.”

Journal Notes



*The City of Chains:
The path of self-empowerment.*

Chapter 13

*“Tell me how it feels to have a chain,
and I will tell you what your chain is made of.
When you know what makes your chain,
you will know how to break it.”*

The City of Chains: The path of self-empowerment.

At first no one noticed them: the chains around the ankles, the wrists, and the neck of everyone who lived here. It was easier to deny these chains were real than it was to see them and have to deal with them.

But as so often happens, anything we try to resist, persists. And all this energy of struggle, denial, and suppression made the chains grow even stronger and more obvious. It wasn't long before everyone began to accept the fact: All of them had a chain here or there dragging along with them wherever they went.

No one knew where the chains came from, nor how each person happened to have whatever they had. And because no one knew where they came from, no one knew how to get rid of them. And so these people called their city the City of Chains.

As strange as it may seem, people who moved here eventually acquired their own chains, just like everyone who was born and raised here. And because everyone was so ashamed, no

one dared to move away. At least here in the City of Chains, everyone had something in common, and everyone bore the disgrace and dishonor together.

Despite all the knowledge and experience of the newcomers, none of them knew where the chains came from, nor how each person happened to have whatever they had.

Well, the day was coming when all that was going to change. Several people gathered together to study about chains. One group decided to test different tools, to see if the chains could be cut. Another group chose to work with locksmiths, to see if they could find a key to unlock the padlocks holding the chains in place. Still another group wanted to sit together in a circle, to think about how it would feel to have no more chains padlocked around their bodies.

One day, while the group sitting in the circle was thinking about how it would feel to have no more chains, someone asked, "How does it feel to have a chain?"

At first no one wanted to talk. After all, who wanted to get into those kinds of feelings?

Gently, the voice continued, "Tell me how it feels to have a chain, and I will tell you what your chain is made of. When you know what makes your chain, you will know how to break it."

Now there was eagerness in this group like never before. Finally they were getting somewhere. First they talked about the chains around their neck and how those felt. Someone said, "I feel like I don't have anything worthwhile to say. Whenever I want to share my feelings, I'm not sure anyone will listen to me. That's when I feel the chain getting tighter around my neck."

Someone else shared, "Even when I know I'm right, or even when I know I've got something to contribute, I can't say it, because I'm afraid someone will laugh at me and say, 'Who do you think you are?'"

Now they began to understand that everything they were talking about described how the chains around their necks came to be, and now they knew how to get rid of them.

All together, everyone in the circle gently and softly began to recite: "From this moment on, I claim my right to speak my truth. I claim my right to say what I feel, and to own my thoughts and feelings."

Over and over again they recited the words. To their amazement, the chains around their necks became so light that they were hardly noticeable. Encouraged by their progress, they continued this practice until the padlocks cracked and fell off their necks, along with all the chains. What excitement and relief!

Once again someone spoke up. That person said, "To keep these chains from coming back, we need to remember we are free to speak our truth. And we need to remember that everyone in our city is also free to speak their truth." They made an agreement to take this practice home to everyone in their household.

When they met again, there was much to talk about and so much more to celebrate, as everyone had stories to tell about how the padlocks cracked and the chains fell off the necks of everyone they talked to and worked with at home.

But there was still so much more to do. And so they sat still in the circle again, and asked the question, "How does it feel to have chains around your wrists?"

Someone answered, "I feel like a prisoner; I feel like I'm guilty and being punished. Whenever I want to do something, but am afraid of making a mistake, the chains get tighter around my wrists."

Someone else added, "Even when I know I'm doing something right, I'm afraid to move forward and do what needs to be done because I'm afraid no one will follow me, affirm me, or support me if I need help. Many times I know I've got something valuable to offer, but then I'm afraid someone's going to take advantage of me -- take the best of what I have to offer and pretend it's theirs without crediting me or paying me for my time and effort."

Now they began to understand that everything they were talking about described how the chains around their wrist came to be, and now they knew how to get rid of them.

All together, everyone in the circle gently and softly began to recite: "From this moment on, I claim my right to be who I am, and to do whatever I came here to do with my life. I claim my right to be the gifted person I am, and to offer whatever I can to make this a wonderful life for myself and for others."

Over and over again they recited the words. To their amazement, the chains around their wrists became so light that they were hardly noticeable. Encouraged by their progress, they continued this practice until the padlocks cracked and fell off their wrists, along with all the chains. What excitement and relief!

Once again someone spoke up. That person said, "To keep these chains from coming back, we need to remember we are free to be whomever we are, and to do whatever we can to make this a wonderful life for ourselves and for others. And we need to remember that everyone in our city is also free to

live this way.” They made an agreement to take this practice home to everyone in their household.

When they met again, there was much to talk about and so much more to celebrate, as everyone had stories to tell about how the padlocks cracked and the chains fell off the wrists of everyone they talked to and worked with at home.

But there was still so much more to do. And so they sat still in the circle again, and asked the question, “How does it feel to have chains around your ankles?”

“I feel like I can’t go where I want to go,” someone said. “I ask myself, ‘What if it’s all a big mistake? What if I really am not needed or wanted there?’ That’s when the chains around my ankles tighten up.”

Someone else offered, “Even when I know I’m going where I am needed, or even when I know I’ve got someplace to belong, I can’t go there and be happy, because the chains are too heavy to drag along with me.”

Now they began to understand that everything they were talking about described how the chains around their feet came to be, and now they knew how to get rid of them.

All together, everyone gently and softly began to recite: “From this moment on, I claim my right to belong, and to go wherever I want to go to live my life to the fullest. I claim my right to move forward with ease and grace, and to help create whatever I can to make this a wonderful life for myself and for others.”

Over and over again they recited the words. To their amazement, the chains around their ankles became so light that they were hardly noticeable. Encouraged by their progress, they continued this practice until the padlocks

cracked and fell off their ankles, along with all the chains. What excitement and relief!

Once again, someone spoke up. That person said, “To keep these chains from coming back, we need to remember we are free to go wherever we want to go, to make this a wonderful life for ourselves and for others. And we need to remember that everyone in our city is also free to live this way.” They made an agreement to take this practice home to everyone in their household.

When they met again, there was much to talk about and so much more to celebrate, as everyone had stories to tell about how the padlocks cracked and the chains fell off the ankles of everyone they talked to and worked with at home.

Word got around the city that more and more of the people were learning how to get rid of their chains, and how to never take them back again. Everyone eventually learned how to do this. The day came when there were no more chains in the City of Chains. On that day, the city administrator sent out a decree saying from that time on, the name of the city was changed to “Freedom.”

Savor the Experience

Now discover and apply this wisdom in your own life experience.

“Tell me how it feels to have a chain, and I will tell you what your chain is made of. When you know what makes your chain, you will know how to break it.”

- » What kinds of “chains” do you have in your life?
 - ♦ A fear of speaking your truth and being judged by others?
 - ♦ A fear of owning your spiritual essence and being ridiculed or abandoned by others?
 - ♦ A fear of making mistakes, not getting it right, being misunderstood or rejected?
 - ♦ A fear of not being wanted or loved, not being on purpose with life, or not having something worthwhile to contribute?
- » Look at your “chains” one at a time. Look at what it is made of: fear, shame, rejection, grief, conflict, abandonment, anger, abuse, failure, helplessness, etc.
- » Then unmake your “chains” one at a time. Choose how you want to feel, how you want to act, how you want to believe in yourself. Choose how you want to enable and empower yourself to be healthy and happy.

Look at the bigger picture and
what it might mean to you.

Choose one or more of the following statements. Allow yourself time to quietly sit with one statement at a time. Several times, repeat to yourself the whole statement or parts of it, and visualize it with all your senses: See it, hear it, touch it, feel it, let it speak to you, let it touch you, let yourself respond to it.

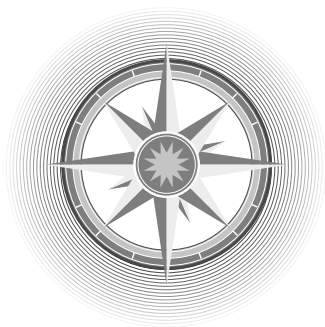
- » “It was easier to deny these chains were real than it was to see them and have to deal with them.”
- » “From this moment on, I claim my right to speak my truth. I claim my right to say what I feel, and to own my thoughts and feelings.”
- » “From this moment on, I claim my right to be who I am, and to do whatever I came here to do with my life. I claim my right to be the gifted person I am, and to offer whatever I can to make this a wonderful life for myself and for others.”
- » “From this moment on, I claim my right to belong and to go wherever I want to go to live my life to the fullest. I claim my right to move forward with ease and grace, and to help create whatever I can to make this a wonderful life for myself and for others.”

Go deeper inside. Allow yourself into this experience without trying to control what is happening, without analyzing it, without making any effort to remember it.

When the experience seems to be finished, to no longer hold your attention and your feelings, then consider journaling. Give yourself time to reflect and to write down what you learned about yourself, or what new awareness you gained in this experience.

Journal Notes

Journal Notes



The Journey Goes On

Though I cannot see the end for me,

I cannot turn away.

We have set our hearts for the way;

this journey is our destiny.

Let no one walk alone.

The journey makes us one.

Text: Rory Cooney's hymn, "Jerusalem, My Destiny"
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The Journey Goes On

Every story in this book is like a fond memory, inviting you to come back and visit it again. Every time you read or listen to these tales, their layers of symbolism take you down roads with new vistas to explore. The journey is not difficult; simply take it one step at a time.

Discover the subtle shifts in how you feel, savor the different scenes appearing in your imagination, nurture the deeper stillness in your meditations, and enjoy the richer moments of reflection and journaling.

Spend some time learning about your spiritual hunger and finding what it takes to satisfy your inner emptiness. Become aware of how everyone in these stories may be showing up in your own family, your neighborhood, at work, among your friends. Who are your teachers and healers? What is their message and meaning?

Now take a bigger and broader leap forward than you may have ever experienced in your life. Gently read the story about the young AIDS orphans in Tanzania at the back of this book. There are many worthwhile causes to support throughout the world; this is one that touches my soul.

When I first saw the beautiful shirts and dresses that these young women made, I didn't know who these women were, where they lived, how they struggled to stay alive, and what dim prospects they had for a future. As I learned more about them, I resolved to help educate and involve others in this humanitarian need, and to raise awareness about shopping with conscience.

As you read their story, allow yourself to become aware of these young women as part of the family of humanity where

we all are one in Spirit. Consider how supporting their skill training through the sewing project is one way many of us can enliven “the light within” for them and for ourselves.

That is why I’m sharing their story with you. Life gives us all so many more chapters to read than we’ll ever find in a book. But sometimes it takes something we hear or something we read to point us in the direction of our next path to giving, sharing, and growing.

May your heart be open to hear where Spirit is leading you. May your soul leap for joy to walk down the pathways opening up within you.

Blessings on your journey,

Janice M. Puta



Send Your Comments to the Author

Whether you only read the story or also work with any of the questions and exercises, feel free to send your comments about this story and your experience to the author at: Janice@OurSpiralJourney.com or Janice M. Puta, 114 S. Main St. #122, Fond du Lac, WI 54935.

Empowering Women

Welcome a Guest

In 1990, the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters in Madison, Wisconsin, welcomed Sr. Hellen Bandiho from Bukoba, Tanzania, in East Africa. Sister Hellen was coming to the U.S. to earn her MBA at Edgewood College. As the sisters exchanged information about their cultures and countries, Sister Stella Storch determined that some day she would like to visit Tanzania. Being a firm believer in “dream it, believe it, achieve it,” when Sister Stella had a six month sabbatical in 2000, she knew exactly where she was going to go.

When she made this first visit to Bukoba, Tanzania, Sister Stella visited the convent for the Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. Not knowing that these were



Photo: Sister Stella

AIDS orphans, Sister Stella saw many girls being taught basic hygiene and things a mother would teach her daughter. She observed the abject poverty in Bukoba and came back to Wisconsin appreciating every convenience and the availability of food that many of us take for granted.

Think and Act Globally

In 2001, Sr. Stella became the Coordinator of Justice, Peace, and Ecology for the Sisters of St. Agnes at their motherhouse in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. In that role, she worked with other

Agnesian Sisters in founding Unanima International (UI), a non-governmental organization at the United Nations. (“Un” represents the United Nations, “anima” is the feminine spirit.) The members of UI focus on human trafficking, and, as she began to work in this context, Sister Stella made the connection to the girls in Bukoba, Tanzania.

She realized that without family, money, and skills, these girls were the perfect prey for those who would exploit them. Without outside intervention, these girls were prime targets for human traffickers.

Sister Stella searched for ways these girls could be taught a skill to support themselves. She came across a placemat she thought these girls could learn to make. She asked the Sisters in Tanzania to organize classes for the girls and teach them basic sewing skills. Sister Stella went on a personal campaign, knitting scarves to sell and asking for donations until there was enough money to send to Tanzania to buy the first treadle sewing machines for this project.

Empower Women's Future

What began as a suggestion for a sewing cooperative evolved into a three-year school called “Empowering Women’s Future: The AIDS Orphan Sewing Project.” The Sewing Project is part of a much larger ministry to AIDS orphans called St. Maria Goretti Organization, which is recognized as a Tanzanian not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization. It provides assistance to AIDS orphans by paying school fees, giving money for food, buying school uniforms, and other services.

Many of the girls who come to the Sewing Project walk one to two hours each way — and one girl walks three hours. The sisters are looking to place her with a family closer and then

give money to the family for her upkeep. The girls, most of whom are 15 to 20 years old, are willing to do this for three years in order to learn the basics of sewing, and, ultimately, to become tailors.

During this training program, students are encouraged to bring to class orders from their village customers and to work on the clothing under the supervision of the instructor.

Upon graduation, they are given a sewing machine so they are fully independent. The first three graduates staff a store in town that sells their dresses and nightgowns. Occasionally, they receive a contract from the government to sew uniforms for children going to school.



Photo: Sister Stella

Through the Sewing Project, more than thirty girls in their teens or early 20s now have a chance for a modest existence.

Organize a Business Venture

Some of the African dresses and shirts made by these girls are shipped to Sister Stella in Wisconsin. She sells them locally and sends the money back to Bukoba, where it covers the cost of the training program and one hot meal a day for these girls.

You'll find Sister Stella at area festivals, fairs, and art shows. She also approaches retailers to sell these authentic garments. Her fondest dream is seeing these beautiful clothes sold in specialty stores and available online.

Thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Sophia Foundation and money raised from selling more than 100 scarves she knitted herself, Sister Stella made another trip back to Bukoba in May of 2006. This was an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments and to address fundamentals like sizing and labeling for a retail clothing business.

Add the Human Element

In order to better represent these beautiful girls, Sister Stella is composing biographies and photos of each seamstress. She hopes to be able to share this information with customers so they can have a more personal connection with these girls in Bokuba. One of the major motivations for these girls to diligently study in the Sewing Project and to graduate is the prospect of creating an income to buy food for their family and to help educate their siblings.

How You Can Help

To learn more, to send donations, or to purchase or sell these garments, contact Sister Stella Storch by E-mail at: [sstorch@csasisters.org](mailto:ssstorch@csasisters.org).

For more information on human trafficking:

Unanima International

www.unanima-international.org

Coalition Against Trafficking Women

www.catwinternational.org

End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes

www.ecpat.net and www.redlightchildren.org

Appendix

Recommended Resources

Books

Too Deep For Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina (With 500 Scripture Texts for Prayer) by Thelma Hall, r.c., published by Paulist Press.

Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue Book 1 by Neale Donald Walsch, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Heal Your Body: The Mental Causes For Physical Illness And The Metaphysical Way To Overcome Them by Louise L. Hay, published by Hay House, Inc.

Chakra Clearing: Awakening Your Spiritual Power To Know And Heal (Includes a Chakra Clearing CD) by Doreen Virtue, Ph.D., published by Hay House, Inc.

The Healing Earth: Nature's Medicine For The Troubled Soul by Philip Sutton Chard, published by NorthWord Press, Inc.

Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life by Byron Katie written with Stephen Mitchell, published by Harmony Books.

Ask And It Is Given: Learning To Manifest Your Desires by Esther and Jerry Hicks (The Teachings of Abraham), published by Hay House, Inc.

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Release those self-limiting beliefs and programming that are not working for you any more. Create all you desire in your life with these effective and easy meridian exercises.



Journal Notes

Journal Notes

Acknowledgements

My journey from stories to book follows the trail of wonderful teachers and guides who showed up in my life to help me walk my spiritual pathways and to honor my passion for teaching and writing.

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Elyse Hope Killoren introduced me to the secrets of the Law of Attraction and living a whole and beautiful life in her Prosperity Partnership Program (PPP). Max Wellspring led me through the certification program to become a Guide in the PPP and to use those powerful tools and life-changing concepts for myself and for others. My instructor in Emotional Freedom and Healing, Richard Ross, introduced me to his gentle and effective energy work as a process for making a difference in my life and the lives of others.

The terrific practitioners, volunteers, and staff at the Fond du Lac Center for Spirituality and Healing and the Fox Valley Wellness Center offered me a place to teach, to meet with clients, and to join in team efforts of healing and wholeness for ourselves and others. Special thanks to Michael A. Ketterhagen, spiritual director of the Fond du Lac Center

for Spirituality and Healing, for writing the Foreword to my book.

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I'm forever grateful to my mentor and best friend, Leni Onkka, whose clearing sessions helped me choose to be fully alive and focused on my greater good, who taught me Spiritual Response Therapy, encouraged me to put my book together, and recommended Lynne Klippel's Book School as a great tool for doing that.

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I offer thanks, also, to my mentoring clients, whose trust and support fanned the flames of my fire. You have no idea how precious you are to me.

My most gracious thanks to my family: my Mom and Dad in their celestial home, keeping the apiary buzzing and the garden growing until we join them there; my sisters and brothers Ruth Nielsen, Diane Beaudry, Cathie Mocarski, and Edward and Joseph Puta for helping me out when the going was rough and celebrating with me my journey forward; my aunt and uncle Hazel and Frederick Eisenmann, whose faith in God is an inspiration to me.

Finally, I thank all of you who read this book and share it with those you love and care about. May you be open to seeing the Light within you shine on your path and the Divine One walking beside you on your spiritual journey.

From beginning to end, I acknowledge and honor the presence and guidance of Divine Love and Light from whom I receive my life and my vision, my gifts and resources. I am blessed and I am grateful.

About the Author

Janice Puta, the owner of Our Spiral Journey, LLC, is on her own journey through life, learning from both teachers and students. Her goal is to make a difference in the life of others with her particular gifts and abilities as teacher, dream interpreter, spiritual director, and energy practitioner.



Photo: Erik Nielsen

Since graduating cum laude from Silver Lake College in Wisconsin, Janice completed certifications in Spiritual Direction, Emotional Freedom & Healing, the Prosperity Partnership Program for Guides, and Teacher in Spiritual Response Therapy.

This focus on healing and wholeness is basic to Jan's passionate service and mentoring career. She helps clients reconnect to their Divine Source, revive their courage and gusto to live a passionate life, embrace their inner wisdom, and choose ways to bless others.

To work with Janice in dream interpretation, to experience a session in Emotional Freedom & Healing or Spiritual Response Therapy, to invite Janice to lead a retreat day or workshop based on this book, contact her at Janice@OurSpiralJourney.com. Or write to Janice M. Puta, 114 S. Main St. #122, Fond du Lac, WI 54935.

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Janice M. Puta, B.S., is an experienced teacher, author, naturalist, and practitioner in several healing practices. Janice is a certified spiritual director, certified facilitator of Emotional Freedom & Healing, a certified guide in the Prosperity Partnership Program, and a certified practitioner and teacher in Spiritual Response Therapy. She works internationally with clients over the phone and lives in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Her website is www.OurSpiralJourney.com.