

# *Living Beyond Death*



**Understanding Consciousness, Life Within Death,  
Creative Freedom, and the Limitless Expression of the  
Self in This World and Worlds Beyond**

*Susanna Stowell Massari*  
Medium and Death Doula

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the Limitless Expression of the Self in This World and Worlds Beyond

*By*

*Susanna Stowell Massari*

*Medium and Death Doula*

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## DEDICATION

For my beloved grandchildren. I dedicate this book to you as an offering to know yourselves in a more profound and mysterious way as you travel through life. May you grow to be free thinkers knowing you can trust your instincts, intuition, impulses, vulnerabilities, and inner intelligence. Be brave, curious, and adventurous. Be your own person. Think for yourselves and remember to question everything, especially authority. Stay hungry for knowledge and intellectual freedom. Think less and know more. Trusting yourself will give you the freedom to consciously create yourself daily and boldly dance with your own inner spirit. Gift yourself with all that you are right now, right here, in your present moment. My love for you and the joy you give me echoes within every universe, dimension, and reality. Above all, love who you are, know yourself, and live in truth, honesty, and integrity. Some people will say that “integrity is doing the right thing even if no one is watching.” But it is not. Integrity is taking responsibility for all you do and create.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THOUGHTS

# INVICTUS

*William Ernest Henley—1849–1903*

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever god's may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

## PROLOGUE

*“Nothing comes unannounced, but many can miss the announcement. So it’s very important to actually listen to your own intuition rather than driving through it.”*

—Terrence McKenna

If you are a stranger to the idea of consciousness, communication with the deceased, or the idea of life after life, be a stranger no more and give it welcome. I will share with you some of the amazing and poignant stories that have been gifted to me, as well as my personal experiences, my views, and beliefs about consciousness, the nature of reality, death, and the afterlife. There is much to appreciate and explore about the magical and mystical aspects of the Self that lie deeply in the dimensions of the soul.

As you read the pages of this book, I hope to lay a well-rounded foundation of how life and death are so beautifully and intrinsically intertwined with one another. My hope is to inspire you to look deeper into your own interior wilderness and expand your understanding of consciousness and how it remains immeasurable and untraceable by the scientific communities. In unsullied spiritual terms, by the communications I and others have had with the deceased, there are clear paths and doorways available to you within your own unlimited consciousness that continuously seek expression—whether in bodily or spirit form. The beauty, richness, and texture of our inner environment transcends all physical limitations, which are free of, and do not obey, the scientific and medical frameworks that demand evidence—evidence that is based solely on accumulated research, data, and analysis in a society that needs proof for everything. We have insisted upon and kept alive the fable of “seeing is believing.”

I invite you to use your imagination to explore your own consciousness and enhance your understanding of how consciousness is the driving force of *The Whole of Existence*—the life force of all creation.

As a medium and death doula, I see the blending of life and death. I am open to the opportunities that exist not just for myself, but for all people—and that means to communicate with, understand, and allow those who are deceased to bring forth information and messages. Life is about being a medium, and death is about being a medium. They cannot be separated. In life, you *determine* everything by your beliefs, desires, emotions, intuition, and imagination. In death, the same thing applies. No matter who you are, or where you are, you are always using your imagination and intuition. Always.

Understand that you are, as you are right now, consciousness. You might be thinking to yourself, “What does that really mean?” Because you are consciousness, you create everything that you know in your reality. There is a force for creation no matter where the creation is to take place, no matter what the force might be. There is also a force for, and of, destruction; the same thing, but the force is used in a different way. If you consider yourself the focal point of your reality, and that reality is *all of what is real to you*, then consider yourself

as being the focal point, *a force*, and your reality a mirror of you. Everything in your reality is a mirror of you emotionally.

You create reality with your desire and motivation as well as with thought, the intensity of your emotions, beliefs, imagination, and intention. But looking at yourself as a force, you create that reflection of you that you know to be your reality and everything and everyone in it. So, you are the force that drives all things in your own reality and in your own private universe. Every time you express yourself emotionally, you create another piece of your life and reality. Everything exists in the imagination—everything. All that you have learned about life and death comes from imagination. Essentially, if you can imagine something, you can create it and experience it.

Life is art. Life is the canvas upon which you express yourself emotionally, physically, and psychically. The canvas is the foundation of your individual life and reality. Your thoughts are the different types of paint you use to create your masterpiece. Emotions are the colors of the paint and how you as an individual express yourself emotionally, which will determine the outcome of your masterpiece—your painting, your life, your reality. The painting can only respond to the type of paint and colors you choose to use.

Death is also art. There is no death. There is only life after life. Physical death is often seen as an end, but in truth, death is nothing more than a continuation of life in another form. As a star reaches the point of super nova, it does not die. It continues as a new form of energy as do two dying neutron stars that can collide to form a magnetar—it continues as its own identity throughout time. The same applies for human beings. At death, elements of the identity and personality of an individual remain relevant *only for a time*, but in a different form.

If we took the time to contemplate and see more than what we commonly see in life, we might begin to gain a deeper understanding for the finer points of evolution and cooperation in nature and our connection to it. Eco systems are formed by communities of organisms that interact with the physical environment. Flowers and plants attract insects, birds, and bees by their color, composition, smell, and pollination sources. Bird nostrils are called nares that allow a bird to breathe, smell for food, and use smell to navigate. They also use taste, touch, sound, and sight to survive. The spreading of seeds is commonly accomplished by wind, bird droppings, animal scat, and on the fur of animals.

Thanks to many devoted scientists, we now know that trees care for one another in a community of below ground networks of communication through mycorrhizal fungi as well as other above and below processes that create and support life. If we could see all life down to the tiniest of networks and symbiotic relationships, we would understand the fundamental nature and taproot of all living things, and that, my friends, would give us an appreciation for life in a more sacred way. The exploration of our inner environment and the development of inner intelligence will give us a greater understanding of consciousness and an understanding of who we are, what we are, and why we are.

By living in truth, being straight with oneself, owning one's own life story, and following natural impulses, instincts, and intuition, it is possible to live in a healthier and more

meaningful relationship with your inner world. Many people fear their imagination, instincts, intuition, and inspiration, often fearing life itself and their own beingness. A great deal of emotional pain and suffering would be abated if people would allow themselves to be vulnerable enough to appreciate and embrace their pain and their unique place in the universe. Becoming intimately aware of how nature flows through everything, we can unfold the inner knowing that life is consciousness, energy, and everything is in a constant state of change. Everything is alive, even in death.

By now, we should all have the basic scientific knowledge that everything is energy, which cannot be created or destroyed; only transformed. Again, the one constant in the universe is change—life is continually in a state of fluctuation, and the self that we identify with, the self that we perceive as who we are, is only a fraction of who we *truly* are. All structures, constructs, and systems of life are self-organizing. Meaning, they create themselves over and over again to form their own design. The unfolding and flow of life allows structures and systems the simple recognitions of their own life processes. Nothing in life is static—but rather, it is in a constant state of reorganization.

Sometimes, humans move toward new ideas and concepts kicking and screaming. It takes people a tremendously long time to warm up to new discoveries, ideas and, frankly, anything that may challenge treasured assumptions and beliefs such as natural selection and competition instead of symbiotic relationships and cooperation. People are stubbornly faithful to their assumptions and beliefs because they form a framework that helps them function psychologically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually in a safe way that can ultimately disconnect them and cause them to distrust their own nature. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer said, “All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”

New ideas, new concepts, and change can frighten people—people need to feel safe, and change means an alteration in their identity. Change can make people feel vulnerable, and if we are disconnected from our emotionality, it can be terrifying. When changing, whether we are changing our mind about an idea or a belief or having an experience that other people cannot relate to, we can also run the risk of rejection by family, friends, coworkers, and society.

We are social creatures who desire and need love, acceptance, validation, and to be seen and heard, but people will reject you if you do not align with their beliefs. We also happen to be experts at categorizing, labeling, judging, and compartmentalizing life, because we have been taught that this is the safest way for us to maintain our life and lifestyle. Many times, we go along to get along. The good news is, slowly, we are moving in the direction of lifting the taboo of knowing who we truly are by accepting our true nature as creative beings that are always in a state of becoming, whether we are in physical form or nonphysical form.

In my generation, there have been pioneer researchers and trailblazers in the field of life after death that have paved the way for people to speak openly about their experiences. Raymond Moody Jr., M.D., who coined the term “Near Death Experience” (NDE), has given people, through his research, permission to talk about what happened to them when they died and came back. Many people have death experiences, and some come back

profoundly changed and enlightened. It is real and it is part of reality. Thanks to Dr. Moody's groundbreaking research, we have come a long way in deepening our conversations and understanding about the Near Death Experience. After decades of research, Dr. Moody also coined the term "Shared Death Experience" (SDE) in his book *Glimpses of Eternity* with Paul Perry.

A shared death, or shared crossing, is generally viewed as a person who has a direct experience simultaneously with the dying person at the moment of their death. As someone who has experienced a shared death as well as other "crossing over" phenomena, I can tell you that experiences may include the feeling of the dying individual's soul or essence going through the person who is either sitting vigil or by someone in another location. A manifestation of the dying person's essence is either seen as translucent energy or as a physical apparition of the person, a vision of the dying person's experience as they cross over, a premonition, or a dream that corresponds with the person's death. After death, it is very common for people to have dream visitations from the deceased, feel the deceased around them, or they may have a vision of them, or hear their name being called.

The resting pulse and default clichés of the scientific and medical communities are reductionism and rationalizations when it comes to pre-death dreams and visions, near death experiences, shared death experiences, and post-death communications. Peoples' experiences are routinely belittled by those who state that the brain is neurologically impaired and that their experiences are only hallucinations. With a broad brush, I will say that the disciplined fields of science and medicine tend to place our existence and experiences in a silo of biological structures and systems incapable of naturally occurring psychic experiences or the survival of consciousness after death. Their report card tells me they have impeded themselves by not incorporating the inner expressions and processes of consciousness. One day, inflexible scientists will need to, in a constructive way, alter their focus and stop trying to discover an objective, logical, and substantiated universe and reality that is independent of consciousness. Theoretical scientists are making progress, but *all* scientists will need to fully embrace the idea that the universe is self-aware, self-organizing, creates our physical world, and *is* consciousness.

We, as a species, are at a remarkable juncture. We are in the spring of transformative changes and shifts in paradigms that are unfolding in grand ways. In all fields of our emotional and spiritual development, we are waking up to a greater understanding of our inner world that will ultimately lead us to make choices that are more enlightened. Eventually, our private inner life will blend more fully and naturally with our outer life and our perceptions of Self, whereby trusting our rhythms and natural inner impulses will be seen as normal. But, to accomplish this we need to change our minds about ourselves and how we operate by paying close attention to how we function and process incoming and outgoing information. Focus on rebuilding our life and rebuild it to how we would like it to be. Think about what you personally would like to change, create a plan, and do your best to accomplish your goals. You are the "master of your fate and the captain of your soul." No one else can do it for you.

Young children and animals are naturally open to a greater awareness. To them, their experience of themselves is *whole* and in the Now Moment where they have an inner trust in their relationship and union with the universe. It is normal for young children to be aware of people in spirit but adults have learned to domesticate children out of that natural state. Some religions teach that we are born corrupted and sinful and they vehemently oppose supernatural experiences and ideas that promote the belief that communication with the dead is coming from demons. This belief can be traced back to the fourth century and directly linked to the obliteration and genocide of Indigenous and village peoples' (Pagans) beliefs, practices, and rituals. There was also the cultural appropriation of their symbols, how they worshiped, and their celebrations and ceremonies throughout the year such as Winter Solstice (Yule), which is celebrated as Christmas, and Samhain (Hallows), which is celebrated as Halloween.

Referencing my King James Bible (ca. 1611), Paul's first letter to the Corinthians on *The Natural and Spiritual Body*, 1 Corinthians 15:44 reads, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body..." Paul further states in 15:49, "And as we have born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." For me, he is talking about the physical body and soul. As we have an earthly body, we will continue to live in spirit form in death.

Heaven is *within* us as well as hell and, literally everything else you can imagine. As we imagine them, they become states of being for us. Heaven can always be a part of you. You can always, in essence, be a part of heaven even while you are alive and well in your physical body, you are chronically ill, or you are dying. Don't think heaven is not a part of you. Heaven is a *label* for purity of mind, heart, and soul. That is heaven to me. In many religions and philosophies, heaven and other "higher realms" are set up to be a destination and a reward. All people need to understand that they are their own destination, because when they die their physical death, they return to themselves over and over again.

In a literal sense, with the use of fear, we have been subjugated into not trusting our inner selves, which has caused us to deny what would otherwise come naturally to us. People have been murdered, tortured, imprisoned, and ostracized for being witches, herbalists, midwives, or just for being different or looking different. Over centuries, people have systematically been gaslit and brainwashed in insidious ways to fear life, death, and supernatural experiences.

Our death experiences and interactions with the deceased can no longer be reduced to wishful thinking and hallucinations. Too many people have come forward with their stories of pre-death, at-death, and after death communications to still be ignored, disparaged, and subjected to the prejudices and inflexible beliefs held by science, medicine, and religion. Life is not only a journey; it is a dance—a dance that is void of an arrival and destination in all things. Every day, we have the choice to be a present and conscious participant in weaving our own tapestry of life. Every day, we gain new experiences, new ideas, new insights, and new understandings. Lean into life. Freely experiment with the idea of a nonlinear beginning and end, because it is only by an intense focus on this reality that experiences are measured by the illusion of man-made time. It is no longer a radical idea to embrace a more thorough and open worldview of the nature of reality.

I am optimistic that you will come to your own place of awakening and celebrate your private depths of joy, love, ecstatic experiences, and a deeper connection with *The Whole of Existence*—in this world and worlds beyond.

## DEAR READER

*“We are all inventors, each sailing out on a voyage of discovery, guided each by a private chart, of which there is no duplicate. The world is all gates, all opportunities.”*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

This book has been brewing on the borders of my life for 50 years, and it was not until 2019 that I seriously began to appreciate that my story may pave another way for people to understand themselves and life. What began as a book that was to be predominately about death, dying, preparing for death, and the survival of consciousness after death, has morphed into something far greater than I had imagined. To reveal what I believe to be truths we all have in common, is to reveal and share meaningful paths in life that have led me to greater expressions of my consciousness. Since meeting my worthiness in different ways throughout my life, I can now unflappably pass by the Buddhas I meet on the road of life, understand the stretchability of my psychic abilities, which are central to my being, and be the unprejudiced scientist of my inner world and environment.

What I have to say may echo ancient teachings, principals, and universal knowledge, but here, I rely heavily on my personal experiences, truths, beliefs about life, consciousness, and the survival of consciousness after bodily death. Not everyone will agree with me, and that’s okay because people will hold their trusty beliefs tightly and I will never be able to please everyone—I wouldn’t want to. I also understand that sharing my opinions and outlook, as well as my experiences with the deceased and their after-death communications, may be uncomfortable for some. However, I believe the information on these pages can be appreciated as a timely disturbance of long-held beliefs and ideas as we stand on the threshold of change and the rearrangement of individual and mass consciousness. If we are brave about being accountable to ourselves without fear and embrace our consciousness and the consciousness of *The Whole of Existence*, we can gently and candidly explore our personal stories within our nomadic undomesticated wilderness that is our inner environment.

I invite you to think about examining and altering belief structures, creating balance with your emotions, both negative and positive, and how you can imagine and create new gateways of expression. Understanding, both emotionally and psychologically that there are no floors, limitations, or boundaries with consciousness, will offer people more freedom to explore the multi-faceted dimensions and constructs of our inner reality. This will allow us to be an active and deliberate participant in conceptualizing and designing our outer reality. By paying attention to, and developing our interior intelligence, the knowledge and wisdom that can come from life experiences will expand the Self naturally and effortlessly.

I have had many reflections and memories pop up while writing this book that reminded me of how fortunate I am to have been born into a generation that had the courage to change multiple mores and dismantle old and stale beliefs. Those of us coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s created a worldwide cultural revolution that pulled young people to change

the landscapes of sex, drugs, and rock ‘n roll who openly and boldly challenged the world with political and social activism. There was a powerful civil rights movement as well as activists from the Black Panthers, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (MOBE), and the Youth International Party (Yippies), that came to be known as the Chicago Seven. We had the Black Power Movement, the Black Arts Movement, Woodstock, Communes, psychedelics, spiritual seeking, Gestalt Therapy, EST, the Human Potential Movement (gateway to coercive behavior modification and mind control), transformational psychotherapies, Transcendental Meditation developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Eastern religions, a feminist movement, and various philosophies. *Power to the people* was one of the mantras of our time. Yes, my generation was very busy and the times were turbulent.

While factions of my generation were radical, covert, and violent, I also witnessed the celebration of peace, love, and sexual exploration. Despite growing up in an enigmatic world and experiencing years of uncertainty about my own identity and self-worth, I could always rely on my independence and autonomy, which led me into, and through, many life initiations. Some were pleasurable while others were psychologically and emotionally injurious. Every adolescent in every generation has an impetus to rebel and break free of the previous generation to venture out to find definition, meaning, identity, and their place in the world—we were no exception. The lack of reverence toward our parents and grandparents and the wisdom they may have held for us, seemed at the time to be empty, full of repressive hypocrisy, dysfunctional, and the pervading cry to arms was that anyone over the age of 30 was not to be trusted. We were a generation ignited by reform, existentialism, metaphysics, and we nuzzled with and identified as society’s nonconformists. We demanded change.

We were awakening to what we thought was the dawning of a new age. We rebelled and rattled the prison bars of puritanical beliefs, tore down decaying ideologies, insisted on racial justice, raged against the Vietnam War, questioned religion, and we had phenomenal music. We contributed to the idea of a more educated, diverse, and tolerant society, and while many of us continue to be deeply concerned about the environment, there are those that have become numb to the frightening changes over the past 60 years to our world. Many ran out of steam and were seduced by the same traps as previous generations. Hate, prejudice, racism, partisan politics, and sexism persisted through the subsequent decades, and not all hippies were about peace and love.

Many copped out to become part of the silent watchful eye of the government and the underbelly of the political, religious, corporate, and military structures. It was not all for naught however. My generation, known as baby boomers, were a part of history that inspired, stirred, and triggered great change in our own right that changed the collective consciousness—either in a positive or negative way depending on what the times meant to an individual. We faltered when it came time to sustainably value the equality of all people, the specific needs and autonomy of women of all races, the protection of our children, and the disparity of wages. It was a time that cannot be taught or explained to people who did not live it. Today, through the glorification of youth, cancel culture, fallacious opinion pieces, and unethical citizen journalism we are seen as old and redundant, and any cultural initiation for elders—for those oldies who successfully dodged spiritual truancy and bypassing—have

long been renounced. For most older people, based on self-observations and experience, Western culture, including our government, consistently victimizes, devalues, discriminates, abandons, dismisses, and ghosts the “elderly.” *Soylent Green* anyone?

Boomers get a bad rap and we get hate from the scoffers who think most of us are crusty, cruise hopping, clueless margarita drinking old white fogeys who ride around in golf carts and vote against our own self-interests; not all of us are like that. Predictably, many who once cried for societal changes became defectors and many of those defectors are now the dross, acquisitive, and atrophied congress that for decades has threatened to take Social Security and Medicare away; they are also the ones who are beholden to lobbyists and special interest groups and not to their constituents.

As we age, the contempt is felt by the rocks that are tossed from political platforms, keyboard warriors, and boors with shallow aspirations looking for attention and instant notoriety who depend on “likes” and “retweets” to define who they are. But hear me clearly, I will gladly support, listen to, applaud, and accept the finger pointing from levelheaded young activists who want a better world. It is the right thing to do to pass the battered baton to the young people from all over the world who are actively influencing society and creating positive change. We need to take them seriously and listen to them NOW! It is essential that we welcome, support, and usher in the young who aspire to become the elders of our world who will be the stewards of the earth and the protectors of life—those with pure motives.

The current level of insanity has always existed in one form or another and in differing degrees and scales that wax and wane to the sways of life’s pendulum with each generation. Especially in the U.S., we are in a deep stupor sedated by distractions, consumerism, self-absorption, apathy, blame-ism, voyeurism, and social media vigilantism. The once popular sentiment on a bumper sticker that said, “If you’re not outraged, you’re uninformed” has been quelled by the current fear-based tranquilizing of society, which also creates fertile ground for rabid religious, New Age spirituality, and political influence. Our growth and evolvment depend on cooperation with nature and each other—not to be in competition with—*if* we care enough to course-correct from the dizzying path we are on.

In America during my earlier years, larger dreams were never realized when the soul of our country bled as we lost important voices and leaders such as JFK, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, Leon Jordan, Malcolm X, and yes, John Lennon too, an activist through his music. There exists a force that ensures that the political and social divisions in America remain in place to benefit the privileged who continue to control the narrative and status quo of our society. We have had many troubling and traumatic times. While their lives were short, their personal rudders did indeed spark change and a shift in thinking that altered society’s trajectory. Positive changes have been slow. We *have* made significant progress, and let us appreciate that, but we still have a lot of work to do. When I look in the rearview mirror, the foundation that needed to be changed and shifted seems not to have moved in a notable way. We continue to war, discriminate, and dehumanize others.

The civil rights movement cannot be spoken about without acknowledging the brutal torture and murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till in August 1955 days after allegedly flirting with a white woman in a small grocery store in Money, Mississippi. Emmett’s murder

mobilized and solidified the civil rights movement that we know of today. His mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, insisted on an open casket at her son's funeral in Chicago so the world could witness the brutality of his death. Mamie Till pursued justice for her son for many years, and in the fall of 2022, the biographical film *Till* opened in theaters almost 20 years after her death in 2003.

It was on March 2, 1955, that 15-year-old Claudette Colvin refused to give up her seat for a white person on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, honored by Congress as “the first lady of civil rights” and “the mother of the freedom movement,” also refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. African Americans continue to live with systemic racism and the legacy of trauma, kidnapping, enslavement, brutalization, rape, murder, and families torn apart to be sold like cattle.

We must also acknowledge the very dark history toward First Peoples of this nation and the deliberate and malevolent acts of genocide and the destruction of their cultures, languages, systems of self-governing, the theft of their lands, and treaties that have not been honored. The forced separation of their children and placing them in residential boarding homes furthered the agenda of our government to destroy and neutralize their cultures through death and assimilation. When will we be morally and spiritually compelled to own up to our brutal and dishonorable acts of colonialism, genocide, and systemic damage openly and honestly toward First Nations and to validate and honor their role and stature in American history? It may take a long time, so it is important to validate and celebrate the histories and stories of Native peoples around the world and continue to honor the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures today. Wounds need to be tended to.

Looking at the alarming national average, four out five Native women and Alaska Native women *and* men have experienced violence sometime in their life according to The National Institute of Justice. The National Organization for Women reports that the murder rate for Native women is 10 times the national average with an alarming 96% by non-Native predators. There are many contributing factors for women such as domestic violence, murder, rape, exploitation, and human trafficking; women are also at risk of attack and abuse by transient predatory workers from “man camps” in the oil industry throughout the U.S. and Canada. The systemic and government sanctioned abuse and exploitation of tribes is traced to colonization with American soldiers using abuse and prostitution as tactics to “assimilate” First Peoples. Tribal traumas are high and we are all aware of the assault on the 2016 protesters at Standing Rock over the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) that encroached Native territory, which was a poisonous threat to the water on the reservation. The Water Protectors were met with a violent militarized response on their own land and pelted with tear-gas, rubber bullets, and water hoses by a private security company along with federal, state, and local authorities.

With European colonization, America became part of the established slave trade with the Spanish and Portuguese and, along with other players, the system later came to be known as the Triangle Trade: Europe—West Africa—Americas. We continue to live with the iniquity of slavery and, how, on the heels of Indigenous genocide, it continued to escort white supremacy into the fabric of the country's identity. The internment of the Japanese during

WWII mirrors our long history of racism toward Asians and other immigrants. By facing the history of this nation, even the tribe-between-tribe history of First Peoples before the arrival of Europeans, can we be free to understand, teach, and inform future generations so they may grow and build a more just world for all our brothers and sisters. If we really want to dig and get to the world's marrow, we can trace cultural disintegration, annihilation, and traumas back to the Romans and their expansion over 2000 years ago.

The shadow of cultural and generational trauma, without a doubt, frames our identity as a nation and as a people of the world. It hovers all around our present-day and it will not be released until world leaders make peace with those that have been, and continue to be, oppressed and the oppressors acknowledging their wounds and be accountable even if it means generations later by a successor. If leaders continue to stoke the flames of racism and emotionally push our national history down to keep it hidden and allow government and religious revisionism, we will continue to act out in destructive and dehumanizing ways. Time does not heal all wounds and it is foolish to pretend otherwise.

No one person, no one culture, and no one belief system is more singular than another. We all have a right to be here and to believe what we want to believe and to live how we choose. Everything and everyone have a right to life. However, it is not a right to harm and to violate. As a nation, it would benefit us and it would be advisable to “see” First Peoples and African-Americans and not dilute or diminish their deep and painful stories to make anyone feel more comfortable. We need to, in a healing way, feel very uncomfortable so we know how to change.

Would it not feel healthier, saner, and freer to live in a more enlightened collective consciousness? Hate, prejudice, sexism, and racism are weakened by understanding that we project what already exists within our own selves. We create our reality based on our thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and imagination. Our outer reality reflects our interior reality. As a matter of course, we are always in a state of change and fluctuation; we continuously have opportunities to modify our beliefs about ourselves and the world around us.

By electing principled and humanitarian officials who are environmentally friendly and genuinely have a peaceful nature and strong leadership skills, we can begin to make wiser decisions that include the acceptance and respect for all people. Our problems and ills are vast, and it is hard to find the crux of the matter and it is difficult to pinpoint which hole in the dam to plug first. By sobering up, reevaluating, and redefining our perceptions of what we think are weak or strong leaders as we face the reality of the deteriorating connective tissue of society, we could begin by rejecting fear-driven politics and the cartoonish bafflebatters who think they are consecrated in some magical way. Tyrannical or authoritarian leaders (you will find those personalities in all walks of life), often use the divine to seduce and manipulate his or her people, only to mandate laws that weaken and suppress basic human rights. Deeper knowledge and wisdom have been overthrown for a culture of incoherency that lacks critical thinking. If we would be willing to have a deeper connection with our precious short lives, be of service to humanity in a way that reflects individual passions and callings, we would grow into being wiser humans and selfless caretakers of our world.

The “Now Moment” is always the most powerful moment—we can set a deliberate intention for positive change within *each* moment because that is where *everything* exists—in the present moment. We are solely responsible for how we act. We all belong to the human race, we all have the condition of being human, and we all have the ability to extend ourselves to be benevolent towards one another, offering love, vulnerability, transparency, and kindness. I hold that vision for humanity. Too many people *choose* to be unethical, destructive, vicious, manipulative, and who use people without regard to how they may be hurting another being—human or animal. Social media has given the insecure, the prosaic, the people with an underdeveloped sense of Self, and those with nefarious intentions, an unpoliced expressway to inflict great harm that sometimes crosses into the territory of emotional and psychological rape and terrorism, which can lead to forms of violence, murder, or suicide. Are we all really doing our best? Is not the idea of “best” in itself a judgment? Maybe a more accurate way to look at it is that everyone is functioning within their own emotional understanding of themselves.

We have the personal power to focus on deep inner work individually and collectively no matter how painful it may be. History has repeated itself over and over again in the world, showing up in different forms that are relevant to the times, yet we remain prejudiced, violent, and warring. For centuries, too much blood has been spilled in the name of God that has only brought more dominance, oppression, and suffering rather than love and good will toward man.

With the current blitz of personal whims, self-absorption, and political correctness that surrounds us, humans still have the capacity for deep and meaningful change. We are creative, talented, resilient, inspirational, persistent, and very powerful creators and co-creators. However, our vulnerabilities and chronicled historical violations have once again been exposed in recent years. The curtain has been pulled back for those who wish to see the true religion of money, power, and control structures behind policies, procedures, and the gears of control by cash-minded people. Exposed are the layers of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical corruption.

The power of a person’s word is no longer used to speak of ancient and authentic truths, storytelling, and rituals filled with defining wisdom, or holding the preciousness, intimacy, and value of life close to our hearts. I am witnessing the degradation and abandonment of ethical behavior, truth, personal responsibility, and the belief that we are to leave the world in a better place than we found it. We are bombarded with negativity and fear. Our leaders, officials, and people in powerful positions lie with impunity and engage in such distasteful behavior that we are no longer shocked by it. People are robbing themselves of meaning, purpose, autonomy, deep qualities of Self, and numinous beauty. This is not an accusation, indictment, doomsday thinking, or saying we are parasites—it is just where we are today and an indication that we need to change our stories and learn to cast more enlightened spells.

We possess, in this moment, the ability to move toward a greater understanding of who we truly are. The illusions, distractions, and smoke and mirrors we have collectively created and enabled, are unsheltered. Some will choose to rise to a higher ground and some will

choose to remain unaware. And, the cycles and patterns of evolution continue, and the game of life will continue in the same way until we decide to play a different game.

While all of this was, and is, going on in the world, I have relied on my active dream state that has always offered me, as does yours, a way to be free of my daily responsibilities, free of time and space, use telepathic communication, engage in dimensional travel, and have a deeper communication with my inner wilderness. At an early age, I found comfort with the visitations of deceased relatives and I realized there was more to being alive than just my daily conscious self. I have no memory of misunderstanding physical death, or ever questioning that physical death is simply a continuation of life. Often feeling like a visitor from another world, my desire to organically explore altered states of consciousness has taken precedence in my life. Being born into mediumship does not mean I have not had to work at developing my abilities—it has taken a lifetime to be where I am today. Nonphysical beings as well as friends and acquaintances have assisted me along the way, and with every step and misstep, consciousness became my ally.

While many mediums are good technically, they often miss the opportunity to offer deeper meaning and healing by diving into the emotions of those in spirit form. I specialize in emotional connections. By connecting emotionally with the deceased or other nonphysical personalities, I offer people an understanding of the continuation of life and the gifts that deceased beings are giving them. Every medium will have their own specialized way of working so it is important to do your research if you are seeking a connection with the deceased through someone other than yourself.

There have been many watershed moments that defined my life, but there are two life-changing experiences that affected me deeply. My distaste and skepticism for the ideological thumbprint of “spiritual development” directed me to do more inner work, and with great synchronicity in play, I began a personal journey in 2002 that was driven by an internal push to explore and experience authentic shamanism. The time was ripe to broaden and expand my horizons. With good fortune, I was introduced to Charles H. Lawrence, a spirited man with great pizzazz. He is a speaker, world traveler, teacher, mentor to many, and widely known as a Thunder Being. Charles is a deep explorer of his own inner world, and for many years, he facilitated yearly travels to the upper region of the Amazon in Peru to work with Don Agustin Rivas Vazques, a nationally and internationally known wood sculptor and shaman. In 2003 I joined his group, and with intense motivation, I was excited to continue my inner work and I jumped in feet first—no holds barred—to experience the unknown dimensions of my journey—which really means I had no idea what I was getting into, but I was ready to go!

I participated in the shamanic and healing tradition of Ayahuasca (eye-ah-waska) that has been passed down from generation to generation in Amazonian Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Western Brazil. Ayahuasca is an entheogenic brew made of a vine and shrub used as spiritual medicine for the expansion of consciousness. Ayahuasca is known as “The Mother” and referred to as *La Purga* (the purge) because it can lead to the purging of core toxicity and trauma, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Ayahuasca and other psychedelics are now, in some circles of psychotherapy, clinically used in micro doses for the treatment of PTSD,

sexual trauma, palliative care, end-of-life care, and more. The experience of Ayahuasca can lead to profound self-discovery and healing through visions under the direction of a highly skilled Ayahuasquero proficient in the practice of using the sacred vine.

My intimate experiences with Ayahuasca, in tandem with the daily processing and integration of my visions, opened something extraordinary inside of me. By allowing my mind to be free, unencumbered, and fearless during the ceremonies, my mind exploded with telling visions—visions that still give me insight and guidance to deeper caverns of my emotionality. The medicine, meaning the insights and healing I received from this journey, were pivotal for me. I touched an inner knowing that I had nothing to fear from my own mind, which was huge for me as I was taught to not trust anything about myself. Fortunately, diving into my consciousness has come naturally—it is there that I created a safe place to be, a form of emotional hibernation for myself, and withdrew there as a kid due to a turbulent home life. I am fortunate to have had this experience in Peru before it became popular, touristy, and another tool in the New Age spiritual toolbox.



### **Exploring the Amazon**

Along with Charles and a few others in 2006, I traveled to Tuva, officially the Tyva Republic, a federal subject of Russia, and defined as an independent state in the center of Asia in southern Siberia that borders Mongolia to the south. If you look at a map of Asia, the largest of the seven continents, and drew lines north to south and east to west from the most outer points of each border, those lines would intersect in Tuva. Tuva is known as “The Land of the Shamans.” Our small group worked with numerous shamans during several weeks learning their culture, ancestral roots, and ceremonies, which came close to

extinction during Soviet times. Many shamans were killed by the Soviets and one shaman we met recounted how he had to pretend to be crazy to stay alive. The mother of another shaman dressed him as a girl when he was a child so he would not be killed. Very dangerous times. I met amazing people during my time there and I witnessed how people, who lived in yurts on the steppes, lived honestly and authentically and were so willing to welcome foreign strangers into their homes. These amazing people were happy to give whatever they had, even though they had very little. Both of my journeys, Peru, and Tuva, gifted me with direct experiences of kindness, friendship, generosity, love, and an open window to my vulnerabilities, insecurities, strengths, and gifts. How I was seen and received by people from another land and culture was the opposite of how I have been seen and received in my own country.



**Enjoying the Centre of Asia Monument**



### **The Centre of Asia**

When I refer to spirit, the spiritual, and spirituality, I am referring to the true nature of spirituality—one's personage, soul, essence, true self, and life force. As many before me have done, I also use inner world, inner landscape, inner wilderness, and inner environment interchangeably, and make references to he or she and him or herself for the sake of simplicity, so use it in a way that best suits your lifestyle and self-identification. Some names and locations have been changed to protect one's privacy unless permission has been given to me, subjects are publicly known, or information is common knowledge. *What I am offering is not a substitute for legal, medical, or psychiatric advice. You are solely responsible for your reactions, triggers, perceptions, interpretations, and obtaining advice from a clinician when needed. I am not an academic, scientist, or licensed mental health professional.* You, have ownership of you.

The commercialized New Age mindset hijacks and bypasses genuine spirituality by creating an industry that too often offer methods to instantaneously activate your chakras, DNA, pineal gland, or other methods to awaken and transform you that propose methodologies to optimize your potential to find your true purpose. The self-help, spiritual, and wellness circles are filled with people who offer tricks and shortcuts for faster results to enlightenment. The newest fad is a thing called Light Language. Then there is the ringing in the ears, which means you are having a spiritual awakening or guides are downloading info to you, *or* it means you are a channel (eye roll—bada-bing!). There are many genuine, well-educated, and seasoned people in their chosen field who are accomplishing great deeds that help us understand ourselves in a deeper way. Exploiters exist in every facet of life, so everyone needs to do their due diligence and develop a keen sense of discernment. Pay

attention to the red flags and rabbit holes, know your worth, be curious, and question those who *think* they have authority! There will always be someone trying to one-up whatever is popular in so-called spiritual and healing circles to keep people hooked on being special. Again, let me emphasize the fact that there are many legitimate and sincere people doing wonderful and meaningful work.

The self-help and personal growth industry also panders to a person's desire to better themselves, but at the same time, it sends subtle messages that an individual is damaged, directionless, and not aligned spiritually—they have the answer and can lead you to find your purpose, fix you, and enlighten you because they have knowledge you do not. Run away if someone tells you they “do it all” or they can channel anyone in the universe—some rare individuals do have the ability to receive information from higher evolved beings, but they are the ones who have made agreements with nonphysical sources before birth for such a circumstance to occur. The medium or the channel who is genuine and whose intent is to serve and educate humanity will not need to mega-advertise it, boast about it, seek admiration, control people, be focused on becoming rich and famous, and be all woo-woo.

Aside from charitable work, everyone deserves compensation for the work they do. Sure, there are many misguided people selling, teaching, and offering services based on unethical practices, but above this, artists sell their work, musicians charge for concerts, writers sell their books, and actors get paid. There needs to be an exchange, and if there is not some kind of exchange, whether it is barter or money, people will not respect what they are given for free and will ultimately take advantage—it is human nature. You have probably heard of the saying, “If you give a mouse a cookie, he'll want a glass of milk.” We have only given permission to and brought ourselves to the mass commercialism, consumerism, materialism, conning, manipulation, and gifting that occurs in our world today by allowing ourselves to be mostly controlled by the mindset and actions of large corporations and other puppeteers. We can no longer count on customer service or support, value, quality, and dependability of products and services. We thoughtlessly steal the earth's resources of minerals, forests, water, plants, and animals, to commoditize them for short-term consumption where throwaway products, medicines, and other chemicals end up polluting our rivers, oceans, and landfills.

On June 29, 2023, the Florida Governor approved bill HB1191 that will allow radioactive waste from fertilizer to be used in road construction throughout the state. Over time, this may be a potential death warrant for humans, animals, and the environment. The EPA banned Phosphogypsum for decades, but they are now considering giving the greenlight after test results come in. What about exposure to the workers as they are laying the roads? What about run off? There are a lot of “what abouts.” It is obvious to me that much of the mental, emotional, and physical illnesses that are on the rise, even for animals, are directly linked to the poisoning of the environment—all of it.

In 2009, three people died and 18 people were injured during a sweat lodge in Arizona facilitated by a “self-help guru.” People paid thousands of dollars to attend a program that was described as having cult-like practices during the retreat. The road to enlightenment does not need to be achieved through dramatic sleep deprivation, dangerous isolation techniques, or lack of food. Nor is enlightenment the flowery skipping down the sidewalk

blowing kisses, tossing flowers, and saying an overused Namaste, trying to never have a negative thought, and be *all* love.

If you enjoy the comradery and community of retreats and classes, do it because it is fun for you and use it to learn what is best for you—not because you are searching for truth and enlightenment from sources outside of yourself. The guru, wizard, Buddha, God, seer, scientist, and the mystic are all within you. There is no right or wrong way for your own self-discovery, and if you need to, give yourself permission to ask for assistance from someone else to give you a hand or lead the way when you feel confused, lost, broken, or cannot find the path you think you should be pursuing. Just choose with wisdom and do not lose sight of the fact that you are never broken or lost, and you are always on the right path, because when it comes down to it, all paths lead to *you*.

It is an impossible task for any sane person to be loving and positive all the time. As emotional beings, we will always have both positive and negative thoughts and emotions; even people we regard as truly “enlightened” are people who appreciate and process their feelings and thoughts. Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) is a good example of a man considered to be enlightened. He became a leader for Indian independence from British colonialism who believed in nonviolent civil disobedience as well as passive resistance. He believed that God lives in every one of His creations and his four fundamental principles of truth (*satya*), nonviolence (*ahimsa*), welfare of all (*sarvodaya*), and peaceful protest (*satyagraha*) are still followed. These principles are the foundation of *dharmā*, which loosely means the eternal nature of reality, cosmic law, and truth. Gandhi directed his emotions, both positive and negative, to primarily be truth centered; his legacy prevails as being an inspiration to the world where it is possible to live in truth, nonviolence, love, and peace. Every individual, no matter if they are “enlightened” or not, are still human with human shortcomings.

Having said that, here is something to consider; individuals like Gandhi, *allow* themselves to be what and who they are. Truly enlightened individuals do not care what people think of them and they do not want or need “followers.” Unfortunately, because of the fear of rejection, the lack of confidence, or being seen as silly, many people rarely give themselves the chance to understand their own enlightenment, and never become who they truly can be.

Nelson Mandela (1918–2013), one of our most important figures of the 20th century, is an example of the steadfast belief in the human spirit and how we are all capable of being benevolent beings to create a peaceful and just world in a nonviolent way. He was a great politician, lawyer, anti-apartheid activist, inspirational leader, and humanitarian. Mandela was a political prisoner for 27 years and rose to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 shared with Frederik Willem de Klerk, which peacefully terminated Apartheid. After his release, Mandela became President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. How can we not be inspired by his very large presence in this world?

Another tall presence and human rights icon in our world was the progressive anti-apartheid and LGBTQ+ activist, Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu (1931–2021). Ordained as an Anglican Priest in 1961 from St. Peter’s Theological College in Johannesburg, he continued his post-graduate studies in England earning a Master of Theology degree in 1966. He brought national and international attention to the atrocities of apartheid and other

human rights violations. His beliefs in democracy, peaceful protest, and the economic pressures by countries dealing with South Africa, led to his Nobel Prize for Peace in 1984. In 1985 Tutu became the first Black Anglican Bishop and in 1986 “The Arch,” as he was called, was elected to be the first Black Archbishop of Cape Town. In 1995, President Nelson Mandela appointed Tutu to be the head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that investigated human rights allegations and abuses that occurred during the Apartheid era that ended in the early 1990s.

Life is about balance. We need the negative as well as the positive. If you want to live never having a negative thought or emotion, you are limiting who you are and keeping yourself from discovering deeper areas of your being. You will be causing an inner division and conflict that can eventually distort your perceptions or cause somatic illness. You attain true spirituality and enlightenment by having human experiences. There is only so much you can learn from others; there are only so many workshops and retreats you can attend. Everything you need is within you. Draw from your life experiences and touch the energy of those experiences to create a deeper identity, an identity as you would like it to be that reflects the authentic and inner you. Everything is a choice; so, try shifting your thinking to view your experiences as *creative experiences*. Practice taking the judgment, shame, and guilt out of negative events and see them as neither good nor bad, but simply as creative experiences. Practice and develop your critical thinking, your inner intelligence, and seek help or guidance when you need it.

Referencing PhDessay.com, the theory of dualism, by any stretch of the imagination, is not a new or novel concept, tracing its birth as early as Plato and Aristotle. However, the idea took hold with the philosophy of Rene Descartes referred to as Cartesian Dualism. The foundation of his philosophy hinged on the mind being separate from the brain, which is also not a new idea. He believed the mind is an intangible entity that is self-aware, self-directed, and self-conscious. Working his way through his own thought processes and rejecting accepted philosophies of the time, he began doubting everything around him, which led him to doubt the physicality of the universe as well as his own physical body. He held the position that there is a fine line between the waking state and the dreaming state, which I go into in Chapter 8.

Through the ages, people have created a world solely based on dualism where there must be good and bad, God and the devil, heaven and hell, positive and negative, light and dark, right and wrong, health and illness, and so forth. If we have no judgments about all those things, including our emotions, we have the opportunity to create balance. Being non-judgmental can indeed seem like a monumental task because we are constantly judging everything—it’s what people do. However, there is a difference between being discerning and being judgmental, and we can always have preferences without placing judgment on anyone or any *thing*, including ourselves. Maybe a good place to begin would be to practice who we are in the present moment. We tend to judge ourselves very harshly and we silently manifest self-judgment by creating a running narrative about ourselves, often a negative dialogue that forms a neurological pathway that ensures repetition of that narrative.

Enjoy, my friends. My wish is that you will lean into the ideas, concepts, and philosophies offered here, which are deserving of your gentle, playful, and imaginative reflections. You may find ways to discover and understand the vastness of your inner wilderness and intelligence and how to apply them to your daily life. You may learn more about consciousness, death, life, and many things in between that you may not have thought about before. You may find new ideas about death and how it is another beginning, and the many ways of being alive, being conscious, being aware, and ways to create new realities. I believe the *pièce de résistance* of this book is how people can value themselves and life.

The responsibility for preserving our Earth and all her inhabitants, lies squarely on our shoulders, so take with you what resonates, explore your comfort level, and leave the rest behind for another time. You are unique and there is no one in any dimension, reality, galaxy, or universe that is like you or is traveling the exact same path that you are. You may be traveling a similar and parallel path as others, but every individual will have their personal design and their way of executing and unfolding that plan. What are your essential desires and inner expectations about who you want to be, what you want to be, and how you wish your reality to be? It is your choice, but if you cannot make a choice, then do nothing for a while. Sometimes the best thing to do is fly blind and by the seat of your pants.

In closing, I offer a six-year-old's wisdom about how and what we bring into our consciousness.

“I don't like to watch scary things on TV because it gets inside my brain, and then I dream about it at night.”

How will you feed *your* head, Alice?



The pyramid is the power source that is consciousness. In ancient Egypt, the burial chambers in the tombs of the pyramids were believed to be entrances to the underworld. The sun is life and with the rising of the sun, each day comes rebirth, which originates from the source of power. The woman and child are about to enter the pyramid, or the power source. In death, you will find you have more power and you will realize you are the source of that power. When you die, you become more alive—more alive than you can ever imagine while in your earthly existence. The woman represents the emotionality of all life and the child represents freedom, creativity, and imagination. The woman and child holding hands is the weaving of our entire beingness. The Ankh represents eternal life, and the hourglass signifies that everyone has their time to die.

# 1

## THE FASCINATION WITH LIFE AND DEATH

*“If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life. For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.”*

—Kahlil Gibran

The civilization that emerged in the latter part of the Stone Age, known as the Neolithic Period, began in Mesopotamia with the formation of several cities collectively known as Sumer (the Sumerians) in the southern part of the Fertile Crescent between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The cultural systems of this new era coming out of the ancient world formed a stronger system of socio-economic and political structures. Around the same time, the ancient Egyptians settled on the Nile River in northeast Africa.

Many of our customs and rituals surrounding creation, death, and dying, can be traced back to ancient civilizations—most notably, ancient Egypt. The Sun God Ra was the greatest deity in their polytheistic belief system of multiple Gods. For the Egyptians, Osiris was the God of the underworld, which was known as Duat, a home to multiple Gods and supernatural spirits that would seem monstrous and repulsive to us by their very nature. The God Apep, the serpent demon of evil, chaos, darkness, and destruction, battled Ra every night in the underworld.

In a general overview, it was in the underworld where souls were judged. The burial chambers in the tombs of the pyramids were believed to be entrances to the underworld where a soul could move between the two worlds. Once a soul entered the underworld for their journey, there were many realms to pass through that were both frightening and pleasurable. The dead were expected to pass through the *Gate Deities* that were protected by monstrous spirits in caves, where the soul was required to give the name of the deity of that gate to pass through.

Once a soul passed through these extreme conditions of the underworld, they would come to the “Weighing of the Heart.” The judgement of the deceased faced a jury of gods and the ritual was performed by Anubis, the jackal-headed god who would place the heart on a scale that weighed the soul’s heart against a feather. The feather represented Ma’at, the Goddess of truth and justice, balance, order, harmony, morality, and the daughter of Ra, the sun God. She also regulated the stars and seasons. If a heart were out of balance, the demoness and Goddess Ammit, who was part lion, hippopotamus, and crocodile, known as the *Devourer of the Dead* or the *Eater of Hearts*, would devour the heart. For the hearts that were in balance, they became immortal and would enter the paradise of Aaru, the heavenly paradise where Osiris ruled.

The notion of paradise and purgatory crisscrosses almost every culture, religion, and spiritual philosophy in one form or another. There are many mythologies of judgment

whether a life was lived well or not, being rewarded for good deeds, and being singled out to enter either heaven or hell. All cultures have their rituals that include the preparation of the body for burial, funerary ceremonies, and grief customs. Our death traditions are rooted in ancient cultures with numerous variations of creation stories, flood myths, and beliefs about death, dying, and the afterlife. Man's relationship with death and dying has been intricate and often difficult to follow, especially as there were, and still are, multiple deities, customs, and rituals involved in various cultures.

## **The History of Resuscitation**

The boundary between life and death has fascinated man as soon as ancient peoples understood death. Contemporary society in the Netherlands during the 18th century, gives us a particular view into the states between life and death and the resurrection of the dead. To date, Amsterdam has about 165 canals with a combined length of 60 miles. It is often referred to as the "Venice of the North." It seems that in the 1700s, Amsterdam had a growing problem with people swimming in the canals who did not know how to swim, and the canals also provided a convenient and popular place to commit suicide. Often the lines were blurred in knowing who was a drowning victim and who had attempted suicide.

According to Dr. David Casarett in his book, *Shocked*, "The Society in Favor of Drowned Persons" was formed in 1767 by a group of Dutch citizens, which became the first organization to deal with unexpected deaths. By the end of the 1700s, Amsterdam was making numerous medical advancements including surgical developments, anesthesia, and resuscitation.

Among the many testimonials of the resuscitation of drowned persons in the *Memoirs of the Society Instituted at Amsterdam in Favor of Drowned Persons* (1767-1771), there is a well-known account of the drowning of 27-year-old Anne Wortman at 9:30 in the morning on April 17, 1769. By all accounts, Ms. Wortman was found face down in a canal not breathing and without vital signs, according to the good citizens Andrew de Raad and Jacob Toonbergen, who had come to her aid. To the lay person, she seemed to be a goner but Andrew and Jacob must have had a glimmer of hope that they could resuscitate her. As was common practice, they draped her over a log and rolled her back-and-forth for 15 minutes, to expel some of the water from her lungs.

As Andrew and Jacob transported Ms. Wortman to a tavern for the local apothecary, Bernard Donfalaar, to assist in the resuscitation because she showed faint signs of life with moaning sounds. Upon arrival, she was cold, stiff, not breathing, and had no pulse. Disrobing her and placing her body by the fire between two blankets, the apothecary rubbed the naked Ms. Wortman down with ammonia and spirit of Rosemary along "the spine of the back, muscles of the neck, the whole of the head and temples, and particularly the loins, which he also ordered to be covered with warm pillows." While all this was happening, the other assistants took a knife sheath, and with the end cut off, continuously blew tobacco smoke into her rectum. If you have ever wondered where the term "to blow smoke up someone's ass" most likely came from, now you know.

With warm pillows on her body, her feet were warmed with a bottle filled with boiling water. As signs of life appeared, she expelled a considerable amount of water. Trembling, she was bled, given some tea with milk, and carried home in the afternoon and put to bed complaining of great bodily pain—certainly from the log rolling and other liberties taken with her person. Ms. Wortman stated she had no recollection of how the “accident” happened, and she went on to make a full recovery. In the translated text, there is no mention of a feather placed far back into her throat as possible to tickle her pharyngeal (gag) reflex, or breathing into her mouth through a handkerchief with nostrils pinched, which was a common practice for resuscitation, but I think we can safely assume this was done.

Presumptively, the practice of tobacco smoke blown into the rectum would inflate the lower intestines. Because tobacco is also a stimulant, it would stimulate the adrenal glands causing the release of adrenaline, which would then stimulate the central nervous system thus increasing heart rate and blood pressure. We might laugh at this now and think how ridiculous it is, but the thought process behind it makes sense. In today’s world, we administer epinephrine and adrenaline intermittently with an IV to stabilize and regulate the heart in cardiac arrest, and we have the EpiPen that delivers epinephrine for people experiencing anaphylaxis.

Seven-year-old Peter Van Vuuren was retrieved out of a canal on April 27, 1769, by three bystanders who initially removed froth from his mouth, then carried his lifeless body to his home and placed him on a table. For 15 minutes, his loins pulsed from the bellows and tube being used to blow smoke up his rectum. To add insult to injury, the little chap had beer with some butter and gin mixed in, poured down his throat, which revived him. Crying, he did not expel any more water from his lungs and went on to make a full recovery.

The Society distributed pamphlets wherever they could with their recommendations for resuscitation. Intuitively, they suggested in their manual, pinching the drowned persons nostrils with one hand, compressing the heart side of the chest with the other hand, and breathing into the mouth of the victim. Unfortunately, the accepted and most popular methods of resuscitation by rolling a drowned person over a barrel, a log, or being draped over a trotting horse, could cause internal bleeding leading to death.

The practice of administering tobacco smoke into the rectum by blowing into a tube had been replaced by using a bellows with a long tube attached. The use of a bellows as a medical device has a long history and it was used as a way of getting air into the lungs that dates to the 1500s. The Swiss physician and alchemist, Paracelsus, who was a renowned healer and occultist, created “The Bellows Method.” Following the bellows-to-rectum technique, the bellows, with a tube attached, was later used to pump air into the nostrils to inflate the lungs.

Prior to Ms. Wortman’s drowning, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation for drowning victims was recommended by the “Paris Academy of Sciences” in 1740. In England, doctors William Hawes and Thomas Cogan, a physician who graduated from medical school in Holland, co-founded the “Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned,” and in 1774, the society became the “Royal Humane Society.” Dr. Thomas Cogan, who translated the Anne Wortman and Van Os cases, accepted the task of translating the Dutch Society’s notes from Dutch into English. The goal of the society in England was to educate people on how to

resuscitate the drowned with the added incentive to pay people for the use of their home or pub, pay if there was an attempt to resuscitate, and paying more if their efforts were successful. There was a network of homes established in the Westminster District of London where drowning victims and victims who had accidentally been buried alive, assuming they were dead, could be taken and treated by volunteer medical assistants.

In an interview on Vox.com with David Cassarett, Cassarett spoke of an early report by the Royal Humane Society noting the use of electrical stimulation in 1774. The history of defibrillators that we are familiar with today dates to the 1700s. A Ms. Greenhill fell out of a window and was unconscious. She was taken to London's Middlesex Hospital where a surgeon by the name of Squires applied wires to different areas on her body to no avail. After applying the wires to her chest, she began to breathe and later woke up.

Since the early 18th century, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation has waxed, waned, and developed bit by bit. Resuscitation pioneers, Drs. William Bennett Kouwenhoven (father of Cardiovascular Resuscitation), James Elam, Peter Safar, and James Jude, led the way to using mouth-to-mouth combined with chest compressions, which ultimately introduced Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation; known as CPR, endorsed by the American Heart Association in 1963. In 2008, the AHA revised their rules to say that CPR is to be hands-only with deep and rapid chest compressions, which works just as well without using mouth-to-mouth.

Once only used by medical professionals, it is now widely taught as a life-saving action. The choice of having CPR performed is included in Advance Care Directives. A decision to agree to have CPR performed if you cannot speak for yourself needs to be carefully weighed especially when it involves the elderly. CPR does save lives, yet it can be extremely invasive and does not always have a positive outcome.

Years ago, a dear friend of mine collapsed from a massive heart attack in a parking area. Luckily, the person that was with him retrieved an anesthesiologist and nurse who had been attending the same canine training class that they had just left. The doctor and the nurse immediately began CPR, reviving him and keeping him alive until the ambulance arrived. He died two more times on the way to the hospital and was successfully revived. During his surgery, they lowered his body temperature, and while he was in the ICU in a medically induced coma, they continued to keep his body temperature lowered. His recovery was amazing and today he is healthy and doing well. We have come a long way since the beginning of the modern world in our techniques of resuscitation and using hypothermia for medical treatment.

The research and use of clinical hypothermia have their roots in ancient Egypt. It is suggested and largely remains unproven that the legendary physician, astrologer, architect, and surgeon—to name a few of his laurels—Imhotep (c. 2630-2611 BCE—third dynasty), studied assorted injuries of slaves that were tasked to build the Step Pyramid, or Pyramid of Djoser, the first pyramid to be built, which he also designed. There is a lack of information to validate that any of Imhotep's findings were ever recorded. However, it is also suggested that his teachings survived for centuries and were ultimately recorded in the renowned Edwin Smith Papyrus, the earliest medical text that has been discovered to date. The

Papyrus is critical, as it outlines an unbiased and orderly guide for patient care, physical ailments, and treatments that include neurosurgical, orthopedic, oral procedures, and surgery. And, it is important to note that the Papyrus also contains information of the earliest use and effects of using cold to treat disease.

While the use of cold as a treatment has been around for 5000 years, we cannot romanticize it and we must recognize that it has given way to some horrific experimentations on humans and animals over the centuries in the name of science. That stated, in ancient Greece, philosopher and physician Hippocrates, known as the father of medicine, founded the Hippocratic School of Medicine. Hippocrates used cold to treat various ailments, such as swelling and joint pain, and he used cold hydrotherapy (known as a cold douche) for ulcerations, gout, and spasms. The school was credited for using full-body hypothermia as a method for treating disease where the whole body was involved.

There are many remarkable stories of survival about drowning victims being revived after long periods of being submerged in icy waters and other hypothermic situations. Such is the case of Anne Greene's hanging on December 14, 1650. The 22-year-old maidservant of Sir Thomas Read of Steeple Barton, Oxfordshire, became pregnant by his 16-year-old grandson. Hiding the pregnancy and giving birth to a premature stillborn, she was sentenced to death by hanging for infanticide after the baby's body was discovered. As was the law of the day, criminals who were hanged were required to be on the rope for 30 minutes before taken down. The young woman suffered greatly during her 30-minute execution on a bitterly cold and wet day.

Friends desperately tried to help her by pulling down on her legs with all their might, then lifting her up and pulling her down again to end her suffering. Finally presumed dead after 30 minutes, Anne's body was given to physicians William Petty and Thomas Willis at Oxford, and her coffin was sent to the medical school's dissection laboratory. Upon opening her casket, as one version of the story goes, a young assistant observed breath coming from Anne and possibly in an act of compassion to put her out of her misery, stomped with force on her chest and stomach to end her. Still not declared dead, Petty and Willis, with other assistants, began resuscitation by giving her hot and cold liqueurs, tickling her throat with a feather, a tobacco enema, poultices, and bloodletting. After a few days, she fully recovered and with the help of Petty and Willis, was able to obtain a pardon. Anne later went on to marry and had three more children. Unfortunately, it is believed that she died in childbirth at the age of 37 in 1665. There are many variations to this event for Anne, depending on who wrote it, so I did my best to accurately tell her story.

The "Murder Act" of 1752 was a British law that cited that anyone convicted of murder, including nobility, would be executed by way of hanging. The corpse of the condemned would then be sent to an anatomist for dissection or to the local police to be hanged in chains, called gibbeted, and suspended 30 feet in the air to decompose in public view to deter people from committing murder. Although some surgeons returned bodies to their families, further humiliation and desecration of a dead body was visited on the condemned by having their body splayed and displayed inside inns and other public places. If this was

not bad enough, the condemned person's family was prevented from burying their loved one according to their beliefs, customs, and rituals.

I don't believe there has ever been a time when people have not feared, been fascinated by, or been obsessed with death, dying, and the functions of the body. With the parade of drownings, resuscitations, and attempted resurrections by way of electric shock, known as galvanism—which was not that successful, people were becoming confused and anxious about the true meaning of death. There was a lack of understanding about different states between life and death, such as sleeping, coma, fainting, catalepsy, hypothermia, and other states of not being conscious. People questioned as to how they could tell if someone were truly dead.

The French came to the rescue to cite the difference in their *Encyclopédie* between two states of death: “incomplete” and “absolute.” Most likely, in a contribution piece, it further stated there was no remedy for death, but it was also willing to say that death could be cured. London physician, James Curry, concluded in his book in 1817 that the only way to be sure of death was by the putrefaction of the body, and identified death as either “apparent” or “absolute.” The *Encyclopédie*, was a revolutionary encyclopedia that was published in France from 1751 to 1772 by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert, editors and contributors.

The radical and influential encyclopedia provided information on the arts, sciences, crafts & trades, and philosophies that were frequently in opposition to the Catholic Church and the French monarchy. The encyclopedia gave a platform to philosophers and thinkers of the time who were interested in enlightenment, open-mindedness, science, and secular thought. The editors completed 17 volumes of text and 11 volumes of images while subjected to censorship, suppression, and had their doors closed numerous times.

Since the 1500s, centuries of evolving progress in medicine, science, and technology all came to an intersection with contemporary research into resuscitation, resurrection by way of galvanism, and what we now call differing states of consciousness. This intersection offered a backdrop and inspiration for Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's masterpiece, *Frankenstein*. While she and her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, were visiting Switzerland in the summer of 1816, they became friends with their neighbor, Lord Byron and Lord Byron's physician, John Polidori. With many days filled with inclement weather, the foursome passed their time engaged in literary and philosophical conversations. On one such rainy day, Lord Byron put everyone to the task by suggesting they each write a ghost story.

In the 1931 edition (Grosset and Dunlap), Mary Shelley wrote a Preface to her novel recounting how her “imagination carried her far beyond her customary thoughts and daydreaming, which guided her to want to speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror.” Mary's clear visions had Victor Frankenstein creating life by reanimating a body put together from the parts of corpses. She goes on to say in her Preface that Victor Frankenstein “mocks the very mechanism of the Creator.” *Frankenstein* embodies our deepest fears about creation, life, death, sin, judgment, morality, immortality, madness, purity of heart, and man's incessant craving to conquer death.

*Frankenstein*, published in 1818, is a novel that was relevant to the times and continues to be relevant over 200 years later. On the surface, it seems that it is just a story, but it has proven to be far deeper. In Shelley's brilliance, it was, and remains to be, a story written so people can understand life itself. It takes a considerable amount of inner knowledge and wisdom to conceive of such a message that would reach the masses in such a powerful way. Her storytelling welled up from her brilliant imagination and embodies every fear that people have about life and death, and I believe, living in 1818, she pushed her message to the limit. People would not have been ready for the information she had to offer straight away; she instinctively knew how to adapt her inner knowledge to create her message in story form. As with all things, some people understand the deeper meaning of her work and some remain unaware and just appreciate the great story.

People are always afraid of something no matter what it might be—an insect, another human being, life, death. People need to face fear with acceptance of it to conquer fear—in a gentle positive sense of the word “conquer”—and not to fight it or have a battle with it. You cannot face fear and fight it because it will fight back, and the fear will only grow when you are in opposition with it. You do not have to love fear, but accept it and realize it is another very real illusion in our physical world. If you have a deep seated or deep-rooted fear, you would be better off facing it and understanding it is a part of your consciousness. Once the fear is *recognized* and *understood*, it can be eliminated from your consciousness. Once fear is removed in a positive and constructive way, you can become more of what you are to be. If you hold on to fear, you will never be all of what you can be. Fear and self-doubt will kill progress. To conquer fear in a positive and constructive way means to fully understand that it is an illusion—it is energy and your judgment that you place on that energy. Your fear is an illusion. When you understand that, you can conquer it, and conquer it in a gentle and positive way.

## **160 Years of Death and Dying in the U.S.**

Throughout history, every culture follows its own beliefs, practices, and rituals about death and dying as well as the preservation of the body, burial, and the afterlife. The desire and the necessity to preserve the body after death has been around for over 7,000 years. In modern times in the U.S., we can trace the practice of embalming to Thomas Holmes and the Civil War.

In 1838, the French chemist Jean-Nicolas Gannal discovered a way to use arsenic to preserve human remains for dissection. The arsenic was injected directly into one of the carotid arteries in the neck. By and large, the method worked, but ultimately at the cost of many anatomists who suffered from arsenic poisoning through inhalation. Since arsenic is odorless, those poor chaps were unaware of their exposure. Holmes, believed to have graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University in 1845, was later known as the “Father of Modern Embalming.” He continued the work of Gannal and perfected an arsenic-based solution for arterial embalming using a fluid pump. Commissioned in the Union Army Medical Corps and stationed in Washington, D.C., Holmes offered his services to President Lincoln when Lincoln’s close friend, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, was shot and killed on the roof of a Virginian hotel while removing a Confederate flag that could be seen from the White House. Ellsworth was the first military casualty of an officer in the Civil War. Colonel Ellsworth lay in state at the White House for several days, and then transported to Hudson View Cemetery in Mechanicville, New York where he was buried.

President Lincoln commissioned Holmes to train “embalming surgeons” to be dispatched to battle sites to preserve deceased Union soldiers so they could be returned to their families for proper burial. Not only was a war going on, there was also an outbreak of the infectious disease, Typhoid Fever, which spread from camp to camp in both the Union and Confederate armies. President Lincoln’s son, Willie, who lost his life at the age of 11, was Lincoln’s third son. Out of four children, Lincoln’s first child, Robert, was the only one that lived to see adulthood. It was also speculated that Thomas Holmes embalmed approximately 4,000 men at \$100 per corpse during the Civil War. Depending on the rank of a soldier, the estimated price other embalmers charged was anywhere between \$30 to \$80. In 1864, New York resident Timothy Dwight, filed a complaint that embalmer, Dr. Richard Burr, from Washington D.C., was holding his son’s body ransom after Burr embalmed the soldier without the family’s consent. Dr. Burr allegedly would not release his body to his father until the father paid the \$100.

Embalmers gained a reputation as vultures and predators. Most had businesses as cabinetmakers and furniture makers, so it was easy for them to make coffins that sold for approximately four to seven dollars. Unfortunately, not everyone could afford to have their deceased loved one shipped home for burial. Due to the enormous number of casualties on both sides, numerous fallen soldiers were buried where they fell, most with no grave markers. Some soldiers pinned their name and address on their jackets or scratched their names on their belt buckles. In an act passed by Congress in 1862, national cemeteries were created for

the burial of Union soldiers, but are now national cemeteries for all U.S. military veterans. It was not until 1913 that military identification tags were mandatory.

The Civil War was the beginning of the funeral industry. The embalmers came to be known as Morticians and Funeral Directors, which led to the formation of the National Funeral Directors Association in the beginning of the 1900s. The organization strongly suggested that members think of themselves as “professionals” and not tradesmen. Embalming was peddled as a public health issue, suggesting that encountering a dead body was unsanitary, so it became a common practice not to disclose that embalming was an option and not a law. It has never been a law. Even today, you may refuse the service. You will no longer find many family-operated funeral homes because they have been acquired by corporate entities. We have been strategically misled over the decades by the funeral industry that we are not allowed to wash, prepare, or have a home funeral. Check your state’s regulations for a burial transit permit. Funeral homes are now required to present a General Price List (GPL) to the consumer. The Federal Trade Commission’s funeral rule states that you have a right to buy only the funeral services that you want. You are not required to purchase a package and pay for services that you do not want or need.

During the 1800s, as people cared for their sick and dying at home, doctors made house calls and home funerals were commonplace. A community of women would come to help families with the washing, preparing, dressing, and displaying of their loved ones in the privacy of their own homes. As society changed, homes that were more affluent were built with front rooms. You know, *that* room where no one touches anything and you can’t sit on the furniture or touch the fancy dinnerware that was only used for special occasions. The front room, where the coffin was displayed, was referred to as the “death room” until 1910 when the *Ladies Home Journal* replaced the name to “living room,” to steer away from any morbid thoughts of death—transforming it to a home’s “happy living place,” if you will.

While speaking to a group about my work as a death doula, a woman offered a story about the death of her beloved grandfather when she was a young girl. Her grandfather, Patrick, died in his own home and bed surrounded by immediate and extended family who also lived in the home. The woman distinctly remembered the room was called the death room where her grandfather’s coffin was displayed, which was supported by three chairs—a common practice; one at each end and one in the middle. Her family, of Irish dissent, loved their drink. Thus, Patrick’s pals were in the kitchen drinking their Irish whiskey, toasting Patrick, and telling stories about him. Needing an extra chair, they pulled the middle chair out from under the coffin and took it into the kitchen. The priest, a crusty relic embodying traditional bells and smells, showed up later when the men were three sheets to the wind. Noticing the missing chair that had supported the coffin, he went directly into the kitchen and in his formidable Irish accent said, “I need *three chairs* for Patrick!”

*Chairs* pronounced like *cheers*, the men raised their whiskey glasses and quickly responded by yelling, “Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray!”

The woman, telling her story, had the room dissolved in laughter.

In the wealthier and grander homes, you would find a death or coffin door usually located in the back or side of the house on the first floor that led to the outside without any steps. The deceased would discreetly be removed from the home, as it was considered poor form to remove the body through the same door that the living entered, and bad luck to remove the dead headfirst. Superstition calls for feet-first removal so the spirit of the deceased cannot look back into the house causing another person to die. There is a different element of superstition about feet facing the bedroom door. My aunt repeatedly told me over the decades to not sleep with my feet facing the door because it was bad luck; jokingly implying that it would be easier for the Grim Reaper to get me. I have also read that sleeping with your feet facing the door makes it easier for spirits to drag you out. Wow, what a thought.

During the class-based Victorian times, there were three separate mourning periods—deep mourning, second mourning, and half mourning. The length of each mourning period depended on the relationship one had with the deceased. Of course, the rules for women were far more stringent than for men. The deep mourning period for a woman was typically two to four years or more, and if they were not wealthy, they usually wore bombazine or an uncomfortable stiff black dress made mostly of crepe for the entire period. Men, on the other hand were only required to wear black gloves and a dark suit. A black wreath was hung on the front door, mirrors were covered, and lilies were kept in vases throughout the house to cover up any smell of decomposition that may have occurred before the actual burial. And let us not forget the funeral cookies and the baked biscuits for the attendees. It was also not an uncommon practice for people to frequent a loved one's grave site to picnic and spend time with the deceased.



**Photo courtesy of St. Luke's Historic Church & Museum, Smithfield, Virginia—  
Virginia's Oldest Church Building & Open Cemetery.**

In a time where the average lifespan was 50 years of age, the mortality rate for children was high, with many dying before the age of one and many not making it past the age of 10. The mortality rate for children under five was 46%. Penicillin and antibiotics did not exist so a simple scratch or cut could lead to death. Death rates would, of course, fluctuate depending on accidents, war, illnesses, and epidemics. With death as a persistent visitor, people often died from lack of medical care, unidentified diseases, unsanitary conditions, war, and farm accidents. The most common way women died was from complications related to childbirth. Medical advancements have evolved at such a rapid speed that it is hard to pinpoint exactly when we began to put our faith and decisions into the hands of medical professionals and the funeral industry.

Note: The Victorian customs about death and dying does not reflect societal customs and rituals of various cultures. Mortality rates were primarily based on white males and females—the rates were higher for non-white people.

### **The Atmosphere of Medicine and Death**

We turned the corner as cities and communities became larger and more industrialized. Large parks, later known as cemeteries, were established when burial space became an issue and people could no longer bury their dead near their homes. Funeral homes grew and softened logistical issues for grieving families at their most vulnerable time. However, this also opened the door to persistent predatory practices that tarnished the face of the funeral industry for over a century.

Today, the collective fear of death has been intensified by medical advances, which can offer hope to those receiving the diagnosis of a terminal illness. While there are innovative treatments available, medical research and scientific developments often woo people into believing a breakthrough cure can happen at any moment, making emotionally and medically fragile people vulnerable to false hopes.

Sometimes, with false hope and strong defenses created with denial, we cling to the hope for remission, spontaneous healing, a cure, a sudden breakthrough, or a miracle. Our for-profit medical system and the practice of defensive medicine has become so vast that we are no longer seen as individuals; doctors are now employees or independent contractors, and nurses and other staff have become interchangeable parts in the corporate system where low performing staff are shuffled around instead of fired. We have held hands with science and medicine along the way, giving power to the establishment to make life and death decisions for us by dangling the possibility of outwitting and beating death and staying alive at all costs.

Many doctors fall in line with their patients because they themselves have a fear of death and often lack the skills or empathy to have open and honest conversations about dying. Many professionals will go to great lengths to avoid conversations because they may be emotionally incapable of giving the patient a truthful assessment about their chances for survival. Doctors tend to project an aura of strength, knowledge, control, and sometimes arrogance and will often support the dying person and their family's fantasy instead of helping plan for the probable outcome and the path of the disease. Doctors also have the fear of being sued for malpractice. Today, patients need to be sharp about their treatment plans and have a clear understanding of their own expectations and trajectory for their health and make realistic decisions, because some doctors see the money before they see the person.

Cheerleaders for "the fight" come with consequences. Family and caregivers can become overwhelmed, exhausted, and the deceptive nature of anxiety and stress eventually permeates everyone's emotionality and consciousness. If you are a caregiver or plan to be a caregiver for a loved one, expect that this act of love will infiltrate and insert itself in every part of your life. While caring for someone you love can be deeply moving and rewarding, you may also face overwhelming challenges. Ask for help when you begin feeling the stress affecting you—it is okay to ask for help. We live and we die—but, do we die? We do our best at living and being human. I think there is a huge question that is often ignored when faced with an illness, and that question would simply be, "Is it your intention to fight and beat this and win the battle, or is it your intention to become healthy?" Another decision to contemplate would be if you are ready to call it a day.

When you are ill, you are not only out of balance physically, emotionally, and spiritually, but you are also in a different state of being. Recognize and move with the change in your consciousness. Bruce Lee put it aptly in his famous quote: "Be water, my friend. Empty your mind. Be formless, shapeless, like water. You put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put it into a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend."

Set your intentions of how you would like to see yourself and how you would like to be, but also allow yourself to express your emotions. Give yourself permission to feel every emotion that comes up. Sit with your emotions, especially fear. Talk to your body every day and ask what you can do for it. If your adrenaline seems to be overwhelming you, and if you feel as if you are sinking in quicksand, know that there is always a way out. You can always climb out and sit with your fear and understand that fear is not only an illusion, but also a remarkably powerful emotion. Since all emotions are created from the same energy source, you can change an emotion by changing your perception, reaction, impact, and the charge of your emotion. Maybe with strength. Maybe with acceptance of your own mortality. Maybe with a new *idea* of your *Self*. In no way am I suggesting this can be an easy thing to do. We keep our emotions and their effects on our psyche because they serve us in some way, which is another road to explore.

We will always have doubts and worries in life and we will all face circumstances that appear to be detrimental to our wellbeing—physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. Trust your beingness and inner wisdom by knowing deeply within yourself that when everything is said and done, all the experiences in your life and all your actions ultimately work for your highest good and for your benefit, growth, and enlightenment. No matter what happens, you will be okay and you will learn and evolve from all that you encounter in life. Become intimate with your own joy, your excitement, your sorrows, your desperation, and your fears. Ask yourself what makes you feel safe, protected, and loved. Are you loved? Do you feel that you matter? Can you give up the *idea* of hope? Can you give up hoping and wishing for a different outcome? What have you dwelled upon in your life? Try out the practice of living your life with freedom, imagination, and self-acceptance by first allowing your emotions to move freely.

Again, and this is important to remember, which is why I repeat it, *when you fight something, it will fight back*. When a person uses the terms, “to fight cancer, beat cancer, or win the battle,” are they really saying, “I’m going to fight death, beat death, and I will win the battle *over* death?” We have learned to fight, and for some people, that is how they deal with their problems. Most of the time, fighting only makes things worse—fighting to be healthy, fighting death, fighting illness, fighting for the sake of fighting, and so on. If you accept what is taking place, your death can be easier. Once you *accept* something, you *allow* yourself to drop your barriers, you stop second guessing yourself, and you stop the fighting. With acceptance, you leave everything alone and you allow things to work for you. With acceptance and allowance, your body can be free to heal itself because your body does have its own intelligence and consciousness. When it is your time to die, you will die. However, with acceptance and allowance, you can create an emotionally untroubled death.

The death positive movement has been emerging and gaining traction since the 1960s. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross came to the forefront after the 1969 release of her groundbreaking book, *On Death and Dying*, with her model of the five stages of grief. She had several more stages in her book, but we are most familiar with the five—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. According to her son, Ken Ross, she meant for her work to be pliable and welcomed different ideas about death, dying, and grief.

The work of death doulas has taken on a life of its own over the past twenty-five years and, respectfully, the funeral industry is beginning to change their practices to adapt to present funeral and burial options that people are seeking. Advance Care Planning is encouraged so there is a plan in place as to how you would like your wishes to be carried out if you cannot speak for yourself, and *Death Cafes*, *Coffin Clubs*, and *Death Over Dinner* gatherings have emerged where people can get together and openly talk about death. Unfortunately, the reality of it all is that the death industry is just that—an industry. We remain in a tightly woven circle of conspiratorial denial of death and dying and we continue to treat death as a medical event. We are getting better though, bit by bit.

To transform your fear of death and dying, and to normalize the conversation around planning for death, it will take some courage to take an active role in your own deep exploration of who you are, the meaning of your life, and how you would like to be remembered by the people who live beyond you. We have created a culture where people do not want to think about death or prepare for death. We do not need to constantly think about death as the Victorians did as a matter of course in their lives, but we can certainly borrow and learn from their openness about death and preparing for our own mortality in an emotionally healthy way.

## **Your Personal Tapestry of Life**

We are birthed in and we are birthed out. As long as man has been on earth, there have been those answering the call to care for those coming into the world and those making their exit. Birth and death are *of nature* and are *of life's* continuous cycle, seamlessly demonstrating no separation between life and death. How did we get to the point where we think life and death are two separate states of being? Over time, we collectively began to hide and deny death, thinking it would insulate us from death's certainty. Our collective fear of death has become a zealous creature. We protect our feelings of vulnerability by quietly convincing ourselves that death, anticipated or unanticipated, will not happen to us. It is a bubble of denial we create to protect ourselves and to give us a sense of safety.

Within you, far from your daily routines and thoughts of the conscious mind, there are aspects of you that are shaped by your experiences and have emerged as your personal mythologies and archetypes—your personal stories and symbols of the conscious self. These mythologies and archetypes contribute to the formation of your individual identities that are further shaped by your personal experiences, religion, spirituality, cultural beliefs, and social structures. Your feelings about death and dying are an important thread in the tapestry of who you are. Often, your personal mythologies and archetypes will emerge in the landscape of your dreams, where *you* communicate with *you*.

Through the years, we began avoiding conversations about death and dying, which created a pattern of dodging the topic of death, which has led us to ignoring or consciously avoiding making the necessary arrangements that need to be made for our eventual departure. We have successfully hidden death within hospitals and nursing homes, and nearly 70% of Americans will die in a hospital, nursing home, or long-term care facility. Despite 7 out of every 10 people saying they would prefer to die at home, approximately

25% do. According to the World Health Organization, the global death toll for Covid-19 reached 6,987,222 as of December 17, 2023. It made Covid-19 the third leading cause of death worldwide for 2021 and 2022. During the pandemic and with each variant and surge of the virus, many hospitals had to turn patients away, resulting in an increase of people dying at home. Funeral homes as well, turned people away because of overcapacity.

Since the Victorian era, as we slowly handed the wheel to the medical profession and the funeral industry, we drifted away from doctors making house calls, people dying in their own beds, and viewings and funerals were no longer held in the home. We have allowed those practices to diminish as we gave power to professionals as medical advances were made, and it either became necessary or more convenient to allow decisions to be made for us while in an emotionally vulnerable state. As I mentioned before, when life expectancy was around 50 years of age, the anticipated reality of death was a part of everyday life. There were no pointless treatments, a looming possibility of a miracle cure to hang one's hope on, or 911 calls for the dying person to be rushed to a for-profit hospital only to be subjected to life saving measures that only prolonged the inevitable. Many doctors and hospitals expend a great deal of time, energy, and expense to "save" a person from death.

I appreciate that the death positive movement saw its entire structure challenged by Covid-19. Many adjustments were made to continue the work to serve the dying and their families. With the pandemic, it was also clearly demonstrated how essential healthcare professionals are and how unselfishly they served humanity during this crisis. It also served to remind me how committed doctors, nurses, healthcare professionals, and death workers are—many who risked their own mental, physical, and emotional health to be of service during this critical time. And, who were other essential workers that kept things running for us? Low-wage workers that we take for granted daily.

With such amazing advancements in science and medical technology, we cannot lose sight of our humanity and our mortality. No one gets out of here alive, and our goal should not be to beat death, but to live fully every moment of every day. When it is your soul's designed time for you to experience physical death, no amount of technology, the desires of loved ones, or the management of healthcare practitioners will prevent you from going home.



The drawing plays on the meaning and attachment we have with duality and the fear of knowing our true nature. Here we have an individual showing the physical side of us, the side that we present to the world. The other side is the skeleton representing our mortality and who we truly are. We may look at this picture and see two faces. We all have two faces, but thinking in a new way, understand that both faces are only, and just, one face. It depends on what our emotions are that will show either face at any given point in time. In death, both faces occur. In life, both faces occur, because again, there really is only one face even though we may perceive there are two—by seeing and believing in two faces, we have automatically made a division within ourselves, a separation. The two faces are one—we are one with every aspect of who, what, and why we are.

## 2

### LIFE, CREATIVE FREEDOM, AND THE FEAR OF DEATH

*“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely. Your visions will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.”*

—Carl Jung

Where does anxiety about death and the fear of death come from? When you are born, you are born with creative freedom. Creative freedom allows you to have everything at your disposal at any time—everything. You are not born with the terror of death roaming around inside of you. You are wide open to everything about your beingness and your awareness is unencumbered. You are driving a fast and fancy sports car full throttle on the highway of life.

As a baby, you actively communicated by crying, laughing, cooing, babbling, and using body language to have your needs met and to interact with the world around you. As you lived in the present moment, you were not aware of time and you relied on your inner instincts. You had no judgments or self-doubt; you did not know right from wrong, or what was good or bad. When you were a baby, you *were* balance and you *had* balance—you were yourself and you were whole. Playfulness came naturally to you and you were aware of the energy around you. You were acutely aware of other people’s emotions, you were curious and explored your outside world with imagination and creativity, and you were aware of people in spirit.

As you grew and evolved through your lifetime, you became involved in all types of situations in life and you *learned how to be*. You learned to be fearful; you learned to question yourself, you knew when you were valued or devalued, you learned shame, when and how people responded to you, and with all situations you learned how to navigate through your life the best way you knew how. You learned, and you continue to learn how you are to *be* in this life. You are what you have been taught to be. From your parents, your schooling, your religion, and your friends, you learned what is right, wrong, good, bad, light, dark, acceptable, and all the rest. Allow me to repeat because it is important—when you were born you knew nothing of that, nor did you know about time or judgments. When you were a baby, you were balance and you had balance, there was no right or wrong—you just *were*—you were free, pure, and authentic.

We believe we live in a world of duality, a world of cause and effect, which has been kept alive by our belief in it, and it seems the belief in duality is validated for us daily. If you were to have no judgments about all those things, and more, including your emotions, you could ultimately achieve balance. However, we are a judge-y bunch and it is a difficult habit to

break, but becoming nonjudgmental is achievable—and it is unrealistic to think it can be attained in an all “love and light” kind of way.

In every situation, there is always an idea of survival. Children quickly develop coping mechanisms and learn to adapt. As we grow, we learn to adjust because of our instinct to survive, even if it means surviving abuse, catastrophic circumstances, a toxic marriage, an overbearing teacher, a stressful job, bullying, or even life-threatening situations. Whatever the situation, the instinct for survival is a fixed feature in all living things. You might prefer to call it primal. If you could link yourself to the child that came into this life, who instinctively and without restraint embodied creative freedom, you would remember that you will survive everything—even mortality. You *will* survive.

Because we grow up learning about life through the eyes of other people, we were often not given the chance or had the opportunity to see things in our own way or direct or own course. Even with exceptional parents and a happy childhood, a child is still under the influence of the belief structures and personal baggage of other people. A child’s inner magic is redirected causing children to eventually become everyone who has ever taught them. Too many people burden themselves by trying to be something they are not. Some do this by choosing a career that is in opposition with their passion, to make someone else happy, marrying knowing their partner is the wrong person, or trying to live a heterosexual life knowing they are gay. Pressure can come from all corners of life—parents, teachers, peers, friends, bosses, coworkers, religious and spiritual leaders, authority figures, or significant others. Societal pressures to fit in and to be normal can be intense, and those who are different or speak out can be seen as difficult or troublemakers.

It is as if we were given a wardrobe filled with hand-me-down clothes from other people that were wrapped as a gift with a pretty bow, and it is only when we can disrobe and view ourselves in our true nakedness, can we build our wardrobe with clothes that fit properly to express who we really are. In life, most of us have received indirect messages like, “Don’t be different, don’t express yourself too openly, conform, be quiet, behave, and you are not good enough.” We learn to reel ourselves in and learn how *not* to live unapologetically. What we learn is fear, shame, guilt, unworthiness, and limitation. In one form or another, it happens to all of us and, at some point, it would behoove us to *unlearn* the programming and the limited ways of *being* we have learned. It can be arduous, painful, enlightening, and freeing.

As an illustration, if you ask a child to perform a task such as cleaning, and you come right behind them and judge the job because he or she does not meet your standards and you don’t acknowledge the child’s level of achievement, a nonverbal message is sent to the child that their work is not good enough. Children, in their innocence may translate that to, “*I’m* not good enough.” A woman I worked with decades ago, gave her young daughter a task to do as punishment, and then humiliated her by making fun of the distress it was causing her child. The child will get over the event or even forget about it, but what will be remembered emotionally and energetically is the indignation, insult, belittling, shame, and the “*I’m* not good enough.” The energy of those feelings will become part of the child’s inner

landscape and identity. This type of parental behavior, which is typically passed on generationally if not recognized and resolved, is job security for trauma therapists.

The cycle of sustaining unenlightened, careless, chaotic, and antiquated belief structures that are subsequently thrust upon us as children does little to foster or validate imagination, our inner world, or our magic within. Instead, these limiting messages introduce us to fear—fear of humiliation, rejection, and pain. Fear can foster shame and, many times, a victim mentality. We eventually learn to limit ourselves, avoid risks, hide our true selves, be fixers, accommodators, and to stifle our emotional expression and creativity leading people to live their lives trying to avoid the possibility of physical or emotional pain. Personally, I have found it more painful avoiding pain and truth than it is to meet it.

By the time we have grown and gone through schooling, we have become, to a certain extent, all the people who have had an influence on, and in, our life. We can now agree that we have taken on the limiting emotions, attitudes, fears, and beliefs of those around us as well as public figures—to a degree. After socialization and domestication had taken its course, we began functioning as a pattern because we resigned ourselves to a reality partially created and influenced by others. This reality includes the lessons and beliefs we came to understand about life, aging, and death.

Because we were taught, and it continues to be reinforced by society, to distrust our feelings, our inner self, intuition, and instincts, we look for answers outside of ourselves. Many people, indoctrinated by religion, believe they were born sinful and unholy, then later turn to their religion looking for salvation for the crime of being human. That sounds like a toxic relationship to me. A belief in an all-loving God does not come with baggage. Individuals will break free and awaken when they realize they are an *energy being*, born in and with, creative freedom and free will. This means everyone has an opportunity—until the final moments of being alive in this physical world—to have transformative, spiritual, or positive religious experiences that may enlighten and influence the way a person will accept and greet their death. You *are* your personal power and you have unlimited opportunities for change to take place in any given moment.

## **What Does Your Life Mean to You?**

Having a life also means you are preparing yourself for having a death take place within your life. Many people think that death is an end—there is no end. You continue living and your consciousness keeps creating and recreating itself. Death takes place *in* life. Over time, as we know time to be, human beings have learned to separate life and death and, in that separation, have made them separate states of being. They are not—you are one—you are *energy*. There is life in life and life in death. *There is only life*. Life and death are simply one idea and, again, not separate states of consciousness or beingness. You cannot have one without the other.

You most likely have concluded and understand by now, that throughout your life you allow things to die away. You allow emotions, beliefs, and thoughts to die so you can then replace what no longer serves you, or what you no longer need. When you allow things to

die away, you give yourself the opportunity to change. Daily, you experience death in so many ways, you should be familiar with the differing feelings, intensities, and circumstances of death and letting go.

Most importantly, you construct and build your physical life and death with your emotional energy. You also create and form your desires. Desire is a force within you—a force that will always determine the course of your life, your death, and all your accomplishments. You will have your own individual desires, and when you *allow* your desires to present themselves to you, you will find out that you have always been, and you remain, much more than you have given yourself credit for. There is no reason to fear dying. When you discard your body, you will remain who you are *for a time*, just in a different form. When you are once again in spirit, you will eventually outgrow your personality, as you know it to be now, and you will *recreate* yourself with new desires.

### **An Exercise**

Sit comfortably, with a straight spine, and relax yourself. Take a deep breath and exhale slowly, three times, letting go of worries, fears, and stressors with each breath. Gently close your eyes and sit in silence feeling your own energy, your unique life force. After you become comfortable feeling and experiencing your energy, think about your life. Think of your life as one large creative energy experience.

If it is easier, think of your life as a play where you are not only the director, but also the primary actor who is merging actions and energies with other actors in the play to create a masterpiece—a grand creative play that is your life.

Think about the judgments you have of yourself, other people, and situations. As you do that, imagine your body melting away and feel as if you are only an energy body. Experience yourself as energy. Let it happen—give yourself over to it and do not try to control anything, just allow. After you have done that for a few minutes, open your eyes and look around you. Notice if you perceive the room you are in in a different way. Continue with a couple of relaxing deep breaths and think about your death that will eventually take place.

Now, with your eyes closed again, ask yourself, “How will I greet my own death? Do I feel fear when I think about my own death? Do I have no fear? What does death mean to me? Do I fear being in pain? Do I fear suffering?” If you were to design your own peaceful death, how would it be?

Create how you would like to die in your mind, and once you have visualized your perfect death, feel it, and feel it without fear. When you have concluded your visualization, take a deep breath, exhale, and go about your day.

### **What is Death Anxiety?**

A woman I know posted her thoughts about her own death on social media, even though she has been involved in death work and energy work for many years, she shares thoughts that many of us have had. With her permission, here is what she wrote.

“One day, I won’t be here. I don’t fully comprehend what that means, because all I have known so far is what it has been like to be alive. I often wonder about my death; when and how it will happen... sometimes that makes me feel anxious and uncomfortable, and then, other times, I feel open and ready for that experience. On a few occasions, I have been in the presence of someone while they passed... and all I can say is that it was a heightened experience mixed with feelings of awe, beauty, wonder, and anticipation. I know it will happen one day, but I haven’t fully grasped what that means, nor do I think I can... because life is life and death is death. I do believe in the hereafter and have been given glimpses and experiences of the hereafter, which have all been reassuring to my soul. Not sure why I posted this, other than my glass or two of wine kicked in and am feeling somewhat melancholic and mystified about the mystical realm of life/death.”

There is a difference between death anxiety and the fear of death, yet at times, they can become intertwined. Everyone has some form of anxiety about the idea of death and dying. *Everyone*. Even if someone does not fear death and they are ready for death, there is anxiety however negligible, imbedded way down deep in that person’s emotional makeup. Death anxiety is normal and universal. Even if you accept death and you know that consciousness survives death, you still may not be sure what will happen or where you will end up.

People fear what they don’t know or understand. When it comes to your fear about death, do you fear leaving people behind that depend on you, or is your fear based on the possibility of a painful or traumatic death, a sudden death, a long period of suffering, a death that brings nothingness, or an eradication of your entire identity? Maybe, just maybe, your death will be a very peaceful and pleasant one.

## **Real Versus Perceived Fear**

With death, we all get a turn. Will some people suffer? Of course. Will some people die violently? Of course. Will some people die peacefully in their sleep? Of course. During your life, think about who has influenced you and taught you about death. Has religion taught you about suffering and that only through suffering you will get into heaven? As with many experiences in life, the fear of death can mask feelings of unworthiness, shame, guilt, and unforgiveness.

If you find yourself in a life-or-death situation, your body will respond to give you every chance to survive. Your adrenal glands will secrete adrenaline as well as the steroid hormone cortisol, also called the “stress hormone.” When you are threatened, your body reacts instantaneously to prepare you to stay and deal with the threat or to flee—this has commonly been known as the “fight or flight response,” but is now known as “fight, flight, and freeze response,” which is the reaction of freezing in place or fainting. When stressed, the brain also releases endocannabinoids, chemicals that help you feel less pain. In tandem, adrenaline, cortisol, and endocannabinoids can help you feel stronger to respond to danger.

Child and adolescent psychiatrist Kasia Kozłowska of the Children's Hospital at Westmead, Australia, studied how people react to danger, real or perceived. She believed the

term fight or flight needed to include the freeze reaction, which is a fight or flight reaction that has been put on hold. She concluded the more accurate term for reactive behaviors to fear is the *defense cascade*. Briefly, Dr. Kozłowska and her colleagues mapped out the patterns and neurobehavioral characteristics of the Defense Cascade, which includes:

- Arousal – muscles tense, breathing and heartrate increase, preparing the body for a response to a threat with the release of hormones.
- Fight or Flight – defense response to a threat.
- Freeze Reaction – a fight or flight put on hold and instead freezes or faints.
- Tonic Immobility/Collapsed Immobility – one is unable to move, react, or call out.
- Quiescent Immobility – the parasympathetic system takes over to allow a period for rest and healing after the threat.

There is a recent addition to the main F's—fight, flight, and freeze reaction, which is fawning. The term was coined by Pete Walker, MA, a licensed marriage and family therapist and C-PTSD survivor. He specializes in therapy for adults who were traumatized as children, referred to as Complex Trauma. Complex trauma is long-term, invasive, and often daily trauma that had a profound effect on a child's mental, emotional, and physical development in a dramatic way—many times because of abuse and neglect.

Fawning, according to Walker in his book, *Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving*, is “a response to a threat by becoming more appealing to the threat.” In adulthood, fawning is acted out by not having the ability to set boundaries, an unhealthy need to be needed, people pleasing, codependency, and a learned survival mechanism of altering yourself to please an abuser or someone else.

The study of these defense responses has led to a better understanding of treating PTSD in all forms and the awareness of how people respond to and deal with traumatic experiences, which ties directly into how we perceive and respond to fear, whether real or imagined. Why do some people let an event roll off their back while another person having a similar experience will process it as trauma? Comparing our trauma to another person's experience to gauge the importance of our own experience may work in the short-term to put the trauma into context, but does not serve us in a healthy way in the long-term.

## Meeting Cerberus

While living in Milwaukee, decades ago, I was walking home after class at the University of Wisconsin, when out of nowhere a huge dog that was off leash—a Mastiff mix to my recollection—ambushed me and blocked the sidewalk just a few feet in front of me. It was as if he appeared out of nowhere. With gums and sharp teeth showing, saliva building, hackles up, and deep guttural snarls and barking that seemed to pierce right through me, he was prepared to strike.

I knew not to run, so I stood perfectly still taking on a submissive energy and looked down at the sidewalk not making eye contact. But, before I made the instantaneous decision to stand still, adrenaline had already flooded my bloodstream like an intravenous line of ice-cold water. My heart was pounding, my body hair was standing on end, and my thoughts raced for a way out. The fear was reminiscent of an uncontrollable dangerous situation I suddenly found myself in a few years earlier, and just as my mind had searched for solutions then, I began conjuring up ninja moves I could employ if the dog attacked me. I decided that my first defense would be to shove my book into his mouth. All of this happened in a matter of seconds, and the threat on my life and wellbeing in that moment, lit up my nervous system and filled every cell in my body with fear.

It was infuriating when the owner casually walked up and said dismissively, “Sorry,” and took the dog into the house that I just happened to be walking past. Could he not see the terror his dog caused? I bet he did. Logically, I understood the dog’s protectiveness of his owner and property, but this was unprovoked and the possibility did cross my mind that he was just an asshole of a dog, but emotionally and physically, I have never felt such a jolt of terror in my life as I did in those moments. The house the owner lived in was a large Victorian home that several university students shared, and ironically, I rented a room in the same house a few months later because the rent was dirt cheap—Joe and his dog were still living there. The dog’s protectiveness of Joe never waned. I love animals, but I never trusted the dog especially living closely with him and seeing more concerning behavior. Luckily, they moved out.

Now, complex trauma, which many of us lived through daily, made me realize in retrospect that as a child I would freeze. I was conditioned to freeze because every time I opened my mouth to agree with something or to have an opinion, I was shot down and made to feel stupid and inadequate. While I have grown out of the response, it will still pop up every now and then, but I am able to recognize it now for what it is. I have learned over the decades to be gentle with myself when I recognize survival mechanisms that I no longer need today and remind myself that as a child, I was surviving.

## Imagined Fear

Animals are living fully within their own consciousness, live in their own truth, and have a keen sense of awareness. Their instincts are sharp, they are quite cognizant of the death of another animal, and they can sense when it is their own time to die a natural death. Luckily for them, they live in the present moment and are spared the paradox of imagined fear.

In the spirit of keeping things simple with thoughts reserved for the chapter titled, *Animals Are Living Souls*, animals experience a full range of emotions. They can experience love, excitement, joy, grief, and appreciate beauty, but too often they experience fear and trauma caused by cruel people as well as other trying circumstances in life. However, they do not *create* fear in their minds like humans do. They do not have a persistent fear of death, and they do not live their lives worrying about their own demise—they live in the moment. People, on the other hand, find many ways to be fearful—the big ones are fear of failure or success, fear of looking stupid or silly, fear of rejection or abandonment, heartache, invisibility, irrelevance, purposelessness, and the fear of loss. I could go on.

Often, people fear things that have not yet happened and might not ever happen. Scare tactics to capitalize on peoples' fear are fundamental to the media and marketers, for example. Fear is used to keep us fearful of life itself, and the advertisements of marketers use fear to sell us medications, self-improvement, insurance, lifestyles, body images, and everything in between. Once they skillfully scare people and infect them with doubt, they offer a solution, which is to buy their product. Using emotional factors, they create direct marketing tricks and subliminal messaging that exacerbate existing fears, or they market something as safe when it is not. The game of manipulation is everywhere in our society, especially in protection, health and wellness, religion, metaphysics, and politics. Politicians and the media are also masters at creating fear. Manipulating the masses with fear and disinformation is a powerful tool. The most successful way to control the masses is to make them fearful, give them an enemy, then provide a solution. Quoting singer Jim Morrison who died in 1971: "Whoever controls the media, controls the mind."

On a more local scale, falling for a charismatic malignant and coercive narcissist can happen to anyone, but some of the most vulnerable seem to be people who have unfulfilled needs they may not even be aware of, which will filter their way into their sense of identity. Any lack of self-worth, self-love, or insecurities are often due to early trauma resulting in the inability to set boundaries. No one is immune to brainwashing. There is however, a blueprint and a playbook coercive narcissistic people use, and if people were educated about the pathology of narcissism and the self-serving tactics of abuse that are used by those individuals, people would be better at sniffing out toxicity in personal relationships, religious leaders, corporations, cult leaders, spiritual teachers, politicians, or anyone else. Under the right circumstances, anyone can be deceived by another with an agenda because every human on the planet has some type of vulnerability and insecurity that is exploitable—even intelligent and well-educated people who outwardly appear to have it all together with rewarding careers and lifestyles. It is normal to want a more purposeful life, sense of community, belonging, and shared goals. I would highly recommend reading *Losing Reality: On Cults, Cultism, and the Mindset of Political and Religious Zealotry* by Robert Jay Lifton.

From my personal observations and my experiences of working with the public for 50 years, I have concluded that most people need and want someone to tell them what to do and how to do it. People often look for answers without doing their own inner emotional work and look outside of themselves for a fast and easy fix, taking the road of least resistance. Even if an individual recognizes their own “shadows” or “inner demons,” the investment in interrupting unhealthy and self-sabotaging patterns can seem like too much work. We all look for an easy route at one time or another in our life and to some degree—it is a human thing to do. It is also very human to assign blame, deflect, and project before looking inward to take responsibility for personal feelings, thoughts, and actions.

There are people though, who are in so much pain, the only way they can survive is by being emotionally numb. The extreme lengths taken to stay numb are usually through addictions, which can lead to criminal activity, homelessness, and the loss of a moral compass. Circumstances such as these will often require intervention, therapy, legitimate treatment and rehab programs, and long-term support systems. By the early 1970s drug addicted service members fighting in the Viet Nam War had reached epidemic proportions—war being a major cause of psychological trauma. Today, drug addiction remains an epidemic, especially with opioid addiction, which was fueled by a major pharmaceutical company that created millions of addicts.

The definition of a successful life will vary from person to person. A person’s idea of success is intimately bound to their personal perceptions of Self and identity. When people do not have an identity based on self-love, self-responsibility, and self-acceptance, they will create identities that may offer a distorted sense of power that is status driven. For example, a person’s idea of success and power may include a well-sculpted body, financial wealth, fame, a leader, social status, intellectualism, or a powerful political position. People without a strong inner identity are drawn to identities created by outside sources. An erroneous identity may serve one in the short term, but it may be unfulfilling and shallow. In a commencement speech at the University of Pennsylvania in 2011, Denzel Washington said, “You will never see a U-Haul behind a hearse. You can’t take it with you.”

When structures and constructs are dissolved, it is a way to grow, and we will not grow unless we uncover everything painful as well as joyous so we can honestly admit that we do not know everything, and that many of our assumptions are either incorrect, incomplete, or no longer apply. This holds true for governments too. Because a government is an extension and reflection of its people, a government should not only keep itself safe, but the land and the people of the country also. This is supposed to be the purpose of governments—to keep all people safe, prosperous, and happy. If a government is to have a strong, healthy identity, it too must look deeply within to uncover its own lack of awareness, ignorance, distortions, and control to understand that its function is to protect and serve the people. The divisions and polarizations of a nation only reflect the inner conflicts, divisions, and the distortions of *all* its individuals.

I was 11 years old when I saw my mother scared and glued to the TV news because of the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion, known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, which was a real threat to America, especially to we Miamians. In school, we were put through drills of hiding under

our desks in case of a nuclear attack and we were shown propaganda films encouraging people to inform on those we thought to be communists. In driver's education classes, we were shown shock films of kids who died in accidents, and I think there may have been something about the movie *Reefer Madness* thrown into all that indoctrination of fear. None of that affected me at the time, I think, and I do not remember having fear or feeling a threat to my existence, which is far different than the real threats kids have today in their schools.

Those unaware of their emotionality will project their own disorders and neuroses onto other people. And, it would be fair to deduce that people would not be escaping their countries in droves if their governments were doing right by them. Realistically, it remains pretty impossible to compel powerful leaders to take responsibility, because the powerful are focused on maintaining their power and status, which will inevitably eclipse ethical governance. It seems we are only inching our way toward change, but I'm still in. In the meantime, we can each begin by self-reflecting on our own prejudices, attitudes, and assumptions. We can start small by taking baby steps and taking care of what is in our own backyards. We can start with the simple things.

People do not believe in their own personal power because frequently, they are taught that personal power is wrong, negative, or comes from vanity. They will give their power away, making them vulnerable to unmet emotional needs and their own baseless and perceived fears. The brain does not know the difference between—and I will put it this way for the sake of explanation—natural and unnatural fear—because really, any perceived fear *is* fear to the brain. Your brain will signal your body to react in response to a danger, fear, or anxiety that you *feel* whether your fear is real or imagined.

If people would recognize that they have the ability and the power to stop placing judgments on themselves, others, and their judgments of what they believe to be right, wrong, good, bad, light, dark, and all the rest, they would not be so reactive, mean-spirited, and often volatile. People could develop a healthier and deeper sense of identity. With a healthier and stronger sense of identity that comes from a foundation of self-love, self-acceptance, and purpose, people could live a more conscious life and be more aware of their personal joys, which would translate to a more conscious and emotionally joyous death—often referred to as a “good death,” where one maintains autonomy of their death decisions.

By connecting with their own emotionality on a deeper level and by learning to use and trust their intuition and instincts, people would have more balance and would not be off their rockers so much. And, much of the craziness, hate, suspicion, and division directed outwardly today in the world, may just boil down to the fear of loss, and that equates to the fear of death—physical death, emotional death, death of a lifestyle, or economic death. Well, you know, the death of anything. So, what happens when humans perceive an unfounded threat, an unfounded fear? What is the difference between the brain and the mind?

Your *mind* is consciousness—your entire essence. It is everything about you, everything that you are, everything that you have been, everything that you will become, and everything that you have inside of you. The mind is your reality, and it also creates your reality. The *physical brain* is a computing machine designed to act and react in certain ways. The *mind* knows no action, no reaction. It just is. The mind allows you to be whatever you wish to be

and however you wish to be. The brain tells the body what to do, how to feel, when to feel it, when to sleep, when to wake, and so on.

The mind is complete and total freedom. The mind is not bound by time, physical systems, or limitations. It is free, open ended, and limitless. The mind is everything about you. It creates your reality; it *is* your reality. The mind is where ecstatic, transcendent, mystical, and enigmatic experiences come from. When you have such experiences, your mind does not care where you are or what you are doing. These types of experiences will present themselves from within you when they are ready to be expressed—they cannot be prodded or forced.

To reiterate, the physical brain does not know the difference between a real threat and a perceived threat. It just reacts and then your body will, in either case, still produce adrenaline, and you will react according to the hypotheses of the defense cascade. As the chemicals are produced within your body, your emotions are heightened and your instincts become fully awake. All of this tells your brain how to react in a way that is unique to you. Your reaction may help you in a given situation, or your reaction may ultimately hurt you. I believe what people fear the most is themselves. People fear their own power. Since man's time on earth, people have created deities, but in modern times, people are mainly monotheistic and relinquish their personal power to their chosen God who, in return, gives power back to them, but only in the way their specific God sees fit.

I am not bashing anyone's religion, culture, belief systems, or spirituality. This is purely how I see things work. *You have free will.* You do not have free will at the whim of a remote and prevailing God. You either have free will or you don't—it is never a "sometimes" thing and it is not like a faucet that can be turned on and off. You always have the power of choice and change—free will is mankind's gift from our Creator. You always have free will—for eternity.

Fear itself is a power. It is nothing more than a power. Strength is a power, love is a power, sadness is a power. All emotions are energy and power. Fear happens to be a reactive emotion that you will have in response to a given situation that you do not understand. But you need to understand that the situation itself is also a power.

So, psychic experiences, all the ghosts and spirits, and everything that you might not understand, including communication with the deceased, you will probably fear. If you do not understand that death is not the end, you might continue to fear your own mortality thus closing yourself off to communication you could freely have with your deceased loved ones or other nonphysical personalities. All of that is a power that comes from within you. You can use that power to have strength and understanding instead of fear. When you fear something, you are reacting. But, since you create everything, you are creating that which you fear through the lens of your personal, religious, and cultural beliefs. In doing so, you fundamentally fear yourself; ***because you fear the very power you have within you to create.***

## **An Exercise**

A couple of times a day, if you can, relax, gently close your eyes, and try to put yourself in a negative situation. Either make up a situation or bring up a negative situation that you have already experienced—it can be anything. When you bring this up, it will bring about some degree of fear. Then, I want you to feel that fear inside of you. Feel only the power of the fear inside of you, *then* feel the energy of the fear.

Because fear is energy, *feel* that energy and imagine the energy becoming strength. If you felt as though your body was in a weakened state because of the fear, the feeling of strength will assist your body in feeling stronger. As you begin to understand energy, you will understand that negative situations can be transformed into highly creative experiences by becoming that strength because you can change the foundation of that situation and have it become a positive one for you—this takes practice and a willingness to let go of the emotional charge of a situation. You will still have the memory of the original experience, but the influence can be taken out of it by not allowing it to have power over you. Once you can turn your fear into strength, take a few deep breaths, relax your body, and open your eyes. Feel that sense of strength as you go about your day.

## **Plato's Cave and the Power of Denial**

The Greek Philosopher Plato wrote in his masterpiece, *The Republic* (B.C.E. 517), the *Allegory of the Cave*, a conversation between Plato's brother, Glaucon, and his mentor, Socrates. The story centers on Plato's philosophy of how people acquire knowledge by using the allegory to explain the perceptions of reality, greater truths, and knowledge. Interpretations of the allegory are numerous, so I will add my two cents as to what I see as a situation of experience, knowledge, and beliefs.

By paraphrasing the story, the scene begins in a large, dark, underground cave with an opening at the top accessible by a steep ascending walkway. For their entire lives, the people in the cave are facing the back wall bound by chains. They cannot move or turn their heads, so they only see what is before them; chained prisoners for all their lives.

There is a large fire burning behind the prisoners, and there are others in the cave that carry around objects between the fire and the prisoners, but the prisoners can only see the shadows reflected on the cave wall in front of them. The prisoners, only aware of the shadows on the wall, give names to the shadowy figures; others walking behind the prisoners can speak, but because of the echoes in the cave, the sounds are distorted so the chained prisoners cannot understand what is being said. They only know the reality they see in front of them—shadowy figures on the cave wall illuminated by the light of the fire.

Plato surmises that if a freed prisoner would gaze upon the fire and, with the light hurting his eyes, he would not be able to see the true objects casting the shadows. If he were told that what he was seeing was a different version of reality and part of the real reality, he would not believe it and would run back to what he knew, what he was familiar with, and the chains that had become his security.

Then, Plato suggests the freed prisoner is forcibly dragged up the steep walkway and out into the daylight where the sun blinds him. In pain and resisting his situation, the prisoner slowly adjusts to the sunlight, clearly able to see life around him. Mesmerized, he can see people, objects, stars, the moon, and reflections, and he eventually is able to look directly at the sun. The freed prisoner, now knowing that the reality of the outside world is beautiful and far superior to what he had known in the cave, returns to share his journey and new knowledge with the chained prisoners so they too can have the chance to experience the truth. Entering the cave, the darkness blinded him. Convinced the cave harmed the freed man, the other prisoners would not listen to him about his newfound knowledge. Plato concluded that if the fearful prisoners, trapped in their own illusions, had the ability to kill anyone who tried to drag them out of the cave and into the sunlight, they would.

There is a plethora of symbolism to unpack with this masterpiece, but I will briefly spotlight what I believe is obvious about the nature of beliefs, perceptions, and reality.

The cave represents physical reality to the prisoners chained facing the cave wall. In this reality, the prisoners live in darkness, which represents ignorance, so they accept the shadows as true forms, not having the wherewithal to question what they see. The chains limit their movement and further trap them in ignorance, preventing them from learning the truth. The prisoners, believing the illusion of the shadows, create a false and limiting belief about life.

The freed prisoner is symbolic of someone who understands that the physical world is just a shadow of the truth. The sun, and the light from the sun, represent evolved ideas, truth, wisdom, and enlightenment. The light that makes it in through the hole in the top of the cave does little to illuminate the cave, so the prisoners continue seeing only dim shapes and thus, remain in ignorance. The prisoners in the cave do not realize they hold the keys to their own freedom. The more they focus on the shadows, the more real and solid their limited reality becomes. The more real and solid their limited reality becomes, the stronger their beliefs are, solidifying and validating their perceived reality as truth.

Humans are a stubborn bunch. People are judge-y, and what I call *The Great Deniers*. People will deny, deny, deny, until something major happens to shake their perceptions and beliefs, allowing for a new understanding. You can read books, scriptures, go to workshops and seminars, listen to spiritual gurus, or follow the teachings of people you admire and look up to, but it still boils down to *you* doing your own inner work and making healthy choices for yourself. You can learn from others and adopt different philosophies and beliefs systems, but when it comes to your own realizations and conclusions, your freedom and enlightenment comes to you in your own unique way and in your own time.

Every time you grow and evolve, *you* do that. You are responsible for your own growth; waking up to greater truths about your psyche happens in increments. With enlightenment, there is no beginning and no end, it is not something to be achieved, and it is not a destination. Subtly, your growth will unfurl. Bells will not be ringing, there will not be a halleluiah chorus, and there will not be angels trumpeting your arrival into your newfound insight. ***Enlightenment comes when you surrender to the inner forces that guide you.***

The true path to personal change and growth is not achieved by looking outside of yourself. You will always find who you are by going within to explore everything about yourself—the good, the bad, and the ugly. This can be very frightening for people. When you turn to look within yourself, you connect with your pain, your feelings of self-worth, self-love, how you value yourself, and all your emotions as you perceive them to be, both positive and negative. If you live a life without self-reflection and connecting with your emotions and your inner Self, what you are doing is denying yourself. Denying yourself is not healthy or productive because it keeps you from your own freedom, your own creativity, and your ability to act brilliantly.

There is nothing wrong with being free, imaginative, creative, and brilliant. You deserve it, but many people deny this about themselves. Not to worry though. If you are in denial of something, and you may not even be aware of it, at some point, circumstances will eventually lead you to look at your denial and what you have been in denial of, and then you will begin to change your mind, have different thoughts and perceptions, and choose new beliefs and emotions. When you alter your inner perceptions, your outer reality will change accordingly. Every experience you have and every decision you make will ultimately lead you to yourself, because *you* will always return to *you*.

I know you have had those light bulb moments, those ah-ha moments, sudden revelations, and realizations. When those moments happen, the changes have already taken place within you. The ah-ha is when the change that has already happened within you reaches your conscious mind, and then you get it. Get it?

## **The Game of Denial**

You may not want to think or talk about death, and you are not alone. You may deny death and think it will not come to your door anytime soon. Death can be embraced. While physical life has its limitations, death is a transformation from this physical existence to a place of nonphysical existence, where, in your new form, you will have total freedom to function however you choose to function and to create. Death just takes you from one place to another place. Denial is a game. Denial, as well as anger, will give you a feeling of security. Eventually, something will take you out of your present emotionality that will bring you out of denial. When that happens, you are doing yourself a great service. Your emotions are constantly changing, energy is constantly changing, and nothing in life can be stopped. Life and change will not wait around for you. Everything keeps going, everything continues, and continues, and continues. Embracing life and death is a choice, as is rejecting or denying life and death. Everything is always in a state of re-creation.

All too often, I have seen families of the dying putting their loved ones through painful and prolonged procedures to keep them alive at all costs. While this may be done out of well-meaning intentions, decisions are made during an emotional crisis. The fear of loss and not wanting to face the loss of a loved one also begs the question that family members, on a subconscious level, do not want to carry the guilt of what they think of as “giving up” or not doing enough. And, in the end, they fear that they may be left second-guessing their own

decisions for the rest of their lives. Every situation is different and family dynamics can be convoluted and difficult to navigate.

It can also be excruciatingly hard to face the reality of a loved one's death, and no one wants to be haunted by the "what ifs." Doing everything possible to keep someone alive may alleviate guilt for the survivors, but it may not be in the best interest of the person who is dying. Denial is powerful. It is normal. Everyone does it because it is a natural defense mechanism that offers us a sense of safety and protection. When someone is dying and his or her death has been accepted, denial fades away. When a dying person has let go of everything that otherwise would emotionally and mentally protect them, there is an enormous opportunity for self-reflection and emotional and spiritual transformations. Some people are so afraid of themselves and so afraid of death, this fine opportunity can slip away.

I encourage you to think about the way in which you view death and dying, and consider seeing it as a natural transition that you don't have to deny or fear—for yourself or for your loved ones. We come from a nonphysical reality to dwell in a three-dimensional physical reality *for a time*. When that time is done, whether it is a natural death or we have completed what we set out to accomplish and it appears to be a sudden death, our body and our soul know. We are ready to discard the body and return to our original, unlimited, nonphysical state to continue living in another place and in another way—a free and joyful way. All our earthly designs and our day-to-day routines will fade away and we will exist in a state of complete peace, awareness, and creativity. I found extreme calmness and inner peace in the dream state one night. Daily life and all its responsibilities and maintenance seemed like a distant memory. The peace I felt is indescribable, untranslatable, and extraordinarily intimate. I can, however, also tell you that the inner peace I experienced in my dream is miniscule to what we experience when we die.

## **When You Die, You Will Be Alive—Still**

When those people who do fear death reach their private point of death, they will find themselves letting it all go, and they will embrace and welcome death because they will be experiencing and understanding first hand, the continuation of life itself. You either live in physical form or in nonphysical form, and when you die, you will be more alive and aware than you are right now. In the afterlife, our focus of attention and intention are magnified in ways that we cannot imagine in our limited physical life. Rather than thinking with negativity and fear, wouldn't it be nice to think, "When I die, I will be alive—still. Not again, but still. I will never die—I will always live, because this is how the universe works—everything is alive and stays alive."

Life is not a pathway to death nor is it a destination. Your purpose is not to live to die. Your purpose is to live your life and, if you can, find those moments of enthusiasm, joy, and fulfillment. Many overachievers are people trying to outrun death, which is powered by the fear of death. Explore who you are by keying into your own personal power to create the life you desire, and expand your awareness of who you are—refine your consciousness by living your life. Absolutely, life gets messy and sometimes unbearable, traumatic, tragic and, at times, it all seems so unfair and many people suffer. You can learn and grow from every experience and you can learn to open your own inner doors of perception and live consciously. Being present in your own life means merging and focusing on your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual capabilities in the present moment—the Now Moment—accepting who you are, and knowing you are never held hostage by the past or by any negative experience—unless you choose to believe you are. You always have a choice about how you will face adversity and how you will rise.

People, like mirrors, reflect to you something about yourself and sometimes the reflection is something you dislike within you. When this happens, you may feel a dislike for the other person. When you deny another person because you do not like them, you are also denying yourself the opportunity to look at yourself, to look at your own emotions, and the reason you do not like that other person. I have also discovered that there are times when the dislike of another person had little to do with me at all and it ends up as an exercise in setting boundaries or intuitively knowing someone is bad news. Other times it was about recognizing when I might be drawn into someone else's reality. This has happened with a high functioning schizophrenic and another person who was bipolar—unbeknownst to me at the time. The trip into their reality was a slow, deliberate, and methodical burn.

In a very tragic circumstance, I became good friends with a woman years ago with whom I spoke daily. We lived in different cities, and as our friendship grew, she claimed that she was getting information via automatic writing that she, on some ethereal plane, was the wife of a deceased famous singer and her youngest child was their son. Things became more bizarre and every time we talked, the light in my curio cabinet would go on, then I would turn it off, and it would go back on again. It happened so frequently while I was on the phone with her that I had to unplug it every time we spoke. I backed off a bit from talking with her and one day I got a frantic call from a relative saying she was acting strangely and she could not be found. I was still unaware about her bipolar issues. I tried calling her

repeatedly, but she was not answering her cell phone and there was not much I could do because I was so far away. Another friend of mine who also knew the woman, called me a few days later to inform me that she had killed her younger son, then killed herself. I am convinced that her delusional and obsessed belief about this famous singer drove her to commit this act so she and her son could be with him.

If you abhor another person because they represent everything vile, you can acknowledge that the vileness exists within you and every other human being on the planet. You may choose *not to be* a certain way and it is also a choice *to be* a certain way. You may not even realize that the person is reflecting something about yourself that may need to be changed or admitted. Understand that every person and relationship is doing you a service by reflecting to you your positive attributes or your shortcomings. All your relationships will mirror aspects of yourself that will give you a glimpse of who you are, both positive and negative.

Using water to represent emotion, purpose, ideals, possibilities, and probabilities, metaphorically speaking, people do not understand they have most likely never seen their own pool of water—meaning they have never explored their own emotionality or their inner environment, which makes it difficult for some people to self-reflect upon their relationships and encounters with other individuals. And, there are times when your energy simply does not jive with another person's energy—your energies are not compatible. If you know you are not compatible with another, lessen your encounters with that individual when possible.

When it comes to having anxiety or a fear of death, it is possible that the fear might be displaced. I can compare it to what is called *referred* or *reflective* pain in the body where pain is experienced in a location other than the original site of the pain. Emotionally, some people may fear failure when their fear is really about success. They may want success, but they are afraid that if they have success, they might lose it. People want life, but somehow, they are afraid to fully live life because they might lose it in some unexpected way. So, fear of death just might be a fear of life in some way. Of course, people know that death is a part of life. However, for some, maybe it is not about the fear of death, but possibly because they have anxiety or fear about living life and not knowing what to do with their life. Many people see themselves as powerless and at the mercy of life, having no control over it or command within it—life being the luck of the draw. Thinking and believing this way, it makes sense that fearing life could very well translate to having death anxiety or a fear of death.

You may be thinking that your life is just fine and there is nothing wrong with it. I would respond by suggesting to first look at your life and what fears you may have about living to what you think might be your fullest potential. And what defines fullest potential? I think it is knowing yourself and what you believe you *can be* without self-imposed limitations. It certainly is not what I, or others judge your potential to be. No one has a crystal ball to know what you do not, so your fullest potential is what you and you alone can calculate and envision for yourself at any given time, which will fluctuate depending on your emotionality. A person may feel fear because they do not know how, where, or when they will die, and what will happen to them. People know that death is a part of life, but the fear of death may subconsciously prevent them from being creative in their life and lifestyle. Therefore, they

will not really know how to live creatively, which will prevent them from living life to their idea of fullest.

Because we are human, we have all experienced trauma, pain, and disappointment. Many of us have come from homes where we have been mocked, ridiculed, and shamed by people who should have known better but could not because of their own unrecognized trauma. Embraced emotional pain can be molded into the compassionate teacher, or unacknowledged pain can be something to recoil from, an excuse to hide from ourselves and to run away from—often manifested in neuroses. Whatever path, and whenever that path is traveled, at some point, living or deceased, the medicine of our experiences will eventually lead us all to a place where we are able to embrace and honor our beingness and create greater balance. Your consciousness will always exist. You are alive now and you will always be alive in some form because your life force exists whether you have a body or not. There is no reason to fear life or death. To reiterate, there is life in life and life in death. *There is only life.* You have the choice to embrace life, and you have the choice to embrace death also. It may be a difficult concept for some, and my best advice would be to begin by *allowing* the events in your life instead of trying to resist and control them. Be aware of your thoughts and emotions and how you react and respond to people and events in your daily life. Embracing life and death is a choice. If you choose not to choose, you still have made a choice.



Death defies our wishes, hopes, and the ability to deny it—death walks with us along the shoreline of our life, always present, holding our hand throughout life, loss, and grief.

### 3

## THE ART OF DYING

*“The human soul doesn’t want to be advised or fixed or saved. It simply wants to be witnessed—to be seen, heard, and companioned exactly as it is.”*

—Parker Palmer

**W**oven within the heartbeat of life is death—death is an expression of life’s flow. Our conception, birth, and life on earth are all expressions of consciousness. Our death too, is an expression of consciousness. It is the expression of *The Whole of Existence*.

Your death journey, whether expected or unexpected, will be the most profound, intimate, sacred, and last experience you will have in physical life. In whatever way you leave this earth, ultimately you die by your own effort and life force. Your death journey is one only you can walk.

Almustafa spoke of death in the book, *The Prophet*. “...If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life. For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one. In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond; And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring. Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity...”

The timing and the manner of death of an individual are within one’s life design created prior to birth. Because every human being has had, and always will have free will, any design can be changed at any point in an individual’s life, including death. The choice to change any death trajectory, if that were to happen, takes place primarily within the subconscious. Can you consciously program how you will die? Why not? Aside from a specific death experience that you have intentionally planned for yourself before birth and is unalterable by your own design, why would it not be conceivable that you could practice, visualize, imagine, reimagine, or in a sense, program what your perfect death might look like. With consistent practice you can create many possibilities within yourself by sowing the seeds for the death experience of your choice. Even if you do not believe you can change your outcome, or believe that only God is in control of your death, at the very least you will be minimizing whatever your internal stress and fear might be about dying.

You can alter your thinking and visualizations that you may have conjured up throughout the years about all the horrible or painful ways you *do not* want to die. It is far more productive and calming to visualize a “good death” instead of thinking, speaking, and seeing in your mind all the ways you do not want to die. By focusing on the negative, you might end up creating exactly what you do not want.

The deceased have given me clear and strong indications that we can begin preparing for death years beforehand. Your subconscious preparations may stir feelings deeply within you

that will bubble to the surface. When close to your time of death, you may find yourself doing things you would normally not do such as giving your personal belongings away, cleaning, getting in touch with people you usually would not converse with, talking about planning a trip, or making your preferences known. For example, “In case something happens to me...” You might begin seeing spirits out of the corner of your eye, have premonitions, dreams about deceased friends or relatives, or dreams about dying. These days, as I get older, I sometimes have thoughts when I am deep cleaning the house, purging and culling my belongings or donating and giving items away, that I might be fulfilling my intention of not leaving a mess behind for others to clean up after I die. But I am also aware that when I go through such cleaning, redecorating, or changes to the appearance of our home, there has been a change in my consciousness.

Anyone who has worked with the dying for any length of time can affirm to the fact that we have far more control over when and how we die than we think we do. I made a statement once in a workshop how some people will wait until their loved ones are not at their bedside when they die, or they will wait for the quiet hours of the night when no one is around. The presenter, without outing me directly, addressed my comment in a general way to the class and told everyone that it was not true, but I can tell you from personal experience since then, that is *exactly* what many of the dying do.

There are multiple reasons for wanting to die alone that range from the preference of being alone to not wishing to cause additional pain and suffering for loved ones. A few months later, I found out this same person, decades ago, had left his dying father’s bedside for a couple of minutes, and in those costly moments, his father died. His retort to my comment was not about me or what I had said, but it stemmed from his guilt about not being there for those few minutes and not recognizing the signs of his dad’s last moments.

I read about a dying man on social media who would not let go according to the OP (original poster) of the situation. They were doing everything they could think of to help this man leave, which included morphine, massage, relaxing music, energy work, giving him permission to leave, essential oils, and damn it, the man would not let go. Most of the commenters assumed that he still had issues to work out and that he was holding onto things emotionally and would just not let go. What I felt from him, because he did come through while I was reading about his situation, was that the man clearly wanted to be left alone and he was going to die whenever he damn well felt like it. After 15 days, when people stopped fussing over him and thinking they could “help him cross over,” he died alone. He died on his own terms and quite stubbornly so.

Normally, a person begins to decline from their current state of illness that they are in, to what is called transition or the state of transitioning, and from transitioning, the person will slip into the state or phase of actively dying. Once the actively dying phase begins, it usually takes three to five days until the person takes their last breath.

During the two years that I made visits to a woman by the name of Barbara, I often met with her daughter Jan, which gave us the opportunity to get to know one another. Jan was emotionally fragile, felt enormously guilty about putting her mother into a nursing home, and was torn up seeing her once vibrant and independent mother ravaged by Alzheimer’s—a

disease that Barbara repeatedly stated she did not want to die from. Every time I saw Jan, she was always in a state of feeling guilty and on the verge of crying. When Barbara began her transitioning after two years of a slow but steady decline, then into actively dying, I sat vigil with her twice a day for eight days. For those eight days, Jan was frequently there at the same time I was; she felt comfortable enough with me to pour out her emotions while sitting next to her unconscious and unresponsive mother. Jan contacted out-of-state family members and those out of the country so that everyone could say their goodbyes via Jan's cell phone held up to Barbara's ear.

After eight days, Jan told me she could not take anymore. She felt at peace about her mother's death and she had successfully arranged for everyone to say their goodbyes. She made the decision to not come back to be with her mother as she died, and family members in the area did not offer to sit vigil. She could not emotionally do any more than what she had done, and she asked me not to come back. After offering to sit with her mother until she passed, I was surprised when she said no, a decision I needed to respect. Barbara died three days later, making her actively dying stage 11 days. Barbara waited eight days so Jan could express all her emotions and come to terms with her mother's death, then Barbara took her three days to die. Now, that is love.

### **Considering the State of Death and Dying**

Death is a belief and life is a belief. You believe you are alive right now. You believe you will be alive tomorrow. You believe you will awaken after going to sleep. You believe you will die at some point in your life because it happens to everyone as a part of the cycle of life. You know the old saying, "No one gets out of here alive." And when you believe that you have died, you will believe you are in the afterlife and in spirit form. If you believe that when you die, you just die and there is no afterlife, you may create and experience darkness or nothingness until you realize you are still alive, then you will create and move into a new set of circumstances. Everything is a belief, and beliefs come from emotions, and emotions come from one's consciousness. Consciousness is all of reality, all of death, all of life. Everything.

In a third reading I did for a woman in her 30s who was still concerned that her atheist, alcoholic husband who committed suicide, was stuck or in a bad place in spirit. He had already come through in the first two readings to comfort her, but this was the first time she thought he was "stuck." In his communication, he expressed that because of his beliefs as an atheist, he thought that in death he would cease to exist—he would be nothing. He created nothingness for himself until he realized he was not dead—he was still alive. With that realization, he immediately became aware of his entire beingness. Along with that realization, came an instantaneous reflection and understanding of his physical life, and he reassured his wife he was happy and free.

The birth of a child is embraced with joy and happiness, while death is usually celebrated in a more somber way in our Western culture. When faced with a terminal illness, there are many plateaus of raw emotions that one will experience, especially as functionality dwindles

and one becomes dependent on other people to care for them. I believe the biggest fear people have is suffering with a lingering and painful death, and being a burden to loved ones.

Having a terminal illness and coming to terms with your own mortality, will have its own gifts. You will have time to embrace those that you love, resolve conflicts, if that is what you want to do, say your goodbyes, and you could understand yourself and the meaning of your life in a much deeper way. You also have the opportunity to live fully while you are dying—to be present and conscious of your beingness within every moment. Emotional and spiritual transformations can happen at any point in time before the soul leaves the body—even at the last second. When you are terminal, and you have thought about some of your goals such as: having your affairs in order; what your life and your successes mean to you; loving and understanding yourself; what you have learned in life; how you have evolved; being at peace with your death; embracing the unknown; and allowing yourself to “let go;” you will be more accepting of your mortality.

I cannot stress enough how prudent it is to plan for both an anticipated death and an unanticipated death. Now is the time to claim your autonomy about how you choose to actively die, and how you choose to be cared for if you can no longer speak for yourself. For this book, which focuses on consciousness and the survival of bodily death, conscious living and dying, energy, emotions, and beliefs, I will not be addressing the ways to cope with an illness, treatments, palliative care, when to call hospice, or grief.

## **What is a Good Death?**

To die well means you need to be prepared and make it known in writing what your preferences are that will lead you to die in a natural manner and as pain free as possible; treated with dignity, respect, and your wishes being honored. Most people want to die at home or in familiar surroundings, comfortable, with friends and loved ones, and with no last-minute invasive treatments that will prolong death. This is not always the case. Because of advancements in medicine and science, the family and immediate community have had their role minimized in caring for a dying person. A large part of a doula’s role is to be an advocate to ensure that the wishes of the dying are represented and communicated to medical and non-medical teams. A doula can also be a buffer when dealing with family members with personal agendas that may want to appropriate a person’s death experience for their own good and not that of the dying person.

Ideally, a properly trained doula will give compassionate and individualized non-medical care and attention that fills in the gaps that family, caregivers, and other busy medical professionals may not be able to accommodate in all circumstances. Pain-free does not mean physical pain alone. It can also mean emotional, mental, and spiritual pain. Medical professionals are not always equipped or have the time to meet the psychological, emotional, or spiritual needs of a dying person. A doula, in tandem with hospice, remains an excellent choice for end-of-life care, no matter where you are—home, a skilled nursing facility, or hospital. Hospice can provide medical support and pain management; they have a chaplain for spiritual support, social workers, and visiting volunteers as well as volunteers to sit vigil.

Make sure you have good communication with your doctor and you are clear as to the trajectory of your illness and how you will likely decline in functionality. Understand that you will have good and bad days. Emotions will most likely be high, causing you and your caregivers to be on edge, stressed, and tired. Everyone needs to take care of themselves, whether that means rest and relaxation, small breaks, or therapy. Your mental and emotional well-being is important.

Talk about your fears or if you feel you are experiencing emotional stress, no matter how insignificant you think it might be. Many little unattended emotional stressors can culminate into one large emotional distress or breakdown. To reiterate, let people who are important to you know that you love them. Have conversations about your life and what has given you meaning, and think about how you would define your successes in life. Plan for the kind of funeral you want, if any, after-death rituals, and the disposition of your body.

### **Patty L. Remembering Her Father's "Good Death"**

"Gosh, he was maybe 83 when he passed in 2013. We were glad that it happened on Thursday, and not the next day, which was Friday the 13th. I do remember that the year was 13. Still, with that, it was a thing that we had mentioned to each other—not that any of us are particularly superstitious. But yes, my father and mother were very prepared. My dad was retired Navy, and he was on the old submarines in the Korean War, and being on the small, old, diesel submarines, they were always mindful that something could happen.

"He had friends who were on the Trident submarine that got stuck underwater and all the men died. He also told us a story about being outside of his submarine, and while he was underwater, he got caught in some of the lines and couldn't get to his dive knife to cut them. He said it was the closest to death that he had ever come. My family never shied away from talking about death, and throughout my life, he shared this story with us at different times. He told us that he was never afraid to die. I was the youngest of three children—I'm a retirement baby, so my dad was older when they had me, and throughout my entire life, my father had different health issues so it felt like there was always something going on. Not that he was a sickly old man or anything, but I do have vivid memories as a little kid of the ambulance showing up at the house.

"My fears grew as I got older because he smoked, as everybody did in his generation. He developed COPD and congestive heart failure, and by my twenties, more of the heart issues started to show up. He was in and out of the hospital and there were times they had to use paddles to bring him back or to reset the arrhythmia because of the COPD. My sister, being a nurse, was always trying to prep us for things and giving us the worst-case scenario by telling us that the end isn't good when people have respiratory issues and it's not always an easy death. So, that was something that I always had in the back of my mind. By April of 2013, it was evident that he was slowing down and he was on oxygen around the clock.

“My mom probably noticed more than the rest of us did and she continued to tell us, ‘Your father is a sick man, but everything is fine and he doesn’t need to be in the hospital.’

“I went out with friends on a Saturday night, and Sunday morning I received a call from my mom.

“In her calm voice, she said, ‘I want you kids to come over. Your father has decided and we’re going to call hospice.’

“My mom, at the time, was a hospice volunteer and my sister had been working in transplants for 20 years, so they knew how to handle and deal with things. When I arrived at their house, my dad was in good shape and I’m sure he and my mom had *the* conversation by then. He was too weak to do anything without assistance, and because of a miserable experience at a local rehab center, he said he would never go back—that was not the way he was going to go out. Therefore, it was very much on his own terms to go on hospice.

“When I arrived at the house, he was sitting in his recliner and everything seemed normal except his breathing was more labored. The whole family was together, and we weren’t weepy, but I think we all had our wheels spinning very rapidly. His physician gave the okay to go into hospice and the hospice social worker came by the house that day to do the paperwork; she was very pleased with how well adjusted we all were. We had the TV on and we had takeout fried chicken like we always did on Sundays, so it was comforting that we were doing our family tradition thing.

“While looking around at everyone, I distinctly remember thinking, ‘This is going to be the last time that all five of us will be sleeping under the same roof together.’

“It was very hard on my brother to switch roles and have to give our father a shower that night when our father was so weak. With my dad’s chronic back pain, he was usually stiff from not being able to get up and move around.

“The next morning, Monday morning, my dad was in a lot of pain. He never liked taking pain medication because it made him too sleepy, but that morning, since he was going into hospice, my sister gave him some of his pain medicine, so he was feeling better. We had some nice conversations and everything felt normal even though, you know, it seemed weird knowing that this was it. This would be the last time he would be in the house. None of us were saying any of that, but I know that was what I was feeling.

“A nice thing that happened that broke the tension was that I knew the ambulance driver. She had been a best friend from the neighborhood and I had grown up with her and her older sister.

“My father was always a very gregarious person and welcomed people, and after we said our hellos, she said, ‘Oh my gosh, I knew that I knew this house!’

“Having her with us put my father very much at ease and it took all of us out of the moment, because now we could be close to someone as we came into this. She took him out of the neighborhood the long and scenic way.

“Everyone at hospice was wonderful and much nicer than the other one—the more popular one in the city. The intake nurse was getting him all set up in his room and she was going through everything with us and told us that we can have and do pretty much anything that we wanted to do if it was not illegal or immoral, but she tweaked immoral stuff because he was in good shape. He was like a new person after the pain medication from the morning along with the morphine at hospice—this is what he needed all along.

“We settled in and we were all hanging out in this nice, pretty, non-hospital room. We had camp chairs that we brought in from our cars and over the course of the next three days, Dad was able to have family and friends come through, and he was kind of perky and alert. I brought family photos and framed pictures that I had at my house to put around the room for him since he was awake and conscious. I brought him his favorite jellybeans and gumdrops that he always had a secret stash of, and his friends brought in some scotch so we could have a drink. We were in a room that was right by the kitchen, so I brought cookies and stuff to bake while we were there so we could have something to snack on throughout the day.

“Everything was good until Wednesday while I was there with my mom. He was out of it and sleeping all throughout the day, like all day, even with us there, and I had gone outside because that was a tough day for me. I guess because reality was setting in. There was one point the day before that my mom and I sat outside and we were wondering if he was getting better because all these people that had come through the room to visit were wondering why he was even on hospice because they saw the same “good old Bob.” He was just like he had always been.

“That night, Wednesday night, more of the family gathered and around seven or eight o’clock, my nephew grabbed one of the envelopes that had a bunch of the family pictures in it and he was standing next to my dad. We were all looking through the pictures and my dad started to wake up a little bit. The more we started talking about the pictures and showing them to him, the more he perked up and acted like everything was fine and normal (his rally/last hurrah). Everyone had a good visit and we went through all the pictures, and he was lucid 100 percent. Slowly, as people left, it was just my sister and me staying. I asked my dad if he wanted us to stay over. He never wanted to put anyone out and he said he was fine with us leaving. We lingered a little bit longer that night and I think at one point, we knew we needed to say our goodbyes. I was telling him how much I loved him.

“We said to him, ‘You know, we are a family that never shied away from death, and you know you will always be with us because we are you—we have your mannerisms and you know there’s no way that you won’t be with us even when you are in any afterlife, or heaven—your spirit is always with us, because we are you, you raised us, and we are also a part of you. There’s no denying that.’

“My sister and I left, and about four o’clock that morning we received a call from hospice that he was declining. All five of us were there and we were playing Sinatra on the iPhone to have some music, and that’s when I baked the four-dozen cookies that I had there, which people who were coming in were enjoying. I also made cinnamon rolls and had everything laid out there. The kitchen was giving me something to do.

“When the doctors came in, they brought the family together to talk to us about how he was in his final stages, and we knew. We told them we started at four o’clock in the morning and now it was nine. We explained that it was okay to give him medication to keep him comfortable but not necessarily to speed things along—we didn’t want that to happen, but we understood and we were all at a good point. We told them we were not the family that’s going to be saying to do whatever you can, and that we had made peace with this and we were okay.

“We went back in and sat with him, and you know how things slow down, slow down, slow down, slow down, and you just know when they’re gone. Yeah, there’s just an energetic shift, I guess, and you just know when they are gone. My mom recited Psalm 23 and then we all got up and we gave each other a nice, good, family hug. We noticed that the windows did not open, but we fixed him up and made sure there was a roll underneath his chin so his jaw wouldn’t drop, and we did all kinds of after death preparations and then we went to get the nurse to let her know. She was amazed that we had already done some preparation. We had said our goodbyes and had our moment of peace with everything, and we were ready to proceed and go on. It was just so nice that it wasn’t the horrible experience that I had always built up in my mind where it was going to be in a super bright hospital room with buzzers and things going off and him hooked up to a million different things. We were so thankful for a good and peaceful death, and the hospice facility was so beautiful, and everyone there was so kind.”

## **The Last Hurrah**

A dying person’s last hurrah, also referred to as an end-of-life rally, the final goodbye, or *terminal lucidity*, which is a term coined by the German biologist, Michael Nahm. The last hurrah can be very confusing for the family sitting with their dying loved one who is clearly in the active phase of dying, but then has a sudden awakening, if you will. Their life force is surging, which increases their energy and is often accompanied by clarity of mind, even in someone with Alzheimer’s. The family might think their loved one is getting better or a miracle has happened, which only offers false hope. If loved ones do not understand that this is a natural process, lifesaving measures might be requested when the person resumes dying that will ultimately prolong death and cause suffering to the dying person.

There was a woman named Rose that I made visits to over a few months. Several times she was either sleeping, having lunch, getting a shower, or on the verge of dying. On one visit, I found her awake with one of the nursing home’s CNAs feeding her lunch. She spoke Spanish and knew very little English, but she knew enough curse words in English to make

her sentiments known. Interestingly, many times over two months, she would make a rapid decline, slip into actively dying, would rally, then be fine for a couple of weeks. The last time I went to visit with her, her daughters were there and Rose was actively dying—again. She was in a semi-conscious state and speaking in Spanish. Her daughters told me that she had been speaking to deceased loved ones all day and her current conversation was with her father as the two of them were sitting at the family’s dining room table having coffee.

My conclusion is that when the actively dying phase is in effect, it does not always mean the individual will die in a few days or hours. As with Rose, I believe she is an example of how the dying process can expand over a couple of months. In this type of approach to dying, an individual will rally, then be fully aware of reality, and then go back into dying, then repeating this process a few times before death. This back and forth is where their spirit, their energy, or their essence is experiencing both realities—physical reality and the death reality, and it may seem as if they are making up their mind as to what is best for them concerning their departure from this life and their immediate destination in nonphysical life. I also believe, as an individual oscillates, they are, in a sense, practicing and preparing for death in its final stage—if that is what they want to do. Death is personal, individualized, and based on an individual’s beliefs systems, culture, and their emotional, psychological, and spiritual makeup.

There are definite signs that someone is close to imminent death; however, every person will die in their own unique way. There is not a specific order or time limit that everyone follows; it is not a cookie cutter process. Rose died the next day.

## Nearing Death

While declining and moving into the transitioning phase, the dying person has begun to refuse food, show signs of cognitive decline, anxiety, agitation, may move in and out of delirium, and may begin picking at the air, their clothes, or their sheets. Additionally, picking is common among people with dementia and Alzheimer's, so the action is not solely dedicated as a sign of end of life. People may experience deathbed visions where they see or talk to deceased friends, relatives, pets, religious figures, or spiritual guides. Seemingly incoherent or delirious, the dying may talk about things in the past or they may say things out of character for them, whether they be loving remarks or hateful remarks. A friend told me a story about a nun she knew well who was deeply devout and a caring and compassionate woman. During the nun's transitional phase though, she ranted on and on for days spewing obscenities, which amused some and embarrassed others that were around her. Personally, I give her kudos for being unfiltered and just maybe having a *last hurrah* by unfurling and shedding the vestments of Catholic guilt.

I once heard the analogy that dying is like unplugging a fan. It goes from running at top speed to slowly winding down to a complete stop. Once a person enters the actively dying phase, the body begins to shut down and the awareness of the present physical reality starts to shrink—the person begins to go within and eventually becomes unconscious. If you are in the presence of someone dying, it is important that you educate yourself about the dying process so you can be *present* for one of the most profound experiences of life. If you are not familiar with how the body shuts down during the natural processes of death, you may end up in a panic and calling 911. As a person is transitioning into actively dying, it is the time to stay calm and understand you are in a very sacred space—not just in the physical space and in the spiritual sense, but you are now connected to what I call the *death space or death energy*, because you are present, focused, and companioning another human being to the threshold of their death.

The signs can begin one to three months before death. Not everyone will follow this blueprint, as we are all unique.

- The person may become withdrawn and will begin sleeping more. Sleeping will eventually take up most of the day. A calm atmosphere and gentle touch are important. When you need to do something for the person, speak in a normal tone and tell them who you are and what you will be doing as you care for them. Since the dying person can hear you, be careful what you say in their presence. Make sure you are providing comfort and ease, and limiting visitors to minimize confusion. As the nervous system is shutting down oxygen levels will be lower.
- It is natural for an individual to stop eating and drinking—let them indicate what they need. This is not a cause for alarm as the dying do not feel hunger as you and I do, and they are not starving. As the body slows down with the changes that it is going through, changes also occur in the digestive system. As the desire for food and liquids dwindle, it is important to keep the mouth and lips moist. The person might like small ice chips if they are conscious or semiconscious, but let them decide. If a

person cannot speak, they will find a way to let you know if they do not want to eat. They may bite down on the utensil, spit out the food, turn their head away, or clamp their teeth and lips shut.

- Incontinence—the elderly may experience incontinence before a significant decline but, while in the last days and hours there can be a greater loss of control of bodily functions because the muscles are relaxing more. With fewer liquids, there will be less urine and it will probably be darker with a pungent odor. Make sure it is specified in the Advance Care Directives if the person wants a catheter used. It is important to maintain the dignity of the dying person by keeping them comfortable, clean, and dry.
- The skin color may look pale or a light gray.
- The hands and feet will be cooler to the touch because of the lack of blood flow, and the lips and fingernails may appear bluish. This is normal.
- As the hypothalamus shuts down, the brain will cause the body temperature to fluctuate and the individual may experience a fever or may feel cold. The fever is not fighting an infection unless it is sepsis or another type of infection. An over-the-counter pain medication will help if the fever is too high and if the person is chilled, warm blankets can be used. It may be appropriate at this point for a short gentle massage of the hands or feet for comfort and temporary aid in blood flow.
- Anxiety and restlessness can be caused by the lack of blood flow, which means less oxygen to the brain. The individual may also be in physical or emotional pain. There are medications to help with this, which should be discussed with the doctor or hospice nurse.
- If the person talks about seeing dead relatives or has conversations with them, believe it. Do not argue or try to convince the person they are wrong—I have seen this a lot. Go along when there is talk about packing for a trip, finding their keys, they need to catch a flight, or get on a train. This is all very real for the person.
- As the dying person becomes less conscious, the jaw will drop, the mouth will open, and there will be rapid, labored, and a cyclical pattern of breathing called Cheyne-Stokes, commonly referred to as guppy breathing. A pool of saliva and mucus will gather at the back of the throat and cause a gurgling sound, which is called the “death rattle.” It sounds uncomfortable, but the individual is not choking or in pain. The sound can panic some people, but realize it is normal. There are medications to dry it up, but the dryness may cause a feeling of heaviness in the lungs causing discomfort for the dying person. This should be a personal choice written in the Advance Care Directive but if it is not stated, the family should make that decision after being educated on the pros and cons of the medication. It might help if the person is placed on his or her side to drain the saliva.
- Mottling of the skin occurs when the heart is not sufficiently pumping blood so the skin becomes marbled looking, typically on the extremities.

- Speak with sincerity if you want to say goodbye; there is no proper or improper way when expressing your heartfelt feelings at someone's deathbed, and saying your goodbye will not affect the dying process. It may be preferable to say what you need to say while the person is still conscious but if it cannot be done while they are alert, they still can hear and understand you in an unconscious state.
- As a person comes closer to death, there will be more breaks in the breathing cycle, known as apnea (still part of Cheyne-Stokes breathing). In the beginning, there will be more rapid breathing, but it will gradually turn to longer periods of apnea until the apnea becomes final.

All forms of life know how to die. Concerning humans and other sentient beings, dying is within our genetic makeup. The stage of actively dying is the final phase of physical life and plays out in the most beautifully orchestrated and stunning dance. The self-regulating organism that we call the body, which has a general count of 78 organs and multiple systems that keep us alive, is its own consciousness. Trillions of individual cells, blood, individual organs, and every system in the body has its own consciousness. Our skin, which is the largest organ, and everything that comprises it, is its own consciousness. The miracle of the physical body and the beauty of birth and death are unparalleled.

Because death is individualized, every person dies in his or her own unique way. Death has many appearances and many different faces to it that work *within* a general framework for how the body will die, how a dying person will react, and what happens to the body as it ceases to exist. Every organ and system work in harmony and balance, knowing what to do. There are bodily patterns that make it *appear* as if the body shuts down one part at a time and in a linear fashion, but the truth is, the energy of the body will work as a whole creating energetic variations.

I have sat vigil with individuals who did not exhibit the typical checklist of signs and predictors that death was close. One woman who comes to mind baffled the hospice nurse and several staff nurses, as her signs were all over the place—it was almost like she was doing things backwards. It was so weird. We were certain she had minutes to live when her apnea was far greater than her breaths, and then suddenly she would jump back to rapid breathing.

The mottling of her skin would be prominent then disappear only to reappear an hour later, and her fever would spike, then drop, then spike again. It was as if the common predictors for one's last hours were being shuffled like a deck of cards. All we could do was make her comfortable and to ride the wave of her own plan to exit this world. She was one of my favorite people at the nursing home and died peacefully. I stayed as the hospice CNA bathed her, changed her clothes, combed her hair, and placed a rolled-up towel under her chin so her jaw would be closed when rigor mortis set in. Sadly, many seniors are left alone in skilled nursing facilities often forgotten by family or without any family to care for them.

The 1843 popular novella, *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens, and the 1938 film, which was the second adaptation, you might recall that the former business partner of Ebenezer Scrooge, Jacob Marley, who died seven years before, appeared to Scrooge on

Christmas eve to warn him that he would be visited by three other spirits that night. Jacob Marley, bound by chains, cash boxes, and ledgers, walked the earth in perpetual purgatory for his greed, lack of compassion for his fellow man, and his social indifference. If you notice, Marley has a piece of cloth underneath his chin that framed his face and tied at the top of his head indicating and reflecting the practice of that era to keep the jaw closed after death.

There are many people in the healing arts, including doulas and other death workers who offer and incorporate alternative practices for end-of-life pain management such as massage, meditation, guided visualization, energy work, essential oils, and aromatherapy. If one can travel, there are treatment centers that use micro dosing of psychedelic plant medicines and LSD that are administered by a doctor under a controlled environment to treat conditions such as unresolved trauma, PTSD, and end of life fears. Treatment centers can be found in the U.S. and around the world. Modalities in and outside of the U.S. should be practiced with proper licensure, certification, education, and training, and nothing should be performed on the ill or the dying without their expressed consent.

Unless a person has made their preferences perfectly clear in their directive, or if the dying person is still in a conscious state and can give permission as to whether they want essential oils on their body, aroma therapy, massage, energy work, or any other alternative therapeutics, it is my belief that the unresponsive person or an actively dying person should be left alone. If you do not know if they want essential oils or aromas in the room, don't use them. The closer a person gets to his or her last minutes, it may be a distraction so you may want to hold the person's hand instead. If you do not know if they want natural light coming in from a window, keep the lighting subdued. If the person becomes agitated from hearing music, don't play it.

Using an essential oil on the top of the head where the crown chakra is located does nothing to help or direct the soul to leave from that energy point; it is not the "best" exit point for the soul and it only makes the hair oily. The scent of oils, candles, perfume, and touching the body, unless it is necessary for cleaning and comfort, may interfere with the death process the person is experiencing. At times, and with certain people, it can lead the dying individual to stick around a bit longer in physical reality, which would disrupt his or her journey, and that would not be a good thing.

In our Western culture, if someone wants to do energy work on a dying person, say to assist the function of the chakras or to help the dying leave their body, realize it does nothing to affect the outcome of the natural flow and movement of death. Other than making the energy worker feel good about themselves and what they are doing, the individual does not have the power to interject their will or beliefs into the dying person's death experience. Energy "healers" do not heal people—they provide their energetic talent to the person they are working on for that person to use the energy as their body sees fit. Permission must always be obtained. I understand that rooted beliefs about death rituals and customs of other cultures around the world can be vastly different from our own, but that remains an entirely different conversation.

Dying is a process where the body slowly shuts down and it can appear that chakras are slowing down one after another in some kind of order. What is really taking place is that all the energy points throughout the body, being consciousness, know when the time is right to cease working, just like all the other parts of the human body. They know when the timing is right to fade, and they all diminish in their own proper time. The energy points all work together in communion as they perform with differing intensities and vigor. The body's intelligence knows what it needs to do and it knows what it is doing—I cannot stress that enough. Other than comfort care, the dying do not want or need anything because they are intensely and laser focused on the process of leaving. This is paramount for them.

Another popular belief I do not buy into is that hearing is the last sense to go. It is true the dying are fully aware of sounds around them at all times. They hear you while dying and can hear you while taking their last breath. They also know when they are touched, they know when they are given a foul-tasting medication, they still have a sense of smell, and even when their eyes are cloudy and staring into the ethers, they are aware of you. I strongly believe all the senses are functional *to some degree* until the point of death. In death, you take your energetic senses with you, and those senses become more enhanced than they ever were in physical life. In death, you remove yourself from this life and become brand new, or reborn if you prefer. As an individual's soul finds him or herself in their new surroundings and being nonphysical, they will still have all their senses within them. You have a hint of this truth from your dreams—while dreaming, you continue to touch, taste, smell, hear, see, and communicate telepathically.

### **What Happens at the Moment of Death?**

Ah, the age-old question. Many people believe that the soul, the energy, the essence, or the spirit of a person will lift or float out of the body, or leave through the crown chakra. Not once have I ever witnessed the dying lifting, floating, or funneling out of the top of the head to leave their body. The belief that the soul exits only by way of the crown chakra at the top of the head makes no sense at all—I think that is pure nonsense. And, never have I experienced any of these things when people have shared their passing with me after death.

When sitting vigil for a dying person, they may go in and out of their body while in an unresponsive state. Their consciousness is within the body, and then in another second, they are standing next to their body. The same happens in vivid astral projection dreams—an individual will just find themselves outside of their body. When an individual dies, to some it might seem as though the soul is lifting out—it might *seem* that way. What happens is, there is a disconnect that takes place between the soul and the physical body. In this disconnect, the only thing that is recognizable is that the soul has already left seconds to a femtosecond before the last breath is taken. Upon leaving the body, and without the soul's participation, the body knows how and when to shut down and let go of physical life. The soul, even a femtosecond before death, is already in a different dimension where that individual decides if they need self-evaluation, self-determination, or help with awareness of his or her new surroundings and new form. Period. The individual will still be aware of the entire death process because, even though the soul has left, the brain is still communicating to all systems

that it is dying. The individual will continue to experience the entire death process even when the soul has left. This also applies to unanticipated deaths or sudden deaths.

And if you are wondering, I have never seen or experienced a silver cord—in my experience, there is not an energetic cord that connects a person’s essence to the body—you know where you belong.

In my backyard, I have about 20 small solar lights all around the yard and in flowerpots. The ones that only cost a dollar. At night, their light is strong and bright and the yard looks like something out of a child’s storybook. As the night progresses, the lights begin to dim and they lose their power one by one—not all at the same time. By the time I am up, which is around 4:00 a.m., most of the lights are out but a few are still well lit, and some flicker on and off doing their best to fulfill their purpose. This is how the body shuts down because death is a process and everything happens in its own progression and timing. A person once mentioned to me that some psychics have told her that when death is so *fresh* it is *hard* to pick-up on the fact that they have passed. I have been in contact with people within minutes after their death, so I know this belief is not true. There are many psychics out there who are good people, but many times they give information from their own beliefs and their own consciousness and the information is not that real or accurate and, not all psychics are mediums. All I can say is, when you bake a loaf of bread, and you take it out of the oven and it is *fresh*, is it *hard* to eat? Or can you eat it?

There is a belief that when a person dies a traumatic death, they can be “stuck” or “earthbound.” No. No one is stuck or confused for any length of time about their death. However, the soul can be in a *temporary* state of confusion or feel a lack of purpose, only at times, but at the same time, the soul will always have complete awareness of being out of the physical body and in his or her new form and new surroundings. If there is confusion, it will quickly dissipate because there is no time, and there will not be what we would consider to be an extended period of, “Oh my God, am I dead? Am I alive? Am I dead? How did I die? What is going on here? Where am I?”

Some of the living, especially those in New Age healing professions, feel the need to help someone “into the light.” Most people think the light is a Christ-like or God-like experience, the stairway to heaven, or something of that nature. Many individuals who have had a Near Death Experience (NDE), which is really a death experience (you have died and come back to life), have experienced the tunnel/light. This is a real and valid experience for them. Absolutely. Regardless of common and collective death experiences, at the core, it is a belief that this is what happens when we die. Not only an individual belief, it is also a deeply held belief that has become a truth en masse.

Does everyone experience the tunnel or the light? No. It still boils down to what you believe, what your expectations are, and what you want to create for yourself at the moment of death. In a reading, a relative of my client had died alone from exposure. I asked the deceased person if she had anyone to greet her once she passed and she told me, “I’ve died so many times I knew what to do. I always wondered what it was like to fly like an eagle, so that’s what I did.” She then gave me a visual of her flying above a small river that wound its way through miles of a forest. She later met up with her friends and family.

In all seriousness, and I am not being flippant about profound life-altering death experiences, but, for example, if you experienced yourself and Jesus riding motor scooters down a lighted hallway and through a door into a garden that Jesus said was heaven, that would be your experience, formed from your beliefs, and that would be your truth. And, when you came back to life and announced to the world what you experienced, many people would be in awe and believe that as fact and so it would be true for them also. Then there would be many more NDEs of riding a motor scooter down the lighted hallway through a door into heaven. You, see?

Therefore, when people have a death experience and they go through a tunnel toward the light, numerous people do meet Jesus the Christ and even God, because this is in their belief structure. This is something that they believe they will do, and this is what will happen to them upon their death. An explanation, which is the one I like the most, is that *the tunnel of light is, in fact, the individual*. When you die, you return to yourself. Of course, you do. As you embrace the light when you die, you are meeting yourself, embracing yourself, acknowledging yourself, understanding yourself, and becoming more of yourself. So, everyone will have their own belief, they will believe what they need to believe, and they will then create it.

The only experience that is to be had is the experience about, of, and within the individual who died. This is the experience. No one needs assistance to move into the light or anything else. If they choose to remain or “hang around” for a time in their previous physical reality, they will know when the timing is proper for them move on, but they are not actually moving on, they become more of what they are, and then they will be in a new dimension of reality. Nevertheless, there is no confusion as we might think of it, because there is always awareness of what is going on, what is being created, and by whom. The dying person knows what they are doing and there is no confusion about it. Again, the soul will merely find itself outside of the physical body.

At the precise moment of death, all realities immediately become apparent. Immediately. You have realization of your past physical reality, your upcoming nonphysical reality, and all other realities that lie inside and outside of yourself. Meaning, that when death occurs, the fabric of reality will change and the individual who has just died will be fully aware, completely aware of physical reality *and* nonphysical reality at the same time. The soul will be more aware of nonphysical reality, because this is where the soul will be, but the awareness and memory of physical reality will still be with them. Everything begins within, but there is also the without, and that is the reality that the individual had lived as a physical human being. All realities will be around them and they will have an awareness of all of them simultaneously. *The dying person will create whatever reality is best for them to be in at that time, in their immediate state of being.*

Without going into string theory and what theoretical scientists believe about dimensions, a simple analogy would be that one individual might choose dimension number four, another individual might choose dimension number 12, another might choose dimension number 48. Keeping things simple, there are trillions of dimensions, and all realities are around you and they are not numbered—humans do that. When you die, you will come to

realize that they exist *within you*, allowing you the choice to create whatever circumstance you feel is best for you. You have the creative freedom and power to be yourself without limitations. The adjustment to being nonphysical can be instantaneous, or for some people, they may need a “helper” to be with them as they adjust, usually because of inflexible beliefs they had in physical life.

## **After Death, Home Funerals, and Green Burials**

It is important to have a plan in place for what you are going to do after your death or a loved one's death. If the death of a loved one occurs in the home, contact the doctor or hospice team to call "time of death." The nurse will usually remove any tubes, immediately remove medications, and make plans for equipment to be picked up. It is not unusual for a family member or a visiting friend with an addiction issue to have sticky fingers when it comes to pain medication for the dying person, so keep a close record of medications that have been used and what is left over. Before you call the funeral home, if that is your plan, you have the right to spend time with your loved one. You have the right to bathe and dress the body, to spend time reminiscing and telling stories, or perform any type of meaningful ritual. When you are ready, call the funeral home. Check your state laws for how long you can wait before the body needs to be removed from the home.

For many years now, people have been feeling more empowered to exercise their rights to after-death care of a loved one in the home. The greatest resource to accomplish this goal and exercise your right to a home funeral is to contact the "National Home Funeral Alliance." It is a non-profit that offers everything you need to know about home funerals. They educate on health and safety, what a home funeral is, how to prepare for one, cooling techniques, and so much more. They have resources and a directory to find Home Funeral Guides, Death Doulas, Celebrants, and state-by-state requirements for a home funeral.

In Pope Francis' *Encyclical Letter* on man's effect on the environment and the destruction man has caused, not only to the earth, but to our fellow man, he implored humanity to wake up. Within his document that was addressed "... to all people about our common home," he embraced green burials and, surprisingly, many Catholic cemeteries in the U.S. now offer green burial options. Green burial is an umbrella term for different types of ethical and environmentally friendly and sustainable burials and cremation such as hybrid, natural, conservation, and human composting.

He stated very matter-of-factly, "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish. Industrial waste and chemical products utilized in cities and agricultural areas can lead to bioaccumulation in the organisms of the local population, even when levels of toxins in those places are low. Frequently no measures are taken until after people's health has been irreversibly affected."

Following his 2015 encyclical, Pope Francis wrote *Laudate Deum*—his response to our climate crisis. Published on October 4, 2023, he wrote, "With the passage of time, I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point."

We can all take an active role by considering the following burial options, which will have less of a negative impact on the environment.

**Hybrid Cemetery:** A traditional cemetery that offers chemical free natural burials without vaults and uses biodegradable wood caskets and cotton shrouds.

**Natural Burial:** The body is interred directly into the ground for natural decomposition without any harmful embalming fluid or other preservatives.

**Conservation Cemetery:** A conservation cemetery fulfills the requirements for a natural burial, but it must also be a nonprofit or run by a government agency. Visit the website of Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery, a protected area located near Gainesville, Florida, to understand what a conservation cemetery is about—there are only a few in the U.S.

**Human Composting:** In 2019 Gov. Jay Inslee signed legislation approving human composting in the state of Washington. The eco-friendly alternative to burial and cremation allows the organic reduction of a body to decompose in a few weeks in a mixture of soil, woodchips, alfalfa, and straw in a moisture and temperature controlled rotating container. The law went into effect in May 2020.

**Alkaline Hydrolysis:** A process also referred to as resomation, aquamation, or water cremation that uses heat, water, pressure, and chemicals for decomposition. According to the Cremation Association of North America, the process once common for the cremation of pets now has fourteen states and two provinces that have legalized the process for humans. There are pending legislations in several other states.

**Mushroom Suit:** Jae Rhim Lee developed the Infinity Burial Project and the hybrid mushroom suit that uses fungi to quickly decompose a body. During the metabolic decay, the fungi will also remediate any toxins a person accumulates during their lifetime, which will transform the body into nutrient-rich soil. Lee has a TED Talk from 2011 and suits may be ordered from Coeio.com.

**Body Farm:** A body farm is a place of research first conceived by anthropologist William M. Bass in 1987 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. It is a place where the decomposition of a human corpse is scientifically studied under different situations and circumstances from time of death to decay. Florida has the only sub-tropic body farm. Other body farms are in Texas, Tennessee, North Carolina, Illinois, and Colorado.

**Body Donation:** The donation of a body to medical schools or scientific research.

**Cryogenics:** Deeply grieving family members may choose this method hoping for future cures of diseases, but it will not preserve the soul. The soul or the person's essence leaves the body at death. The future rewards of freezing a body remains science fiction, but we can place it in the realm of possibility. We have no idea where science will lead us in the far, far, future. I have deep compassion for the grieving who choose cryogenics, but does the knowledge that a loved one, frozen in a container, offer comfort and hope or will it hamper the natural grieving process and acceptance of death?

## **Karma and Reincarnation**

The understanding that people have today about Karma is that it means, “What goes around, comes around.” They believe it is a cosmic punishment and reward system that propagates the idea that whatever you do to someone else, whether negative or positive, will come back to you, often more powerfully than what you dished out. The theory of Karma existed in India before the arrival of Buddha and is known as the law of, and relationship to, cause and effect. Briefly, the unknown cause or causes of misery and delight, heaven and hell, and all circumstances in between, can be the result of not only past and present actions in this life, but also actions taken in a previous incarnation.

What works for me is that Karma is simply the opportunity and the chance at perfection, *not being perfect*, but perfection, which leaves room for change. This is why reincarnation exists. People will have their chosen number or clusters of physical lives and physical deaths. With my clients, I use the analogy of a cluster of grapes to think about the concept of personal cycles and patterns of physical lifetimes. People will reincarnate multiple times, and sometimes, when the need arises, a soul will repeat the same circumstances in life over and over again with the same group of people to learn and understand more about themselves, a situation, or a repeated pattern. We choose to play different roles within a cluster or cycle of lives that we have designed and made agreements about. We play these differing roles for each other using the same energy of past lives over and over again, for whatever we need to experience. When a soul is ready and desires to experience different things, they will create a new physical life and then reincarnate. A soul can experience either the same things, or new and different things in a different framework with modified perspectives, or in a better way without being judgmental.

This is how I choose to understand Karma—the opportunity to live many lives, a cycle of lives to achieve any type of perfection, or for the evolvment, knowledge, and understanding of any situation or pattern a soul feels the need to perfect—not to become perfect, but to reach the optimal level of perfection for any situation or pattern. If you do not believe in reincarnation, that is up to you. Logically, it makes sense to me. How would I explain reincarnation to an atheist? I would use the simple and basic analogy about a perennial plant that flowers, which will bloom in the spring and when the season is over, the leaves and flowers will die. The core of the plant, the plant’s roots or the bulb remains in the ground until the next spring, and then it comes to life again in a new and beautiful way. And, the cycle continues. There are many annual flowers that only last for one season. There are many annual thinkers in the world who believe that there is only one life and no afterlife. What is the point of having only one physical life if that life is reduced to a coincidental biological event? What about all your experiences, having emotions, and maturing—even evolving?

The world is full of people who commit heinous acts that violate the lives of others mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. We would like to believe there is a special place in hell for vile people and that God will no doubt judge them harshly. It would anger and offend scores of people to think that every soul departing this life will be met with love, peace, and freedom. We are *all* met with love, peace, and freedom. If you conclude you will

be going to hell or will wander around in purgatory for eternity due to past deeds or perceived sins you committed, you will create those circumstances if you *believe* that is what you deserve, until you decide to create a different circumstance for yourself.

I understand fully how it can offend one's sensibilities and it seems as though violators, perpetrators, and predators get a free pass from a welcoming all-loving God. When you are dead and you are a spirit, and call it what you would like to call it, you have choices when preparing for another life in this world. You can design an existence where in one life you may be poor and starving, another life you may be a prodigy or savant, in another life you may be a killer, yet in another life you may become the victim of a killer. You may also choose to experience joy, peace, and a fulfilling life. The only way to understand poverty and hunger is to live it; the only way to understand humility, empathy, and compassion is to live a life where it can be understood. The only way to understand and know grief and loss in the most raw and vulnerable way is to live it. To know heartbreak, betrayal, judgment, success, failure, love, and all the rest, is to live it—you must live it and experience it to become it.

When faced with adversity in life, when you are in the middle of a challenging, violent, or traumatic experience, you do the best you can with what you have to work with at the time to survive. Hurt people act out and hurt others. No one would consciously choose horrific circumstances to experience—many situations seem to be random acts or a matter of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. That can be said of positive experiences also. Many people question their faith in God when bad things happen in this world and wonder why He would allow horrific circumstances to happen to innocent people.

A belief that we create our reality and we design circumstances for the evolvement of our soul and make agreements pre-birth, is not victim blaming as some critics believe. Understanding the concept that we design our own experiences individually and collectively in life is not saying or implying that everything that happens to an individual is their fault and they are to blame for their lot in life. There is no fault. There is no blame. There is only experience. We are here in this reality and when life happens, we are in the thick of the human experience and we respond the best way we know how. The reason and outcome of the experience is personal and intimate for each individual and may not be fully known or understood until death.

In 2019 an unremorseful, self-proclaimed philosopher/scientist and founder of a cult-like multilevel marketing organization for human potential development, was convicted of multiple federal crimes. Sentenced to 120 years, the charges included sex trafficking, racketeering, and fraud. One of the core concepts of the self-help organization centered around that no one is a victim because everyone creates their own reality, and an individual is to blame for anything that happens to them. Using philosophical platitudes to put on the air of being a great thinker, he used misogynistic doctrines to manipulate, dominate, and control women into believing that if they were victimized, it was their fault and they were persistently encouraged to believe they were *not* victims.

Brainwashing and indoctrination were used to exploit the women, which ultimately led to a secret sorority of a master-slave relationship and the branding of the founder's initials near their mons pubis—the women falsely believed they were becoming stronger and more

empowered. The organization nauseatingly twisted, deformed, disparaged, and mocked concepts, spiritual teachings, therapies, and ideas, some with ancient origins, that centered around the nature of reality, emotions, and finding one's true Self. Intuition was trampled on and what was taught and done with these teachings were twisted and used in a sick way to keep followers dependent on the founder. Anyone, anywhere, anytime, can take any positive, self-empowering philosophy and use it in an ugly and manipulative way.

There are many horrific and terrifying ways people hurt one another that cause great suffering. It is callous, insensitive, and lacks compassion to tell a person who is in pain that they brought their circumstances on themselves to learn a lesson, it is God's plan, or everything happens for a reason. We have a form of amnesia that allows us to experience life in the raw, in the here and now, in this organic reality. Just because people may believe in prebirth planning and design, it should not negate compassion.

Life can be messy, tricky, convoluted, and many people rise from harsh circumstances to become advocates and activists. One person, one voice, one shocking event can deeply affect people and usher in change that the world is in great need of. Human beings have created everything beautiful and everything ugly in all of society. Collectively, *we are responsible* for the state of the world and condition of the earth. Let us welcome change to create a more sustainable, peaceful, and just existence for all. We can do better and be greater.

In nonphysical realities where we see ourselves with greater clarity, we can experience a life review when we die if we feel the need to or believe that it is a matter of course to have one—not everyone needs a life review, and many believe God will be the judge of one's life. Maybe, just maybe, you will be your own judge and jury. Whatever the circumstance and whatever you choose to believe, there are those in the afterlife whose job it is to assist anyone in need, often referred to as angels, guides, or helpers. Everything is about experience and what one does with their life experiences. It is all about the continued evolvment of one's soul. Fundamentally, you evolve in life and you evolve in death. Always.

*“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”*

—Maya Angelo



We are temporarily living a mortal life in an organic and physical reality. The two hands clasping over the dying person symbolizes our life in spirit and our life in the physical—united as one. Bodily death is not a separate state of being because life and death flow as one. There is only, and always, life.

## 4

**DYING WELL WITH AN END-OF-LIFE DOULA**

*“People living deeply have no fear of death.”*  
—Anais Nin

Speaking from my heart about working as a death doula and finding the words to convey how deeply and profoundly companioning the dying has affected me, tends to leave me speechless at times. The dying have honored me by allowing me to walk beside them during the most intimate, personal, and individualized journey they experience in life. It is my hope that the dying know how deeply I honor their lives, their deaths, and the gentle wisdom they have bestowed upon me.

My combined work as a medium and death doula has brought me to a greater understanding of how people approach death. Death work is not for everyone as it is truly a calling. A death doula must be willing to be emotionally available, have a deep capacity for compassion, and the ability to be nonjudgmental. Anyone who is companioning the dying needs to enter the sacred space of the dying person as an open vessel, leaving at the door personal beliefs, prejudices, politics, and especially their religious, spiritual, and philosophical leanings. It is all about the dying person and *their* death journey.

The deceased often return with after-death communications and share details with me about their death experiences and the meaning of their life, which has presented me with a broader view of how individuals uniquely approach their death and what we have to look forward to in the afterlife.

Friends and family who have died before you may be with you before your death and during your death, whether it is to comfort you in your process or to accompany you as you transition to your new reality. You may also have ancestors, pets, or anyone you have had an emotional connection with waiting for you on what we refer to as “the other side,” but really, there is no veil to cross as many people believe, and there is no other side. Your death will be as easy as walking into another room. You will leave one reality and step into another. You will die in your own way just as you have lived your life in your own way. You are an individual who will die in an individualized way based on your personal beliefs and expectations about death. No matter how you construct your private death journey, you can trust that you will not be alone unless you choose to be.

Death itself is not painful, and death is not a failure of life; it is a part of life and a continuation of life in a different form. Embracing impending death can be a time of transformation by awakening emotionally and spiritually—the opportunity for an emotional or spiritual transformation exists even at one’s last breath. If you are ill and have accepted your mortality, you may experience a sense of peace and a willingness to make amends, bridge broken relationships, or explore the deeper meaning of your life—or not. I have seen people dig their heels in and remain the jerks they have always been in their adult life, and I

have watched adult children buckle down on long held resentments and hurts, saying aloud to their actively dying parent while checking their watch, “How long is this going to take?”

I wish you could see through my eyes, even for a moment, because you would then understand the extraordinary beauty there is in the last hours of the death process. Witnessing the final moments of life when the last intake of breath in this world has been taken is a sacred experience. As the body is discarded, the person’s essence, their soul, their spirit, can often be felt, and sometimes seen. The beauty of someone leaving this world is so profound and impactful that the emotions I feel being a witness to a person’s death and renewal is beyond words.

## **What is a Doula?**

The original meaning of doula comes from an ancient Greek word that means *female slave*. Other variations with the same meaning include *bondwoman* from Middle English, and the French word *odalisque*, derived from Turkish-Ottoman.

The word doula has taken on a new definition since the 1960s with the rise of birth doulas. Birth doulas support a woman in a non-medical way during her pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum. The birth doula also supports the mother mentally, emotionally, and, if appropriate, spiritually, especially during the birth process. In the same vein, the death doula or end-of-life doula supports the dying person mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, if that is what the person wishes, during the individual’s end-of-life journey or, their birthing into the afterlife. By reimagining and restructuring the way we die, breaking taboos of talking about our own mortality and openly discussing the fear of death, autonomy is placed back into the hands of the individual to plan for their death and the disposition of their body.

As we become more death aware, even doulas tend to sometimes soften or skirt the impact of the words death and die. Some people do not want to be associated with the name doula because of the ancient connotations of the word—a non-issue in my opinion. However, some people like to take on the energy of something that does not even belong to them nor has any relevance to them. Because of that, I have seen some New Age doula descriptions that are so airy fairy and ethereal sounding, it confuses me as to what the person does and what they are trying to convey to the public. Generically, you may hear such monikers as death midwife, soul midwife, life transitioner, thanadoula, death coach, or psychopomp.

Regardless of how a person brands him or herself, the intention, purpose, and focus remain the same—respecting the autonomy, wishes, and the advocacy for the dying person by creating a dignified, peaceful, comfortable, and meaningful death in the final months, days, and hours of life.

As a doula, I have supported, companioned, advocated for the dying, and supported families and caregivers by providing guidance and much needed respite. Certified end-of-life doulas are trained in all aspects of non-medical care for the dying and many doulas incorporate other services into their private practice such as being a life celebrant or a home funeral guide.

Having a death doula provides an extra layer of care for the dying person that fills in the gaps that can be overlooked because of the emotional and physical exhaustion that caregivers often experience—especially as the dying person declines in physical and mental functionality. A doula will also maintain a steady, focused, individualized, and personalized care for the dying and their family whether the dying person is on hospice at home, a hospice care center, in a skilled nursing facility, or in a hospital. Doulas can close the gap when the hospice nurse, social worker, or chaplain may not be able to respond in a timely manner.

### **The Synchronicity of Alan's Death**

Unfortunate events can happen in hospice care, home care, in a hospital, or nursing facility that may seem untimely, unfortunate, or tragic, but turn out to be a well-orchestrated phenomenon. Such was Alan's death. It may be hard for some to believe or understand, but we have more command over our death experience than you may think.

Alan was my first patient when I began volunteering with hospice and I was with him for six months. He was in his mid-sixties and had Alzheimer's, which began 10 years prior and with our first meeting, he and I made an immediate connection. He was unable to speak, ate soft foods, his legs were in constant motion, and he was unchangingly faithful to picking at his bed covers—a common practice of patients with severe dementia or Alzheimer's.

My visits usually corresponded with his wife Dora's visits, so I was able to get to know Alan through her. He had been under hospice care for at least a year, making a steady slow decline that kept him qualified to remain in their care. In the nursing home, Alan shared a room with another man whose wife, Kathy, was there every day. Between the three of us, we were able to have good communication about the care that Alan was receiving, or not receiving, in the nursing home.

When I arrived one Friday afternoon, after not being there for three days and having left Alan in good spirits and a healthy appetite, I was surprised to see him in a state of rapid decline. He was not responsive, his mouth was open because of rapid mouth breathing, and his eyes were fixated toward the ceiling. Kathy told me he had been in that state for two days; Friday being the third day.

Dora arrived and I asked her if she knew what was happening, which she did not. She admitted she could not sleep the night before out of concern for her husband, thinking the worst. Yet, she was still making plans to go away for the weekend.

As a freshly trained doula and hospice volunteer, I was nervous because of my lack of experience with the dying and having little proficiency in dealing with a family that was spiraling into crises mode. Alan was my first patient and my second vigil. By 4:45 in the afternoon, with the local hospice office closing shortly, I called the office to inform them that Alan was actively dying; I was told that they were aware of the situation. I assumed that contact would have been made with Dora or someone in her family based on Alan's intake information. The hospice nurse had been there earlier in the day and knew of his condition

but had anyone spoken to Dora? No one from hospice had called me to sit vigil with him or asked his wife if she would need a volunteer, and no one had called his children.

I was still new enough not to be fully informed of hospice procedures. I was a volunteer who made visits to nursing homes and trained as a vigil volunteer and I was working toward my certification as an end-of-life doula. I felt that the lack of urgency and action from the hospice supervisor left me hanging out on a limb with the responsibility of informing the wife as well as the family of Alan's impending death so everyone could arrive in a timely manner. Dora was an emotional mess and she was not able to handle the circumstances, let alone take care of details.

When Dora understood that her husband was dying, she gave me the phone numbers of her children to call. One daughter was about two hours away, and the other two were out of state. At first, I told one of the daughters to check with hospice about her dad's condition, as I did not think I had the authority to say a person's death was imminent. However, when the frustrations of the family became too great, I informed them all that they needed to come as soon as they could. I felt as if the family was getting the Friday afternoon shuffle from hospice, so I took the reins and did the best that I could.

Dora was exhausted and wanted to go home for a nap. Knowing that Alan could be in his present state for several more hours, I told her I would call her if anything changed and to please stay close to her phone. If I had been more experienced and informed, I would have found a place for her to nap within the nursing home so that she would be close in case of significant changes. While Dora was gone, the hospice nurse arrived to take his vitals and order morphine to help with his comfort level. After she left, I turned my attention to Alan. I sat on the bed next to him, and while facing him, I held his right hand and told him that I was with him.

I don't know how much time passed, but I noticed his eyes becoming cloudy and mottling began to appear on his face and portions of his bald head. When one's heart is no longer able to pump blood properly, their blood pressure will drop as the blood flow throughout the body slows down, which then causes a purplish marbled appearance on the skin. I knew we had very little time left. I called and left a message on Dora's cell and home phone, then I checked with the head nurse on duty about the morphine and she said she was on her way to get it.

I resumed sitting on the bed in silence holding space with Alan, sometimes letting him know that I was still with him and that his family would be there as soon as they could. I had drawn the curtain between the two beds in the room, the TV was off, and we were in his "death space." It was peaceful; it was quiet except for Alan's rapid breathing.

With the absence of Dora, his daughters, and the staff at the facility, Alan grew colder as life was leaving his body. His eyes became more cloudy and blank and the mottling was more pronounced on his head and face. He was seconds away from taking his last breath. While I was still sitting next to him on the bed, I leaned in and reached over his chest to touch the side of his face and, as my hand was in midair, his left arm rose and his hand grabbed mine. He drew my hand to him, placed it directly over his heart, and continued to

hold it there as he took his last breath. I felt deep affection for Alan in that moment as well as feeling deeply honored to have shared such an intimate moment with him.

I noted the exact time of death. Because time of death needs to be officially called by a nurse or someone else with authority, the time called for a patient may not reflect the actual time of death. I sat with Alan for a few minutes before I went to the nurse's desk to inform them that he had passed. To my dismay, but ultimately luckily for Alan and me, the nursing staff and CNAs of the facility fell short of caring for him while he was dying. No one came in to check his vitals, to turn him to make him as comfortable as possible, check his adult brief, or to administer meds. No one had a sense of urgency! He and I had been alone together for his final moments and enveloped in his death energy; he died peacefully and on his own terms.

As I started walking down the hallway to the front of the facility to see if Dora had arrived, I saw the head nurse casually walking toward me. She told me she was just coming back from getting the morphine and I told her it was too late and that Alan had just died. At that moment, I saw Dora walking towards me with her neighbor. She had missed her husband's death by minutes. We walked to the room and I asked her if she wanted to spend a few minutes alone with her husband, but she said no. She could barely look at him. A CNA came into the room and began preparing his body by bathing him, changing the linens, putting him in a fresh hospital gown, and placing a rolled-up hand towel under his chin. I asked Dora again if she wanted to be in the room while the CNA was preparing his body, as it was her right to do so. She again declined. This was not unusual behavior as people respond to death in a myriad of ways. Some individuals withdraw, as Dora did, others may act out, and some may accept death with grace, for example.

One of his daughters arrived and went in to be with her father. Alan looked peaceful—his body was gray and vacant. A towel had been rolled up under his chin to keep his jaw closed so it would not be frozen open when rigor mortis set in. Dora immediately went into cleanup mode, clearing out his closet and his nightstand. Fortunately, we found a box to pack everything in and I loaded it into the back of my car and took it to her home. Before I left, I made sure that someone at the nurse's station called hospice to inform them so they could call the funeral home that was listed with the facility, and I left her in the hands of her daughter and her neighbor. I attended Alan's funeral a few days later and was met by a grateful family. As I mentioned, Alan and I had an emotional connection from the beginning. It happens, and sometimes we have a connection with an individual and sometimes there is no connection at all. There were many times my visits with him fell during the facility's lunch hour and often no one came in to feed him, so we had many lunch hours together. I found that feeding him became an intimacy between our two souls—an act of emotionally giving and receiving by both of us—an act of love where one human being is caring for another human being. I am eternally grateful for his friendship.

On the surface, the last day of his life looked like a calamity that robbed family members of being by his side, but the events were brilliantly orchestrated because they allowed Alan to die in the way that he chose. Everyone involved did what he or she needed to do to ensure

Alan would have the death that he wanted for himself. We were the players in *his* reality, and with circumstances and people *appearing* to be out of step, we were all in step.

For those who express the belief that only God chooses when an individual will die, I would like to offer the following analogy that came from a religious woman I know who has witnessed her fair share of deaths and knows quite well that an individual's death is on their own terms. Imagine that you are in your home with your bags packed and placed by the front door. You are prepared for your death and you are ready to leave this existence. The car service that you called is parked and waiting for you in front of your home. *You* are the one who decides how and when you are ready to walk through the door with your baggage. Yes, you take your baggage with you—you are not automatically enlightened when you cross. Yes, you will be more aware and have a greater understanding about your life, but you will also continue with your evolvment and working on issues that you feel need to be resolved.

From Alan's after-death communication, it was expressed that he spared his family the trauma of witnessing his death and he also wanted to be in a calm atmosphere and medication free. He conveyed to me that between family emotions and the medication that would have dulled his senses, his death experience would have been drastically altered.

It may sound like an extreme and unbelievable idea that we have more control over our death experiences than we have ever imagined. Frankly, the concept flies in the face of many religious beliefs, but if you have even the most microscopic understanding of the nature of reality and the magic of your own beingness, it is not such a startling or unnatural idea. Our life design, the design created before our birth, includes when and how we die. However, with free will as an absolute, we can change anything at any time on a soul level—it really can be no other way. Happy trails, my friend.

There is an energetic psychic network connecting all things, which we humans are normally unaware of that takes place deep within one's consciousness. In Alan's case, everything worked out in his favor, but other times a clear energetic connection does not happen between people. Sometimes, there is not any love felt between two individuals.

In terms of the dying when I have sat vigil with them, there were times I had a lack of understanding of what that person was going through emotionally because I knew nothing about them or their family circumstances, and in return they may not have understood what I was doing there and what my purpose was, so we did not connect. Usually, the unseen energetic communications we have with one another and other living things are free-flowing where everyone instinctively knows their place and what role they are to take whether consciously understood or not.

*“The world is a mirror, forever reflecting what you are doing, within yourself.”*

—Neville Goddard

## **Doula Services**

The emotional path can be a little tricky at times when a doula becomes attached to a dying person or their family while working with them. We are human beings, and being a

part of such an intimate time in another person's life will naturally create emotional bonds. Regardless, it is critically important for a doula to remember and maintain his or her professional boundaries and to remain focused on their purpose all the while being genuinely compassionate.

As a hospice volunteer or a doula in private practice, it is a standard rule not to have contact with the family after an individual's death. If the doula is providing short-term emotional support or helping the family understand the unfolding of their loved one's death, it may be helpful to offer a time to talk about their experiences within a week or two. In every instance, the families I made follow-up calls to for hospice did not want or need support and I have found that families prefer to keep to themselves after the death of a loved one. For some though, it may be healing for the family and friends of the deceased to have a small observance or ritual to conclude and bring closure to the doula's association with those involved in the death experience.

End-of-life training would greatly benefit doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains, and family members who are caring for a dying loved one. It would broaden and deepen their perspectives about the process of dying and how to provide end-of-life care. In 2000, the City of Hope and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) created the "End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium" (ELNEC) to educate health professionals on understanding the needs of the dying as well as the dying process itself. The intent of the Consortium was to train and educate undergraduate and graduate nursing faculty, students, and licensed nurses on end-of-life care so they could educate other healthcare providers.

Today, with the spotlight and attention on death awareness, anyone can be educated in end-of-life care. End-of-life doulas (EOLD) are passionate about serving humanity and offering education about death, dying, and grief. Services may also include a directive, legacy projects, non-medical pain management techniques, deep active listening, assistance with a life review, planning for the individual's final days, vigil planning, and short-term emotional support for the family after a loved one's death.

## **End-of-Life Planning**

Often repelled by the thought of death and dying, we are also fascinated by it at the same time. When we hear of someone's death, the first question is often, "How did they die?" Curiously, maybe with a touch of death anxiety, we want to know how that person departed life. Was it fast? Did they suffer? Was it peaceful or violent? Of all the ways a person can die, how did it happen for them? I wonder how it will happen for me.

Because we are creatures of habit and routine, we create a comfort zone for ourselves that provides a bubble of security where it is safe to not think about or plan for death. We have become complacent, often believing we are more powerful than death. In generations past, because of a shorter lifespan, lack of medical technology, and people commonly dying at home, an atmosphere was created for a deeper emotional connection for all.

Today, that connection can be greatly watered down by a busy hospital setting with the harsh sounds of medical equipment—we have become so medicalized that illness and death

have become billable commodities. The separation from death has become so vast whereby we keep someone alive at all costs, sometimes having little regard for the suffering and dignity of the dying person.

It is important to plan for your own death so that you can maintain your autonomy and dignity. If you are over the age of 18 you should have Advanced Care Directives in the event that you are unable to speak for yourself due to an illness or an accident. We all think that death is far away from us and in some future time, but being prepared with a document that records your wishes about your medical care if you are not able to make decisions is an important document to have.

Free forms are downloadable from the Internet, or you can request a form from an organization such as *Five Wishes*—there are many resources that offer ACP (Advance Care Planning) forms. Hospice offers free planning, and Medicare offers it for free as part of their yearly “Wellness” visits with participating doctors.

In most states, you need the signatures of two witnesses for your documents, and your directive does not need to be notarized. Your advance planning directives should be updated every five years, and all you need to do is shred the old document and create a new one. You can also download the forms for a living will and a health care surrogate—both require two witness signatures and no notarization.

Please check your state for their specific guidelines for all documents.

## **Information to Include in Your Packet:**

### **A Will**

- Your last will and testament that details how you wish your assets allocated.

### **A Living Will**

- A legal document stating your instructions for medical care if you are near the end of life, in a coma, seriously injured, or any circumstance where you cannot speak for yourself.

### **Healthcare Surrogate**

- A designated person appointed by you to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to make your own decisions.

### **Advance Care Planning**

Here are some of the things you should think about when planning your directives:

- Do you want to be on life-support and for how long?
- Do you want a feeding tube?
- VSED means to Voluntarily Stop Eating and Drinking by adults with decision-making capacity as way to hasten death. This is a refusal of all food and liquids including a feeding tube. Being legal in all states and affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court, it falls in the category of refusing medical treatment, and a person may change their mind at any time during the process. For further information on the process, go to the website of Death With Dignity (<https://deathwithdignity.org>).
- Would you want to receive CPR, surgery, antibiotics, blood transfusions, catheter, or dialysis as a lifesaving option?
- How do you want your body to be treated? Would you like essential oils, light massage, low light, or music?
- Is it okay for people to touch you or to lie next to you?
- How would you like to be remembered? Do you want a traditional burial or do you want to be cremated? Embalmed? Do you want a Green burial?
- If you choose a traditional funeral, what would you like included in the service such as music, specific songs, a slideshow of your life; and whom would you like to designate to read your eulogy?
- Be sure to obtain a General Price List (GPL) from your preferred funeral home.
- Would you like to donate your body to science?
- In lieu of flowers, would you like to designate a charity that people can donate money to?

- Designate a person to have all your computer and bank passwords so they can take care of notifying companies and individuals of your death. Also, list your social media sites and the passwords to close those accounts or to maintain an account in your memory.
- Have the title or mortgage information for your home as well as the title to your car and who financed it. If you have a safe-deposit box, list the name of the bank and location of the key.
- Include information about any money you put aside to cover expenses after your death and any pre-payments you have made for the disposition of your body.
- Do you want a “Do Not Resuscitate” (DNR) order? If you choose to have one and you want to remain at home during your illness and plan to die at home, the DNR must be printed on yellow paper, signed by your doctor, and placed on the side of your refrigerator for EMTs to easily see if they should be called in an emergency. They will not wait for someone to find it in the filing cabinet. If you are rushed to the hospital, have someone bring your DNR. And, please note that “Do Not Resuscitate” tattooed on your chest is NOT a legal document.

Now is the time for you to have an open and honest conversation about your eventual death with your loved ones. If you are alone, approach someone that you love and trust that is willing to take care of your final arrangements. Having all your affairs in order will ease the burden for those you have left in charge, saving your loved ones from having to make decisions in a time of crisis and vulnerability.

It is important for the doula to provide education for the dying person and their loved ones about the dying process and what to expect. Any death myths should be openly discussed, and loved ones should be honest about their level of comfort and what they might not be able to handle emotionally.

You do not need to be in your final months of dying to have a consultation with a doula about end-of-life planning. A doula can help you navigate through your decision-making processes at any point in your life and provide you with resources specific to your area of residence.

## **Advocacy**

Once you have your advance directives taken care of, the doula can be your advocate to ensure that the choices you have made will be carried out in the final months, weeks, days, and hours of your life. The doula can act as a representative not only for you, but also for your family, other caregivers, hospice, medical providers, funeral home, crematorium, green burial, or a conservation cemetery if you have one in your area.

With a doula who is a good fit for you and your family, you are not only receiving logistical support, you are receiving companionship and emotional and spiritual support through a loving, compassionate, and non-judgmental individual who understands the process of dying and what to expect.

As of 2023 there are 11 states, including Washington D.C., that have death with dignity laws allowing for physician-assisted suicide: Montana, New Mexico, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon (no residency requirement), California, Colorado, Vermont, New Jersey, and Maine.

Every state has conditions which must be met—the patient must make the decision and the diagnosis and prognosis is confirmed by two doctors for those who have six months or less to live. There is a waiting period before the prescription can be filled, and the mental competency of the patient must be confirmed before medication is to be administered.

Physician-assisted suicide is a very hot topic and one that state leaders obviously are hesitant to address. There are two sides to this—the first, which I wholeheartedly agree with, is that we all have the right to choose how we die to end pain and suffering without government interference, but with common sense oversight. Living in a free society, we should have the right to maintain our autonomy when it comes to our body and the choices we make about our life. Second, some religious leaders believe that any type of suicide is a sin and will vehemently lobby against death with dignity laws. Again, the *Death With Dignity* website (<https://deathwithdignity.org/resources/>) is a valuable resource for what legislators are doing.

## **Creating A Legacy Project**

A legacy project is something that you would like to leave your loved ones to remember you by. My grandmother always wanted birthday and Christmas presents to be handmade by me. She told me that when someone puts time and effort into giving you a handmade gift, the true gift is the thoughtfulness and the time given behind the gift that gives it greater meaning. Whether you know it or not, you have had an impact on every person you have ever met in your life. Your very presence in this world has changed those around you, including animals, just as they have changed you.

For example, you could make a video remembering different people and what they meant to you and your favorite moments with them and how they made you feel, or create a video journal of your life. You could make a scrapbook or a photo album, create a CD of your favorite songs, or write letters to people in your life to be given to them after your death.

My sister was once an accomplished tailor who made beautiful quilts for friends and coworkers who had a loved one die. She made them out of the deceased person's favorite shirts, T-shirts, and ties—they are beautiful. There are also companies dedicated to creating remembrance gifts, such as a throw blanket made from images of personal photographs.

The possibilities are endless, and these are things you can do by yourself if you are able, or you can have family involved with your project. And, it is also okay if you choose not to do anything.

## **What is Active Listening?**

When communicating with a dying person and their family, a doula must be able to understand and empathize with what they are experiencing. It means the doula must be completely in the present moment for them. Sharing personal experiences by the doula is discouraged unless asked, and it is preferable to pose open-ended questions to allow the dying person to tell *their* stories and express *their* emotions. Being able to recognize sadness, grief, anger, depression, and frustrations because of a life-limiting illness will help the dying person and the family as they navigate through difficult times.

## **Life Review**

After the diagnosis of a terminal illness and coming to terms with mortality, the death journey will steadily flood the consciousness of the dying person with emotions. Emotions can lead to self-reflection and introspection, taking an individual, if he or she allows it, on a pilgrimage into one's inner world to uncover hidden and repressed thoughts, painful memories, denied impulses, instincts, emotions, and intuition.

Therein lies the opportunity for an honest and focused exploration of the meaning of life. By accepting aspects of yourself that have been denied, you can integrate those portions of yourself in a healthy way so that you can see and understand yourself as a whole being rather than feeling fragmented.

It is natural to question how you have lived, how you have loved, how you have been hurt, what you have accomplished, what you regret, if you experienced joy and self-acceptance, and to consider any amends you would like to make. These moments will likely present themselves when you are not distracted by daily activities and the people around you. They may happen while you wander in and out of napping during the day or in and out of sleep at night, times of insomnia, quiet moments when you are alone, or even when you are in the loo. Emotions and insights will be presented to you in their own time.

Depending on your personality, you may prefer to engage in self-reflection and a life review privately, but sometimes it is easier to talk with someone who is removed from family dynamics or drama and can truly listen objectively and help you navigate in a non-judgmental way. There may not be anyone in your life that can actively listen to you and hold the space that you need to be able to talk about your emotions and your life, because they may be in their own bubble of denial. With well-meaning intent, those around you may want to keep things positive and offer pep talks, and tell you everything is going to be fine, and that you will get better.

We all carry trauma, regret, guilt, shame, and conflicts—all of us do. A few years ago, when I attended a Jungian workshop in Ireland on *Pride and Shame*, we spent the week talking about shame and very little time was spent on pride—exceptionally little—not negative arrogant pride, but pride in who we are and the accomplishments that we have made in life that draws us closer to self-acceptance and self-love.

Shame affects us at our core, whether it has been projected upon us or self-inflicted. The pain of trauma and shame can be submerged so deeply within us that the circumstances may or may not be remembered, but the energy remains and becomes a thread in the tapestry of who we are—unresolved trauma will integrate and parade itself into beliefs, character traits, and patterns. It is unknowingly expressed as part of the personality and one's identity, which directly affects the decisions we make and our self-esteem.

Assisting a dying person in a life review can be essential to the person's inner work. It requires patience, skill, and a keen sense of intuition to know when the dying person is ready to initiate authentic conversations. Before a doula does any work with death and dying, they need to make sure they have done their own inner work and faced their own fears and conflicts about life, death, and their personal shadows. People, all people, need to be loved, heard, seen, and validated. When someone is facing a life-limiting illness and they come to a place where they want to talk, reminisce, think about regrets, and possibly connect with people they may be estranged from, they may need someone to hold that space for them where the space itself gives them permission to do so.

I would encourage you, wherever you are in life, to find times to deeply connect with your emotions and embrace your traumas and pain without self-judgment or assigning blame. Allow me to make this point again—if you can reach the point where you can look at every experience as a creative experience, it will automatically take you into a different energy. Defenses can be high and strong, often expressed as anger, lack of trust, and extreme independence, or not wanting help from anyone. “I can do it myself!” Follow the thread of your emotions and ask yourself about the beliefs you hold, how you react emotionally, and thoroughly ask yourself about how events in your life have served you.

Let go of what no longer applies or is no longer relevant. Make amends if you feel the need to. Mend relationships that you would like to salvage, and express your love—I am sure there are people in your life that need to hear, “I love you.” And, “I love you” may be something you need to hear too. Give people around you the opportunity to express their love for you.

The present moment is always the perfect moment for introspection and exploration of your inner landscape to gain a greater understanding of who you are and your place in the world.

## **Pain Management**

People equate death with suffering. There are many options today to manage pain and comfort with traditional medicine as well as alternative practices. Medical professionals use a scale of 0-10, with 10 being the highest level of pain one may be experiencing. If a patient is in a non-verbal state, facial expressions are used as a gauge. Sometimes, physical pain is amplified by emotional, spiritual, and mental anxiety. Pain takes a tremendous amount of energy to maintain, so by addressing symptoms and managing pain, the conscious patient can regain a level of control that will free them to focus on being present in their life.

There are traditional medications that can be prescribed by a personal or hospice physician. Complementing traditional forms of pain management, there are alternative ways of managing pain. Gentle or light touch massage is an alternative method for pain and symptom management that was mentioned by the Joint Commission's R3 (Requirement, Rational, Reference) report, effective January 2018, detailing the need for hospitals to provide nonmedical pain treatment plans, with massage as a practical option.

The mind-body connection means being aware of our thoughts and emotions and how they affect us on a physical level. This connection is at the heart of complementary medicine, which works alongside of conventional treatments. Every individual will present their own unique set of circumstances, and stress-reduction techniques will differ for each person. Combining non-medical therapies can support oncology, pediatric, geriatric, unconscious patients, wheelchair or bed-bound patients, disease-specific, and end-of-life care.

## **Mind-Body Complementary Therapies**

- Light Touch or therapeutic massage.
- Breath Work – breathing techniques for relaxation and stress relief.
- Sound Vibration – the use of crystal sound bowls or Tibetan singing bowls.
- Guided Imagery, meditation, prayer, and hypnosis for pain management, relaxation, and stress relief.
- Entrainment Techniques – gentle music using binaural beats is a technique of playing a musical note (frequency) in one ear and the same note slightly detuned in the other ear, allowing the listener to have more restful sleep, deeper meditations, and lower stress levels.
- Energy Work – Reiki is an accepted form of therapy in 27 hospitals in the U.S. such as the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota and the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio.
- Acupressure and Acupuncture.
- Aromatherapy and the use of essential oils for relaxation.

## **Vigil Planning**

Vigil planning is an important element to be included in your directives that documents how you would like to be treated in your final days and hours of your life. Your autonomy should be respected and honored when you can no longer speak for yourself. Knowing you have planned for a doula or another designated advocate that will make sure your wishes will be carried out, can relieve you of any worries or stress, freeing you to be able to celebrate your life and to live while dying.

You can direct how you want your surroundings to be and who it is that you want to be with you. If you would like to die at home but circumstances change and you are admitted to the hospital or to a hospice care center, your vigil plan can always be adjusted to fit the circumstances.

Even if you are not at home, you can still have control and a say about whether you want your space to be quiet or filled with friends and family who are laughing and talking remembering the times spent with you—whether those times were happy or sad, and toasting you with glasses of wine and celebrating your life. It is all up to you.

However, it is important to keep in mind that your doctors, your caregivers, and your family must all agree and understand what your wishes and desires are for the end of your life. If you do not *directly* ask them if they understand and if they are on board with your plans, you might run the risk of someone not respecting what you want, which may lead to keeping you alive at all costs, even when you have all your directives in order. It only takes one doctor who silently disagrees with you, a family member who does not want to let you go and authorizes lifesaving measures, or a caregiver who panics during your final hours and calls 911. You must be vocal, direct, and adamant about your wishes—to everyone involved.

While everyone's death is individualized and personal in their own way, there are certain markers and predictions on how a body will shut down. The family should already have been educated by the doula about the process of death, what is normal, and what they can expect. Sometimes, however, during the emotionality of the event people may forget and panic. The doula can be a very calming presence if this should unexpectedly occur.

An example of a fearful and panicked family is a story that was relayed to me by a friend who is a nurse and had taken care of a grandfather who was in the active stage of dying. This means he was unconscious and it was anticipated that he had less than an hour before he died.

His mouth had naturally dropped open while he was rapidly breathing, and when my friend entered the room to take his vitals, she witnessed his family stuffing food into his mouth in an attempt to revive him—an act that could have caused him to aspirate, likely resulting in unnecessary suffering for him.

Food, for many people, is a symbol of life, love, recharging, nourishment, and for most people, it creates a sense of community and togetherness with family and friends. It was a heartbreaking scene to witness, because the family had not accepted their loved one's impending death, even in his final moments.

This may seem like a very harsh and sad situation, and it was, but my point is that you never know how friends and family members will react to a loved one's impending death until the time comes. The death process can take time and there can be numerous emotional convolutions. For many of the dying person's family members and friends, the ending is accepted quietly, but for others it can be extremely confusing and traumatic. Having the calm assistance of an experienced death doula can make all the difference in the world for not only the person who is dying, but also for those who must then cope with their loved one's death.

After death and disposition of the body, you may want to recognize your doula in some way. A small ritual or a heartfelt thank you for the relationship that has now come to a close. By doing this, everyone can, in a special way, recognize an important ending that benefits all.



In this illustration are seven moons and an inner eye, which creates eight perfect circles. Together, the moons and the eye symbolize refinement, no beginning, no end, and timelessness. The moons also represent emotions. The number eight is formed by one circle on top of another, creating balance. The eight on its side is the mathematical symbol for eternity—we are eternal.

The four quarter moons are the subconscious; the moons divided embody the Yin-Yang of life, the positive and negative energies that also create balance, and the feminine and masculine aspects within each of us. The full moon above the Crown Chakra represents the unconscious and symbolizes the infinite and limitless of consciousness, the *Whole of Existence*, and the transformation of one's soul that death brings. The eye represents our ability for inner vision, reflection, and the capacity to see ourselves and the world beyond our daily illusions, accomplished by our own hands and insight.

## 5

### FINDING CONSCIOUSNESS

*“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”*

—Heraclitus

Death is a renewal; a mere change in one’s citizenship and cosmic address. Your consciousness, your soul, will survive and continue to exist, alive in another form and in another reality with a greater awareness that a physical life does not yet offer. Having a life also means that you are preparing yourself for having a death. Within your human experience, you have met death in many ways and in many different forms, but the most profound, intimate, and final physical experience of your life will be your death.

When you return to your nonphysical state that is referred to as “home,” you will experience unimaginable peace and unconditional love—a love that holds no judgment—a love and peace that does not exist within our ideas or perceptions of love or peace. Personally, through some of my readings for grieving people as well as my private familiarity, I have experienced glimpses of the beauty that is waiting for every one of us.

We all know by now that all things are energy. There is no other rule. Consciousness, soul, spirit, essence, and energy, are the same thing. They are all motivating forces. This force, this consciousness, this energy, promotes, creates, and allows for all growth. This is what consciousness is all about. We are created by consciousness. Consciousness will remain elusive and we will continue to search for “it” until people agree and become unified in the understanding that we *are* consciousness, we are *of* consciousness, the universe *is* consciousness, and everything that exists is interconnected. Consciousness has always been and will always be. Every construct, every system, and every idea are birthed from, and within, consciousness.

Consciousness is alive. It is self-aware, free flowing, open ended, and without limitations. Waltzing with this truth will give you a better understanding of yourself, the universe, and your place and purpose *in* the universe. And, while you may have more than one purpose, your number one priority in life is to live fully, have human experiences, learn and evolve from your experiences, know yourself on an intimate level, know your vulnerabilities, your traumas, sense of truth, and use your experiences to *become* joy and love in your life—we are not here to suffer. Yet, suffering has its place if you can find meaning within the suffering and use it to understand yourself and life in a more profound way. We are spiritual beings, we are the universe expressing itself, and we are the universe becoming conscious of itself. We ARE the universe. Everything that exists outside of ourselves, first exists within. Period.

Consciousness is *The Whole of Existence* and everything has its own consciousness whether we understand it or not. Our Mother Earth has always been a living *being* endowed with, and

created from, consciousness that lives within the consciousness of all people, nature, animals, insect life, and everything else. The wind has consciousness, as well as water, dirt, trees, rocks, mountains—all *things* are alive!

I once heard a well-known spiritual author concur with the host of an online seminar that the brain is a filter for consciousness. I would like to correct that. Not only is consciousness a part of the human brain, it is found in the entire body. It is within all the organs, cells, and every molecule in the human body as well as within insects, mammals, other types of animals, trees, all plant life, grass, and flowers—everything. Consciousness is about everything and everything is about consciousness. Energy feeds consciousness and consciousness feeds energy. Consciousness is not separated *from* us because we *are it*.

Some people have a hard time believing that a rock is alive. On the science end, if you were to see a rock as it truly is in its physical form, and from a quantum physics perspective, you would see molecules, subatomic particles, atoms, and elementary particles that possess an electrical charge called quarks all swirling in space faster than you can imagine within a foundation of intelligence. Because consciousness is found in frequencies, rocks have a certain frequency, which is consciousness. People think that to have consciousness you must be a human being; a being under one's own intelligent control, who is able to reason things out, create, and has an elaborate nervous system. Everything and everyone generate a frequency, a unique vibration, and it is within that frequency that consciousness is found. So yes, rocks have consciousness found within their distinctive frequency. Everything has a frequency, everything. Again, *everything is consciousness and of consciousness*.

Because human beings have logic and emotions and all the rest that make us who we are, it does not make us more significant than a rock, it just makes us different, and because we cannot relate to or understand the consciousness and the life of a rock, it does not make us superior. In our hubris thinking, we believe we are the highest form of life on the planet possessing the highest form of intelligence, which is sometimes highly debatable.

Many people believe humans *have* a soul, but the soul is not something separate from us; you *are* a soul, and you *are* an energetic being vibrating at your own unique frequency. Physically, the basic premise of being an organic physical human being is that your body, at a cellular level, creates and uses electromagnetic fields. The MEG (magnetoencephalogram) and the EEG (electroencephalogram) detect electrical activity from the brain, and the EKG or ECG (electrocardiogram) detects electrical activity from the heart.

The intelligence and intricacy of our anatomy cannot be compared or matched. *All the body's bio-gravitational fields, as well as the earth's bio-gravitational fields, are self-organizing and self-aware.*

It is important for people to remember that the body always knows what it is doing and functions without judgment. It is quite skilled at shutting down during the death process in the final months, days, and hours of life. After all, we have had plenty of practice over hundreds of thousands of years.

The totality of your consciousness, your soul, your life force—the creative energy that exists within you, is both male and female. Under usual circumstances, or what is thought to be normal, people are born physically either as one gender or the other. However,

emotionally and *within* consciousness, we remain both male *and* female. Biologically speaking, being born in this organic physical reality either as male, female, or with an intersex condition, automatically causes a *division* within a person's consciousness. The division is within one's consciousness and emotionality, which is where he or she truly identifies as either male, female, or having an androgynous balance. Gender divisions will give people the opportunity to understand not only gender differences and how one will emotionally and physically identify, it will also give people the opportunity to understand themselves, others, and consciousness in a deeper and more accepting way.

In *every* way, physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and psychically, you are not the same person as you were yesterday. As Alan Watts said, "You are under no obligation to be the same person you were five minutes ago." The consistency and fluidity of change is not something we normally focus on. Everything is temporary. To deny or try to control change is to limit the freedom of consciousness, which will eventually restrict expansion, evolvment, and enlightenment. This too, will cause divisions within an individual's own psychology and emotionality.

If you could be a conscious participant in fundamentally restructuring and reimagining conventional ideas and norms of religious, social, scientific, and psychological structures in a more creative and dynamic way that leads you to a heightened awareness of yourself, would you participate? What is stopping you from having diverse ecstatic experiences and accepting those experiences as normal? Would you feel safe in letting yourself go to have experiences that fly in the face of reason?

Since we humans are so focused on our three-dimensional reality, we sustain a very localized and limited perception of our world and of ourselves. If we were to fully access all the energies and expanded perceptions available to us—as well as what we already rely upon—and fully trust our instincts and intuition, we would *naturally* have an excitability and an enthusiastic nature about us. We could be fully open to imagine possibilities for ourselves that exist far beyond the structures and boundaries we have set in place for this reality. We would be closer to being free conscious creators who understand that we are linked to, and dependent upon, all life in every form and in all realities.

## **The Superstore Experience**

There was a woman from California named Sara who had scheduled a phone reading with me. She was a devout Catholic and an animal lover with birds, dogs, and cats; she frequently prayed to St. Francis of Assisi. She was grieving over the loss of her Cockatiel and was wondering if her bird would come through for her in a reading. The Cockatiel's communication can be found in Chapter 6, *Animals Are Living Souls*. We were both excited when St. Francis came through for her, but we were not surprised given her many prayers.

St. Francis is one of three saints that have come through in my readings for people, at this point. Because I believe that everything is consciousness and everything has its own intelligence, the highways of communication are wide open and available to all travelers. That includes saints. Saints have had a physical life, they have experienced human emotions, they have been on their own personal quests and journeys in life and have died a physical death. They have been mortal and they are not some untouchable and unreachable divine rock stars. Sadly, not every canonized dead person was a decent human being, and several have caused great suffering to humanity.

As I began my reading, in my mind's eye I was immediately within a forest filled with the richest of colors with animals of multiple species peacefully lying about. Off to the side was St. Francis wearing an earth-colored habit, his arms spread out at shoulder level with different birds perching on his arms, including Sara's Cockatiel. While St. Francis was giving me personal information for Sara, the feel of the energy emanating from him and the forest itself was electrified with a vibration that was refined and untainted. His communication with me was strong, clear, and concise.

He closed out the reading by praying for Sara. As he did, I began conscious channeling (information that comes through directly where I don't need to interpret) and I spoke to her as a priest would, relaying his prayers and absolving her of all of her "perceived" sins and inadequacies that she felt she had in this life, which were directly associated with a past life as a Carmelite Nun in France. St. Francis gave me the vision of her on her knees in her room at a monastery, head bowed, and hands clasped praying for God's forgiveness for being an unworthy and lowly human being who was undeserving of His love. This was very personal for Sara as she had struggled with low self-esteem most of her life, and his prayers and messages for her were very meaningful and gave her a glimpse into why she had self-esteem issues today. This belief became a core belief for her in this life because of her past life as a nun.

I am not curious, nor do I pay attention to how other mediums work, or what the commonly held belief systems are that surround communication with the deceased. It has served me well by following my instincts, and through experience, I have found my own way of working with my energy and the energy of the deceased. It has taken me years to learn how to move myself out of the way and to hold no judgment or fear about who comes through or what information is given. Because I am working with energy, all communication from "the other side" is by telepathy in one form or another. Everyone, physically alive or physically dead, will express themselves in their own individual way.

The one thing I do not do, nor will I ever do, is close the energy off after a reading. My psychic door remains open until it naturally refocuses in its own time. Why? Because I do not want to miss any increased perceptions that might happen after a reading and I do not want to limit my encounters such as the experience I am about to describe. Does that mean I am bombarded with the deceased coming through? Absolutely not. It allows me to be aware of, and pay attention to, any further experiences or personal encounters during times of expanded consciousness, no matter how brief the encounter or the insight may be.

My husband, Tom, and I left for the large discount store we are all familiar with immediately after my reading with Sara. As Tom went to the pharmacy and I parked our cart off to the side to wait for him, I began to people watch. Every person that I looked at appeared beautiful. Every single person I saw was walking *within* this huge field of whitish, but translucent energy. People looked like they had just had their hair done, their skin was glowing, soft, healthy, wrinkle-free, and no matter how old they were, they were all filled with such immense and powerful beauty, peace, and grace. Each person had complete self-acceptance and self-love. I was witnessing their true essence. Not their auras, which is a person's electromagnetic field that extends four to five feet around the body, but their essence—their soul.

During those few minutes of altered perception, I thoroughly understood in experiential terms, how the soul is the creator of the body. I have known this intellectually for years but came to understand it when a visual had been given to me in a reading on how reality is created with rapid pulsations of thought. I now perceived it in a whole new way with greater clarity—I was not being shown the action, I was within the experience experiencing my experience. I was witnessing the delicacy and grace of life. For those new to this belief, the soul is not housed within the body; the soul houses intention, which creates the body with energetic pulsations filled with thoughts, emotions, imagination, desires, and beliefs that are so rapid we are not aware of them. We do not physically generate the soul—the soul creates us. Our body is a physical manifestation and expression of our soul. Imagine that you are standing at the edge of a pool of water and you toss a pebble into it. Think of the ripples as rings of energy. This is what the soul does to the atmosphere around the body so the body can create itself. The rings of energy are the pulsations that are so rapid that we are unaware of what we are doing.

When my experience ended, I thought, “Holy shit—that was cool!” *That* is why I remain open. I am convinced that my experience was energized by the evolved consciousness of St. Francis during Sara's reading, which provided a path to be in a higher state of consciousness well after the reading ended. When the experience faded, I reverted to seeing people as they were. I think what made this experience even more meaningful is that it was happening in ordinary daily life as people were going about their business completely unaware of how beautiful their beingness truly is. After what happened, it was made clear to me that many people are very lonely.

Remember, an easy and uncomplicated way of understanding that the universe is consciousness is to understand the energy source of all things—*The Whole of Existence*. This energy is known by many different names, such as God, Allah, Jehovah, Source, Universal

Energy, All That Is, and Creator, for example. Whatever name you give to your God, it is the same essence and consciousness of *The Whole of Existence*. Whatever attributes and judgments one might bestow upon their God, come from the beliefs created by human beings. For me, God is nature—all nature. God does not take sides, punish certain individuals or groups, and does not make mistakes—nor does nature—even all abnormalities that are not influenced and caused by the hands of humans.

Envision a whole pie as representing God, Source, Creator, or *The Whole of Existence* and one slice represents you as an individual. You, as an individual are endowed with free will, and throughout your lifetime, you will create many identities, personalities, and aspects that spring from your own ideas about who you are. As you grow and change, so do your identities and personalities because everything is always in a state of change. You not only wear many hats; you *are* many hats. You have multiple aspects and personalities that make up who you are—to the fullest degree, you are a multidimensional being—a seemingly overused term but it remains true. In your personal perceptions and ideas of yourself, you will also create your own values, your own freedoms, your own limitations and, yes, your own conflicts and divisions within yourself emotionally. When your internal conflicts and struggles become overwhelming, you may experience sorrow, depression, anger, fear, frustration, or jealousy. This will further deepen your inner divisions and conflicts.

No matter how deeply your conflicts and feelings of disconnect may be, you remain connected to the whole pie. You also remain connected to every other individual, because we are all a part of the whole. When you are balanced, when your life is balanced, and your emotions are balanced, you will feel connected within, and you will feel connected to the Whole. Balance does not mean that everything must be of a positive nature. We need the imbalances, the tensions, healthy inner conflicts, and the push-pull of positive and negative energies.

You will not feel jealousy towards others if you know your own worth and talents. You will not feel the need to take from others because you will know and understand that the universe is abundant; there is plenty to go around for everyone, and the earth will continue to be abundant and provide for us if we love, respect, and care for her in return. If you could simply reimagine who you are and let go of most of what you have been taught, you would see more of the commonality of human beings in nature and the greatness that is within all of us—there is an abundance for all and unlimited possibilities available to everyone.

Many people end up living their lives not knowing who they are, not knowing their personal power, not liking themselves, not knowing their value to humanity, and especially and most profoundly, never knowing how to love and nurture themselves.

The keys are self-love, self-acceptance, and an honest and frequent examination of beliefs and how those beliefs serve you and create your reality. You must tend to your own emotional garden and pull your own weeds. Inner work and transformation are processes that are developed and shaped and can only be achieved by taking personal responsibility for your own emotionality.

Self-love will give you the *freedom* to accept others for who, what, and why they are. This does not mean you will always agree, like, or become pals with everyone. Your energy will not always match with other people, people will piss you off, and there will always be people who are not as mature or intelligent as you. You do not need to go around blowing kisses and tossing flowers at everyone either, but it will guide you to accept yourself as you are, and as a result, you will be able to accept others as they are without critical judgment. Once you understand yourself you can accept people and may discover you can work from a place of cooperation; cooperation with yourself, others, and life. You are unique and one of a kind. You have purpose, you are loved, and you deserve joy. To find your uniqueness, think about doing something you have never done before, then simply do it and do it with no expectation, no personal judgment, and without worrying what other people will think—just do it. Do not *try*—do it—no matter how it turns out.

You will find that you do things in your own way. No one will do things your way, think your way, talk your way, smell your way, see your way, or hear your way. So, to find your uniqueness, try yourself out—practice being you. Because, no matter what you do in life, you are always trying yourself out—even if you want to emulate someone, you will still be doing it in your own way. No one will do the same thing, be the same way, or process thought in the same way because everything is individualized.

If you are looking to find consciousness, stop looking. If you do not understand it, look into a mirror. You *are* consciousness; consciousness is all around you. You cannot measure it; you cannot find it because you *are* it. *Everything* is consciousness; consciousness always was, is, and always will be. Just like change. So, in many respects, consciousness *is* change, because as things change, your consciousness and awareness will always be shifting. Consciousness is not out there. It is here, right here inside of you and all around you. *Your reality is your consciousness.*

Alternate realities and dimensions that exist *within* our three-dimensional reality are all woven with consciousness, and it all originates from every individual. How your reality is constructed or created comes from within you because your consciousness always takes into account everything about you, and that includes your desires, whims, moods, wants, wishes, demands, and everything else. Yes, we benefit from formal learning and we need skills gained through education to navigate in society and the world, and we look to others to gain knowledge or to learn something unknown to us. People will imitate others or try to duplicate what others have accomplished, but the bottom line is that *universal* knowledge is already *within us*.

If you hang on someone else's words, want to be like them, or believe someone else is greater than or superior to you, pause and remind yourself that you have everything you need within *you*. Do things in your own way—learn, experiment, try things out, and practice.

What other people tell you are only reflections of their experiences, beliefs, fears, limitations, perceptions, and what works for them—perceived, experienced, internalized, and integrated through their personal lenses. This applies to me also. I am offering you a glimpse into my world, my reality, and what is true for me. I am sharing a large part of my life with you, not to change your mind about anything, but to say that what people have been taught

for centuries has been a cover-up of our true and larger identity. We have been kept in a rigid narrative, mostly by religion and those in powerful positions about who we are and what we can accomplish. We are so much more than we believe or allow ourselves to be. *Sometimes, we need to be shown a different way of doing things to believe a different way is possible.*

If you are looking for answers, all you need to do is ask yourself the same questions that you might ask someone else—a guru, priest, yoga teacher, or whomever. If you practice and focus on doing that and, in time, you will feel the answer within you. You will most likely not hear it, but you will *feel* it within you. I am referring to inner knowledge here, not knowledge from education if you want to become a brain surgeon, for example. However, becoming a brain surgeon may be your gift, talent, and calling in life, and once gaining the education and skills, those skills will create an identity; everything you do, everything you think, everything you say creates the identity that also creates an inner knowledge, which then creates a marriage between your intuition and instincts.

### **Does the Ego Really Exist?**

What I have to say about the ego might really light some people up. You, as well as everyone else, have an opinion about the ego and it never ceases to be a hot topic. We all hear people yapping about the need to get rid of the ego because it is a bad thing, it is out to get us, and it runs rampant within us like an uncontrollable toddler in a toy store. Ego is a Latin word and when translated to English, it is the word for “I.” That’s it. No big deal. Since the 20th century, the different influences and constructs of the ego inched their way into psychological use with Sigmund Freud, who used the German words *das Es*, *das Ich*, and *das Über-Ich*, which refer to *the it*, *the I*, and *the Over-I*. Freud used the words as a way of pointing to our decision-making processes and a way to refer to ourselves in terms of the “Id, ego, and super-ego.”

Over time, people have repeatedly distorted the word ego morphing it into meaning that someone may be central to him or herself, where their thoughts, agendas, behaviors, and emotions are all about themselves. Yes, I’ve known self-absorbed people like that and I bet you have too. People, along the way, decided to define a state of being *within* the human being that explains, defines, and determines the dual personality within—all the rights, wrongs, what we believe is good and bad, and all the rest that we label as dualism. If you want to simplify everything and get down to brass tacks, there really is no ego as it is believed to be. Everything is emotional. *Everything is determined by your emotional state at any given moment.* There is only self-identity, self-recognition (meaning to recognize and understand yourself to the core of your being), and emotionality.

Since everything is energy and consciousness, emotions are energy *and* consciousness. We use emotion in everything we think and do, and every action we take is based on emotion. A simple comparison would be the stock market or the futures market, which is based on speculation and conjecture of future trends—rooted in emotion. The stock market is gambling run on the emotions of human beings from all over the world. The ego, as we know it, is merely a label for action taken that is in alignment with emotions in a positive way, or a negative reaction that goes against the emotions. To go against the emotions means that

it prevents them from freely expressing themselves as they should (“should” is not being a judgment). Emotions are energies within our beingness and those energies need to express themselves openly and freely because they *are* open and free energies. A negative reaction could prevent them from freely expressing themselves.

The ego has never existed and never will exist, in my humble opinion. It is a judgment and a label. Stop giving the ego so much power and treating it like it is an unwanted and evil appendage that needs to be cut off. Instead, make the ego your friend and start thinking about emotion—because everything comes from emotions. Emotions, which house everything about your personality, are in the mix of creating your reality. Every decision you make is based on emotion. How you act and how you react all come from your feelings. Instead of believing the ego is your enemy, start thinking that your emotions will determine how you function throughout your day. Every day your emotions are different from what you felt the previous day. This is the beginning point of your motivation for your day. Your emotions will guide you, and at any point in your waking state, if you check in with yourself, you will know how you are feeling. Too often people only react to their emotions, skipping over the important part of being aware of them and understanding them.

We constantly hear how the ego is a bad part of us. People preach that we better watch out for the deceptive influences of the ego because it will trick you, control you, and tear you down and make you do things that you really do not want to do, and it will get in your way, so you better get rid of the ego. People believe this because they accept this indoctrination as the truth. It gets preached and people think about it repeatedly and hear it repeatedly, and it becomes real for them, and then it becomes a truth. What people think of as the ego is really part of consciousness, so why would anyone want to get rid of part of their consciousness? We need the ego, not in a judgmental or needy way, and we need to understand the ego in a more enlightened way as a part of our consciousness—a part of our wholeness.

Many times, we will judge someone for being egotistical when in fact that person may be confident and secure within him or herself; confident in knowing their emotions, knowing and understanding them, and dealing with them properly. Maybe people need to understand confidence and to practice that a bit. You will not be selfish, you will not be “egotistical,” you will be just what you are—a physical human being that is based on emotion.

As a brief example—and I make no claims about being a psychologist—if someone persistently needs to be the center of attention, has the need for admiration, and believes they are more intelligent and talented than everyone else, it may be due to their own insecurity associated with low self-esteem and self-worth, which may be trauma based. Narcissism, on the other hand, is designated as a *personality disorder* that is defined as a mental illness according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The Mayo Clinic states that since there are no medications to treat the “disorder,” psychotherapy is the only treatment option—there are no medications to treat this specific disorder. I think it has become obvious that many narcissistic people would not benefit from psychotherapy, and from the narcissists I have come across, not one believed they needed counseling, and if you tell a them to look in a mirror, they will only like what they see.

Both emotional states of being—insecurity and narcissism—may display characteristics of arrogance, grandiosity, manipulation, self-absorption, and the need for admiration. According to an article in *Psychology Today*, posted January 12, 2016, the article states that narcissism appears to be programmed into a person's behavior *after* birth. The article goes on to explain that current beliefs center around “consistent pre-verbal interactions” that shape who we become. It is my belief it is not an ego thing. If narcissism is a form of mental illness, then a child that is born with healthy emotional energy, who becomes narcissistic, was likely traumatized repeatedly.

Look at how we have been taught from birth about the concept of good and bad. You must take the bad along with the good—right? We believe that and we practice that, and then we judge what is good and bad. We hear it when we are small children and we all buy into that concept, constantly practicing the concept, and then we become it. Imagine how things could be in the future if we were taught there is no good/bad, or good/evil, and we were guided instead to understand our experiences and emotionality that would ultimately leave it up to an individual to decide what to do with their emotions? We could begin by not assigning the titles of “good” or “bad” to children. Remember that emotions are energy, and you can do whatever you would like to do with the energy. It is your choice and your responsibility as to how you respond to any given situation and what emotions and meaning you decide to bring into being.

People will create a reality and a belief system around what they think they know and they will preach it to other people. The whacked-out narrative we are fed is that we are wicked and born in sin and God is vengeful and jealous and you better watch out for the devil—the devil will trick you and he will try to take away what God wants to give you, and if you sin you will burn in hell for eternity. How can you burn for eternity? That is a long time! And watch out for that devil's tail, it will whip you and he will jab you with his horns. Can we stop instilling fear and the narrative that “you are less than?” And, why do God and the devil have to be male? Why not have a couple of post-menopausal women named Hazel and Raven? Beliefs are simply beliefs, and we are free to choose and change our beliefs at any time.

We are not born wicked and sinful. WE ARE WORTHY, and nothing is inherently sinful about us. Maybe, since this is an emotional universe, if people were in command of their emotions—*not to control*—but to function with higher emotional clarity within our reality, maybe reality would be more the way we would like it to be and not something that will punish us and send us to hell to burn for eternity. People tend to complicate everything because they don't understand that simplicity works. Guilt and scaring them with the devil is a powerful control mechanism. People do evil things because people make those choices.

## **The Lady of Emotion**

I would like to introduce you to Stella, a patient I visited only once. I had an after-death communication with her that lasted about 40 minutes where she talked about her death and how we live in an emotional universe. Notation: In Stella's belief structure, she believes that

emotion creates thought. Let me add that, many times, there has to be a thought to create an emotional response, which will create a belief and, again, the one creates the other and the other creates the one. *Thought and emotion work closely together—hand in hand—sometimes the thought will create emotion and other times emotion will create the thought.*

Before I went to see Stella at the nursing home, I was told she was well into her eighties with no family, friends, or visitors. Her hospice nurse was very concerned about her emotional and mental state because all she did while awake was to cry and yell out. When I did have the chance to visit her on a Friday afternoon, she was continually yelling out, “Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay,”—I could hear her as I walked down the hall to her room. I was shocked at how thin she was and how her arms and her legs were so contracted.

I sat next to her and introduced myself as I was preparing my phone to play some music for her. When I found some soothing music, I put it on the bed near her pillow and she immediately became agitated. It kind of freaked me out for a moment. After I said, “Oh crap,” under my breath, I scrambled to make the phone disappear into my purse. I was not quite sure what to do for her because she looked like she was suffering and had been in this state for some time.

As I sat with her not saying anything and just holding her hand and looking at her, I was watching her face and watching her mouth while she continually cried out, “Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay.” Then something changed. While listening to her and feeling the vibration of her crying out, it was like being able to hear her in the in between spaces—I don’t know how else to describe it. The energy shifted from *listening* to her, to *hearing* her, and with that, an emotional connection was made between us. *Within* her crying out I heard, “I want water. I want water, I want water.”

There was a Styrofoam cup of water next to her bed and I gently offered it to her. She drank more than I thought she was capable of and I noticed that her tongue was swollen and her teeth were in horrible condition. I am astounded at how often I see a lack of oral care for people in nursing homes. It is a demeaning way of treating people. After she drank, she continued with her crying out. I asked her if it would be okay if we became friends, and in that in between space, I heard, “Yes ma’am.” After about 40 minutes, I told her that I would be back to see her on Monday, as I had a workshop to attend over the weekend. I sat with her a few more minutes, and *within* her crying out I heard, “I don’t want to live anymore. I don’t want to live anymore.” Yes, my heart sank and I wished I could have held her.

Touching her shoulder, I told her that everything would be all right and it would not be much longer. I thought she would make it through the weekend because it did not appear that she was actively dying or close to being unconscious—she was still eating and drinking, and very aware of my presence. I left, remaining in her death energy—that sacred space of sharing energy with a dying person. It is an untouchable space to be in and to be a part of as it is full of intimacy and raw authentic emotional power. I’m using the word “power” as in “the force of life,” *the excited energy of life*. I feel I am within this sacred space when I am companioning a dying person and I felt sad that I would not be able to be with her over the weekend. She deserved to have someone with her when she died. That Monday, I learned that she had “walked on” in the early morning hours on Saturday.

Five days later, as Tom and I were cooking breakfast, I felt Stella's energy come in. After a couple of minutes of information, I had Tom get the digital recorder because it felt like there was a lot of information she would be giving. What I have done with her information, for the intent of this book, is to put her as the first person speaking and not as me speaking for her. Along with some minor editing, putting her in first person is the only change that has been made to the information that she gave.

### **Stella Speaking of Her Worldview**

“My crying out was my way of processing my life. It was my way of talking to myself and working through my life and examining who I was. People would consider it a life review. I wanted to do it here before I died and not ‘over there.’ I wanted to have everything cleaned up. I was having conversations with myself, which in someone else's view and interpretation, I was having conversations with God, which really means that I am of God and God is of me. Only part of my essence remained to keep me alive so I could do my emotional work before I passed, and it didn't bother me that I was alone, it didn't bother me that no one came to visit. None of that bothered me. What was important to me was that I processed my life before I left here. I wanted to fully enter my new life being free of any problems.

“If more people were connected to themselves, they would want to constantly do that throughout their life. To weed their garden and process what comes up and be aware of what they are thinking and feeling. People would have a better view of death and a better time of accepting death and being comfortable with death.

“Emotions are very important and are a priority for me. Emotions are the fires, the electrical charges that generate us. It is the emotions that generate the thoughts, and it is the emotions that generate the beliefs people have. The emotions are the center point and the core of everything that we experience. Everything is generated by emotions. Beliefs are formulated from our emotions, and thoughts are formulated by our emotions. We feel first, then have thoughts, and then form beliefs.

“*This is what is real for me and what I strongly believe.* We need to understand that we are emotional beings and everything is generated by emotions. Emotions are the motor. They are the fire. People are so afraid of their emotions and don't realize it is their fear that causes their pain. It is the fear of looking into their own emotions that causes the pain, so they do not do it. They don't realize that knowing their emotions will give them freedom—*that* will set them free.

“When people understand themselves, it will lead them to learn to love themselves. People will inadvertently and deliberately intrude upon your energy. People who don't know their own path and don't know themselves, and are trying to figure things out, will be attracted to another person's path. If that other person's path is solid, they may try to jump over and walk on that path, too. This is an energetic intrusion. They are not being authentic and true to themselves. Sometimes they will realize it, because it won't feel good to them.

“When people do not recognize that it does not feel good to energetically take from someone else, they may lash out, act out, and do things that are not ethical and find ways of rationalizing their behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. Some people do this for a lifetime. Sometimes they wake up to realize it feels a lot better to know who you are, to know where you are, and not to be grasping at straws to fill themselves up emotionally. I will be a teacher where I am going, but I do not want to call myself a teacher. I am not discounting spiritual teachers either, but when you call yourself a ‘spiritual teacher’ you are boxing yourself in and putting a label on yourself. I don’t want to do that to myself. I want to be free, completely free. It is the freedom of the mind. People can have freedom in this physical reality if people can open their minds and *be* free. “People don’t understand themselves and they don’t understand what is possible. You have people who are so afraid that they spew out rhetoric to get people to follow them. The most afraid are the ones who speak the loudest about things they have no understanding of.”

## **Our Emotional Universe**

Emotion comes from the French word *émotion* from the 1570s, which comes from the Old French word *emouvoir*, meaning to “stir and move.” Between the 1650s and 1808 the word included in its meaning a sense of a “strong feeling” to finally “any feeling.” People label emotions and states of being to identify what is happening within them, so naming emotions seems like the sensible thing to do—it gives us a starting point to logically evaluate what we are feeling. Sometimes, we can feel overwhelmed because of the intensities of differing emotions and, because of that, we find ourselves in an indescribable state of being, not knowing which way to turn. If you are not understanding what you are feeling, it can be confusing and you may search for a reason outside of yourself—maybe you do not need to understand *what* you are feeling. Try sitting in silence without dissecting it and just experience it as an energetic state of being and see where that takes you.

When you are joyous, you are *within* that state of being. When you are sad, you are *within* that state. Each emotion is its own state, and this goes for all emotions; they are states of being. Since emotion is just a word for all states of being, you become many, many states of emotion all throughout your day, and you will experience different states of being every day of your lifetime.

In the spirit of thinking differently, think of emotions as the beginning point of everything. All the atoms, molecules, cells, organs, and systems in your body will have their own set of emotions and their own consciousness. Each will act and react in its own way. Each will experience its own states of being within every moment of time that passes, as we know time to be. Think of your body as an orchestra. Each individual musician and each instrument will have its own identity, its own tone, frequency, and consciousness. Each can act separately as well as being a part of the whole orchestra. Everything that comprises the body and every system in the body is its own consciousness, has its own identity, its own ecosystem, and its own electromagnetic field. When all systems in your body are balanced, you will experience health, which is the natural state for the human body.

The earth and the universe are also a state of being. The universe is a state of being out of which will come all the states of being of the planets, the stars, space-time, people, etc., and the consciousness of the universe is emotion. Right now, people are unbalanced and sick emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Because of man’s recklessness, we have directly caused the earth to be unbalanced and sick as well. There has been an urgent cry from our Mother to understand her as a sentient being and a consciousness possessing intelligence and emotion. She will continue to get our attention with greater ferocity until we understand and practice this absolute. As stewards, we can companion nature to bring back an alignment of her energies to a healthier balance of thriving cohesive creative energy.

## How Do I Go Within?

Going within is a journey that is essential for growth, transformation, and personal enlightenment of the Self. We can say that we raise our consciousness, but let's add that it also becomes more complete, which changes the structure of the emotional pool within; the ripples of that change will come in waves as it reaches the conscious mind and assimilates into the developing identity of the individual. It does not matter what metaphor you use to view your inner landscape—whether you see your *within* as a wilderness of all nature that includes lakes, rivers, streams, and animals, or just an emotional pool of water—it does not matter because everything is about your consciousness and how it is always becoming. You are traveling within your consciousness.

We know that consciousness is the origin of *The Whole of Existence*. It is the fabric of our universe and all other universes as well—there is emotion in everything and *everything* is interconnected. David Joseph Bohm, an unorthodox theoretical physicist, encouraged by Einstein, was regarded as one of the best in the 20th century who wrote his first book, *Quantum Theory*, in 1951. His curiosity moved beyond the conventional approaches to quantum mechanics to non-local quantum potential where everything is interconnected and time and distance become irrelevant and meaningless. Bohm's interests lay with understanding the nature of reality and viewing consciousness as a well-organized whole that is never static or complete.

Thought is the expression of consciousness that creates what *appears* to be reality for an individual, not just in our physical reality, but in all realities one might be in. An individual is consciousness, which is *one* with universal consciousness; it is where ideas are all around throughout the universe. Ideas come to people, and when people think about them, focus upon them, and add emotion to those ideas, they will create reality in a way that their thoughts need to be expressed.

Here is a situation you might be familiar with. The danger from people not using turn signals, not stopping with the caution light and instead, running through the stoplights even when they have turned red. For example, if you have thoughts or a fear of being T-boned by thoughtless drivers going through an intersection and you visualize that scenario every time you go through an intersection, and then add the emotion of fear into it, you are concentrating energy for that situation to manifest itself. To change the situation, see it and think about it being different so you change the foundation of what you had been visualizing. If you do this repeatedly, 99% of the time it will work. The 1% when it does not work and you end up in an accident, means that you had accepted the entire situation and manifested it.

My 2003 Tahoe was such an excellent vehicle. I took good care of it and people often commented how good it looked for a 20-year-old car. The engine was one of the best made and I had 200k miles on it—I was sure it was good for another 150k. However, being that old, I was concerned about safety with my grandchildren. For two years while I was driving, I would imagine I was driving a new car with all the new safety features and bells and

whistles, and a radio that would get more than one station. As a possibility, I was also thinking about keeping the Tahoe as a second car. But for two years, that is what I imagined—a new car—everyday. After weighing my options at the beginning of 2023, I decided that I would keep the Tahoe and replace the engine, if need be, in the future. The body was in excellent condition, the engine was good, and the interior was like new. But, BAM! A month later, after deciding to keep it, I was hit head on while at a stop sign by a large SUV, that spun out from being hit on the busy highway I was trying to turn onto. My car was totaled. I am now driving a new car and missing my analog Tahoe. Maybe grieving is a better description because there were 20 years of memories attached to the car. A harsh way to manifest to say the least, but this is what I am talking about. The three drivers and the passengers of the vehicles that came together to create the accident, served us all for our individual needs and desires, so it was a collective manifestation.

The energy of a thought, which first originates within you, will traverse the universe and come back to you. In an instant of time, your thought will be finalized. Then, the thought will create an emotion within you and the emotion allows you to examine the thought. By examining the thought—because we all think about our thoughts—you will begin the creation and fulfillment of a belief. When you accept, consciously or subconsciously, that you have taken on a certain belief, the belief will be internalized and will become part of your identity within you. That belief will then become part of the foundation of, and for, your reality or what you call reality; the universe will always affirm your beliefs. Now, I am going to reiterate that there needs to be a thought to create an emotional response, which will create a belief, but one will also create the other and vice versa. *Thought and emotion work closely together—hand in hand—sometimes the thought will create emotion and other times emotion will create the thought.*

You can change your beliefs at any time. You are not stuck with certain beliefs throughout your lifetime. Just like you can change your emotions, you can change your thoughts, you can change anything. So, thoughts, emotions, and beliefs are fluid. The very first step to expanding your awareness of who you are and your existence in physical reality is to know that you are consciousness. The next understanding is that thoughts are energy with different intensities and emotional vibrations. Thoughts do not exist independently from your personal reality or the physical universe—your thoughts, emotions, beliefs, *and* imagination and desires create your reality and, with your creations, you give meaning to everything you experience.

To go within, all we need to do is understand our emotions and beliefs—simple, right? There is courage in being straight with ourselves and admitting to the little games we play—and we all play games—or looking at a painful experience from childhood that could leave a person sobbing by reliving the moment and how it really made that individual feel. We can emancipate ourselves. We all know when we do not speak the truth, we all know when we use tried and true manipulations to get our way, and we all know when we lie, cheat, take what does not belong to us, and embellish or twist what someone has said. By facing painful life experiences like rejection, shame, low self-esteem, and all the rest, we are going within. Ask yourself what you believe in and how do your beliefs serve you or do not serve you. And the reality of it all is that our experiences never leave us—we will always have memories

pop up as we evolve, but our assimilation and acceptance of those experiences will evolve also. Ask yourself what state your emotions are in and are your emotions functioning in a clear and productive way or is everything upside down and you do not know *anything*?

When you practice honest assessments of your feelings and belief systems, you are venturing into your inner world, landscape, and wilderness, which can be frightening and painful. What are the predictors and things you control in your daily life that may have changed, shifted, or disappeared? *When you feel like nothing and have nothing, you have everything.* This might sound clichéd and way too simple, but the meaning and opportunity is vaster than what it appears to be. Think about *how* you are believing, because there are different ways of believing. You can look at something and believe it exists, or you can *become* what you are looking at, believing it about yourself and believing it is part of your identity. What beliefs do you have about yourself? If you want to travel within, consider *how* you are believing, because with honesty, you will probably want to change some beliefs you uncover.

Once you can look at the different ways you believe and how your beliefs are formed, you can see how different their origins can be. An example would be beliefs you formed as a child, beliefs created by direct experience, group thinking, social media, or gossip. So, what can you do about it? You can recognize your patterns—patterns of how you have knee-jerk reactions, what triggers you have, your pet peeves, how you test people, games you play with other people that give you a sense of control or fulfill a need, how you stew over stuff and let things bother you, your loyalty to friends and family—these are all patterns of behavior, and there is so much to discover and to uncover, but it is to be done bit by bit and with compassion, love, self-acceptance, and patience. Everyone has their life experiences and some people have risen from horrific and dehumanizing circumstances—you have a lifetime of information available to you and it is up to you what you do with it.

In simplified terms, once you have recognized how you have been functioning, maybe for a lifetime or just a few months because of a recent situation, also recognize that through your lifetime, you have been taught what to think, how to act, and how to *be*, since you were just months old by your parents, friends, neighbors, teachers, schooling, and religion. If you think about the times you were told in various ways how you should be and how you should act, especially if it has been delivered with shame, rejection, and judgment, resentment will set in, which can and often does turn into anger, and then, that can be the beginning of anger as a pattern for your life.

As you mature, there will be times when you subconsciously seek out or are confronted with situations that anger you over and over again. How do you change a pattern once you identify what it is? Be aware when you default to *reacting*. Train yourself to see people and situations as just that—people and situations. People will be people and situations are situations. When things happen that cause a reaction within, practice by not having an emotional reaction but still acknowledging your feelings. Try not taking anything personally and practice removing the judgment you have about something, yourself, or someone else as being good or bad. This can take a lot of practice! Too many people have lived a life of sexual abuse, domestic violence, poverty, and a life of being beaten down by life's circumstances. With practice, it may begin to move you toward shifting yourself out of an

old way of viewing yourself as faulty or blaming yourself for the unwelcomed behavior of other people who have violated you in some way.

We are *never* held hostage or trapped by any system, experience, or pattern; we have the freedom to change ourselves and how we act and react toward other people. And by changing and liberating ourselves, we are changing patterns as well as the perceptions we have created, and when we do that, we will discover that we are more in *command* of the outcome—not trying to control it. Sometimes our perceptions about life events and how we make sense of experiences are not real, they are stories we tell ourselves and illusions we create. We have been taught and trained to believe how we are to act and react, which will keep us from facing the truth about ourselves. We believe reaction is strength and will give us the results we want. To choose *action* will bring about change in a more complete way and the change will have a better chance of lasting. *Reaction* will keep a person in the same pattern over and over.

As I have mentioned before, when you feel that you have nothing or cannot count on anything or anyone, you are in a unique position where you have the opportunity to choose anything. It may not seem like it, but when you have nothing before you, you have all possibilities available to you. Possibilities generate opportunities and opportunities generate possibilities, and since everything is possible, everything is an opportunity. With every circumstance that comes up in life, give yourself permission to accept the unknown and believe that it is okay not to know anything—this can be a very good place to be if you can think of it in that way. By surrendering to yourself and being present without the past and future swirling around in your head, you can allow yourself to just BE. Every entrance you find into your own wilderness will be new and every route you take can seem like the landscape is uncharted and unpredictable. Allow your inner forces to guide you and try not to be afraid of yourself, and if the unknown *is* frightening for you, understand that the unknown is a brand-new creative experience—design your intention to your liking—it is your own Self you are discovering and everything just might work out to be in your favor.

Let me put it another way. For example, let's say you have woken up to the fact that your partner of 15 years has been using you, living a secret and deceptive life, and your entire relationship has been built on a lie. You feel lost and broken. By waking up, you are suddenly thrust into a new reality and this reality is based on a different emotional and mental structure, which will automatically create new opportunities because you are now in a different paradigm—you just need to allow yourself to recognize and be open to opportunities while allowing your inner intelligence the freedom to guide you.

In my 20s, I felt like I was a mess and I didn't know who I was. I felt directionless, purposeless, and alone, but never lost—I have never been *lost*. A harsh and traumatic home life destroyed any self-worth and self-esteem I ever had the chance to have and I knew I had a lot of work and healing to do. I felt emotionally splayed, vulnerable, rejected, unloved, invisible, and I was in extreme pain. To pile on, I was unprepared and naïve for an unforgiving world that I was catapulted into after my mother's death when I was 18. What kept me strong and upright was being a loner, an independent and autonomous introvert, a

bitch when called upon, and I had a drive to understand my psyche and my life. Hail to the late bloomers!

I have many wonderful, joyful, and happy memories of growing up, but the undertow of my life was the feeling that there was no real belonging or an adult that I could ever count on and, to most of my family, I was the weird black sheep of the bunch. From an early age, it was pounded into me that I was a wallflower (invisible), stupid, unlovable, and would never amount to much, which was a storyline I intuitively knew was not me. I felt like I did not matter, so being accepted in the world was not an option. I have been ignored, rejected, overlooked, and unwanted in ways that have stunned me, and it felt like I just did not fit in or belong anywhere; a sidebar to this is that there was a sense of safety to be under the radar—sometimes being invisible has its advantages. I was forced to stand alone—to be alone; it was either sink or swim so I chose to swim. Fortunately for me, this created a direct link to my inner Self—a place where I could safely disappear, but it also meant looking at things that were scary, unpredictable, and painful. It created a portal where I became acutely aware of my inner reality—I became a silent watcher and witness to life. I paid attention to my emotions, my reactions, and I *very* closely observed people.

An important thing to mention at this juncture is that often hurt, traumatized, and wounded people will act out and spill their trauma, anger, shame, and rejection into the world and hurt others. Some people choose to internalize and take things out on themselves, which is what my younger self did. My experiences and stories are unique to me, as are yours, but the fallout and aftershocks from abuse are themes that many traumatized people share. If any of this sounds familiar to you, you are not alone.

My very capable, well-adjusted, and courageous friend moved back to her childhood home to take care of an aging parent, who led her to believe she needed daily assistance. Instead, she was confronted with a mother who continued with the messaging she received as a child that she was not good enough and unlovable. She had internalized that message and translated it to mean something was wrong with her, so consequently her story was being unlovable. As an adult at home, she saw a mother exhibiting emotionally abusive, manipulative, deceitful, and narcissistic behavior, and a person incapable of love, compassion, or nurturing.

Through a great deal of emotional pain and triggers, my beloved friend realized it was never about her or being so wrong in this world that she was condemned to being contemptible. She was brave to knowingly walk into the lion's den alone and face her own pain and fears. Her reward is freedom, healing, and the keys to walk away, which she did. She released her judgments of self-recrimination, self-doubt, guilt, and obligatory love. This is spirit walking, soul alchemy, and transformation of the Self. This is what going within looks like—walking into the wild not knowing what to expect and doing the difficult and challenging work. Brava, my beautiful friend!

*“You only are free when you realize you belong no place—you belong every place—no place at all. The price is high. The reward is great.”*

—Maya Angelou

## **Beliefs**

Let me preface what I am about to propose; my goal is not to challenge, attack, or place judgment on personal religious or spiritual beliefs or faith, but to give you a psychological framework concerning beliefs and the human need to feel safe and secure, and how we place meaning upon everything we do. In our modern world there are approximately over 4,000 religions (not counting obscure religions) with close to 85% of people believing in the idea of a supreme being. Maybe, we as a species are hardwired to believe in something greater than ourselves. Many organizations including religions, wellness, self-help, metaphysics, and all the rest, have some kind of hook or bait to draw a person in. Because people are social and community minded and we gravitate toward like-minded people, some will be attracted to promises of a better life, salvation, or heavenly rewards. They use religion and groups as a security blanket and they surrender their power when there is a lack of understanding about the world around them or when things change too quickly.

People need answers, explanations, and meanings about why “good or evil” land on their doorstep. If you cannot keep up emotionally and mentally with the changes in life and you flounder, or what appears as floundering in your own societal or personal structure, you may feel you have no power or be inclined to give your power away to religion, a philosophy, an individual, a corporation, or to a government, for example. By doing this, you deny yourself. You deny your own Self to be the source of your power to run your own life based on your free will.

In the structure of life and in the patterns of functionality, people look for security that can be relied upon, especially when the going gets tough—whether it comes from an institution, religion, spirituality, or the wellness and self-help industry. People create illusions of security, which only negates their own inner power. The consequence of this is a lack of personal responsibility for one’s thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and actions. Many people are too quick and willing to abandon their own sense of responsibility, finding it easier for someone in authority to think for them or they assign blame to others, not realizing the great freedom personal responsibility ultimately brings.

When you deny yourself in this manner and do not take responsibility for the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and choices you make in life, you open yourself up to outside influences. You begin listening to the belief structures of people who are always willing to influence you with *their* beliefs on what to do and how to do it. When you believe you have no power of your own, you begin believing others know more than you do. After you convince yourself of this, you may want to emulate those people and you wind up patterning yourself after others because they *seem* to have the answers you are seeking. Once the belief of powerlessness has been internalized, it can be passed on as victimization or other neuroses from generation to generation.

To speak of powerlessness, we must also look at the powerlessness that people can experience because of systemic abuses by people in power and leadership roles that engage in coerced manipulations such as sexual harassment and abuse by church leaders, school teachers, university and Olympic coaches, senators, CEOs, Boy Scout leaders, and the

consequences of systemic racism in and by our justice system. Abuses are often covered up to protect the perpetrator, protect the reputation of individuals, the reputation of an institution, or a network of people involved in illegal and illicit behavior that many people are benefiting from. Power is sometimes stripped from those who speak out, report abuses, and often those individuals are met with death threats, social media attacks, violence, or kept quiet with threats to their family's safety.

People who use coercive control, especially cult leaders, will create an unequal power dynamic that will lead to emotional and sometimes physical abuse—this can happen in any relationship. Perpetrators will love bomb and draw people to them by having an inviting hook that makes their ideology grandiose and special. They will slowly isolate their followers from outside influences by creating an enemy, which can be an evil world, family, friends, or anyone who potentially will question what is going on within the group. Followers are required to give up their possessions, work long hours without pay, and bend their will to the will of their leader or prophet. When a person loses their identity and becomes the identity of the group, any group, their ability to think critically is broken down and they rely on their leader for direction because they feel confused and insecure about their own thoughts and feelings. To think independently and to question the leader is to betray the group and could be met with a physical beating, excessive labor, or shunning. When a follower's free will disintegrates and becomes the will of the leader, control is maintained by isolation, fear, intimidation, peer pressure, and punishment.

Still, people do eventually wake up to destructive ideologies, people do escape cults and cult-like situations, and sometimes when one person wakes up, others will follow one-by-one by reclaiming their personal power, individuality, and moral compass. No one wakes up one day and decides to be in a cult. Some are born into it, but mostly people are looking for love and acceptance that a group can offer, a community of like-minded people, inclusion, and a better life.

You were born as a human being living in the present moment without judgment or a sense of time. As I have stated, throughout your life you have been indoctrinated, conditioned, domesticated, and socialized by other peoples' views, ideologies, and narratives, and because of that, you have been taught whom to love or hate, and what to love or hate. The natural alignment with the authentic and true Self we had as babies becomes distorted. When you don't have a clue as to who you are, you are vulnerable to creating an identity based on someone else's agenda. Socrates' maxim, *know thyself*, is to encourage exploration of one's self-understanding. In an intimate way, we can lean into our consciousness, question what we have been taught, what we believe, and press onward with uninhibited self-reflection.

We humans have been gifted with a planet that can only be described as paradise. We have been gifted with free will. We have been gifted with endless creativity, intuition, instinct, and the ability to use logic and reason. What have we done to this beautiful earth, to each other, and its other inhabitants? Our Mother Earth has been ravaged, poisoned, and her resources exploited and depleted without so much as a by-your-leave. Humans have not loved, protected, nor respected the hand that so willingly and lovingly provides for us.

Humans have not, on a global scale, taken care of one another, and many individuals, religions, and governments have instead chosen the path of power, control, and greed. And because many people are too frightened of their own personal power and too afraid to take an honest look at who they are, they willingly give their power to those who seek to take it.

You are spirit in the flesh. You are consciousness. Your thoughts, emotions, choices, and actions are always within your own command. The Creator endowed you with the ability to create and recreate anything in your life, so you always have the power to make your own decisions about what is right or wrong for you. Do not give your power away by believing you are less than you are. You are consciousness and an individualized expression of the eternal *The Whole of Existence*. We are all connected to one another; we all come from the same source and web of life.

*“The earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”*

—Chief Seattle



Animals are not like human beings—they have no distinction between life and death because they know each is a part of the other. The animal is going to a place in which it will begin a new life, and the stones represent the many lifetimes the animal has had. The pond represents the emotional universe, *The Whole of Existence*.

## 6

### ANIMALS ARE LIVING SOULS

*“Animals, like us, are living souls. They are not things. They are not objects. Neither are they human. Yet they mourn. They love. They dance. They suffer. They know the peaks and chasms of being.”*

—Gary Kowalski

The English word *animal* comes from the Latin root word *anima*, which means vital force of the world. The ancient Greeks spoke of what we know as *anima mundi* meaning “world soul,” which in many circles of thought, at the time, equates to the essential and natural connection with all living beings—a natural relationship to the world as a living soul. This concept and belief have roots with the classical Greeks, which Plato embraced, recognizing the universe as a living being. As translated by W.R.M. Lamb in 1925 Plato states, “Thus, then, in accordance with the likely account, we must declare that this Cosmos has verily come into existence as a Living Creature endowed with soul and reason.” Plato further states that the Cosmos is “a Living Creature, one and visible, containing within itself all the living creatures, which are by nature akin to itself.”

While many philosophers during the Age of Enlightenment (17th and 18th centuries) believed in pantheism, which is a belief that the universe exists within God, yet God also transcends the universe to exist outside of it, many of the philosophers held fast to the erroneous belief that animals only existed to be used at our whim and pleasure. Adversely, future theologians and philosophers reoriented ancient philosophies and beliefs by limiting the existence of the soul only to human beings. While our disconnect with nature began long ago, it was this shift in consciousness and the abandonment of nature’s wisdom that reduced the sacredness of animals to a desultory, biological, mechanical, and unthinking existence devoid of consciousness, deep emotional experiences, and a vast inner world and landscape.

Indigenous cultures have characteristically appreciated and treated the Earth as a conscious living being, and without science, our ancestors directly interfaced with, and were engaged in, a spiritual relationship with the natural world. The beauty and advanced intelligence of nature is based upon cooperation. Largely due to the world’s leading forest ecologist, Professor Suzanne Simard, a Canadian scientist, and author of *Finding the Mother Tree*, we have discovered the neurobiology of plants and trees, the vast networks of communication through the various communities of symbiotic fungi, and the cooperation and communication between trees, plants, insects, and animals that create a healthy forest community.

We have turned to and used animals to serve us in many ways—we consume them, we experiment on them, slaughter them, use them for labor, keep them as pets, and kill them

for sport. They have been our companions, emotional supporters, and they adapt well to service, rescue, and detection. Most importantly, they are our brothers, sisters, and fellow travelers in this world who enhance our very existence and give us a direct spiritual communion with the natural world, joy, and the exuberance of life. Without animals and nature, we would be spiritually crippled, emotionally starved, lonely, and a significant portion of our consciousness would be vandalized and excavated.

*“If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beasts also happens to the man. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth.”*

—Chief Seattle

In the frightening 2022 *Living Planet Report*, the World Wide Fund for Nature, Inc. (WWF) reported that the *Living Planet Index*, which studies the currents in biodiversity and health of the planet, report that wildlife populations have plummeted to an average of 69% since 1970, which clearly states that: “...we are living through the dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change driven by the unsustainable use of our planet’s resources.” They also point out that these crises affect not only the environment, but impact humans in many negative ways. And who is mostly responsible? Industrialized countries. In Vienna, Dr. Nikolaus Szucsich from the Natural History Museum, studied the decline of vertebrates in Austria. He found that over the last 30 years, Austria has lost almost 70% of their vertebrates. The chief cause? Humans.

Have you heard of the windshield phenomenon? It is the observation that insects, over the last 20 years, have declined at an alarming rate. The severe loss, above and below ground, of our insect population, which is vital for the world’s food supply, causes entire food chains to collapse without the pollination of crops. Without crops, there will be no food for birds, reptiles, amphibians, etc.—without insects, frogs will die and without frogs, the lizards, snakes, owls, hawks, leeches, and dragonflies lose a food source (there are 22 frog predators). The whole food chain is affected. The main cause of what is being called the insect apocalypse? Humans.

I remember when the lovebug population in Florida was so massive twice a year that I had to scrape them off my windshield and the bug shield that protected the hood of my car—they were everywhere and you better not open your mouth outside because you might find yourself having a little snack. Now? I rarely see them. Lovebugs are good for the environment, especially for the soil because, by laying their eggs in dying vegetation essential nutrients are redistributed back into the ground, which benefits plants and the environment. Populations do fluctuate depending on how much it rains and periods of drought, but their significant loss, I think, is mainly due to urban sprawl and pesticides.

The *Living Planet Index* (LPI) also states that the decline of freshwater populations, more than any other species, has reached an average of 83% since 1970. “Habitat loss and barriers to migration routes account for around half the threats to these populations.” From the website of World Wide Fund for Nature:

## LPI Biodiversity Loss by Region:

- North America: 20%
- Latin America and the Caribbean: 94%
- Africa: 66%
- Europe–Central Asia: 18%
- Asia–Pacific: 55%

Tom recently witnessed a confused and lost deer on our street looking for cover in an area that is losing woods daily to accommodate new homes, apartments, and big-box stores. Bewildered and stressed animals who use instinct, familiarity, and memory to navigate within their territories, habitats, and paths, are first traumatized by large machinery, that in a day or two can obliterate acres of woods or forests. People will have to expect to see more animals wandering into neighborhoods and communities looking for food, water, and shelter. They are forced to either encroach, move on, adjust to what is left of their habitat, or they die—by our hands or by our habits.

In 2023, the news carried a story about a Florida sheriff who suggested another state-sanctioned bear hunt, which has been suspended since 2015 because too many bears are finding their way into populated areas, which is due to over development. One bear in Seminole County opened a refrigerator near a residential pool area and downed some alcoholic seltzer. Another bear made its way into Disney World. This is a situation created by man and killing animals is not a solution. For now, they are suggesting people keep their trash cans securely closed and bring in any food like birdfeeders or dog food. However, bears are smart—there is a video on the Internet from a security camera of a bear standing upright carrying a large plastic garbage can into the woods from a Connecticut home.

I have read articles and seen videos of disoriented deer jumping through windows of homes, bears sifting through local garbage, and I have seen my fair share of dead fawns in the gutters of our streets and on the roads of our interstates. And how, pray tell, are we to protect the remaining wilderness that borders our sprawl? Are animals collateral damage in our quest for MORE? Is nature just an inconvenience for our malls, and the gated communities and subdivisions that control people with unregulated HOAs? As humans thumb their noses at nature's wilderness and her wild, we are only thumbing our noses at ourselves and betraying our responsibility to be stewards.

Mother Nature, as a living consciousness, is profoundly aware of the transgressions humans have made against her. She will continue to respond to the violations with stronger and more frequent hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, flooding, droughts, and freakish weather such as the hailstorm that caused ice-covered roads in Mexico City on June 12, 2022. Is nature retaliating for our relentless violence and assault on her? It is obvious to me that she is *responding*, but Mother Nature is only expressing and replying in her own way, just as anyone would who is chronically traumatized.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the Earth is a living being. The fate of the Earth, *fate meaning a situation that when left to its own free will, will communicate within itself to create what is needed for itself*—the situation, which has its own free will to re-

create, will protect itself in a way that makes no room for chance or interference. So far, we have dictated and controlled nature to serve whatever outcomes we want, and the consequence is that the Earth is turning away from us in real time. The Earth is an extension of ourselves, we are one, but we have separated ourselves from her. The Earth, now creating a new identity to protect herself, is confronting us in a big way and, yes, turning on us in her own way.

Globally, there are many people who care for the Earth and the welfare of humanity, and as we laud the activists, leaders, speakers, and exemplars, let us use their momentum to continue to put pressure on governments and businesses to change their ways to work *with* nature. Focus on making quality products that last, have replaceable parts, can be recycled, and responsible for proper waste disposal. The very people who shit on the Earth live here too, apparently without any thought for how future generations will have to deal with the consequences of their negligence. Insisting that world leaders prioritize their people, animals, and the health of the Earth, is one of many places to start.

Convenience is not a bad thing, progress is not a bad thing, our modern world is not a bad thing, and giving the benefit of doubt, I would like to think that most people are doing the best they can with what they are able to work with. It is also imperative that we recognize when we are sold a bill of goods by those who are addicted to power, control, greed, and parasitic capitalism. The cards are stacked against most of us right now in this respect, and to me, it feels like nothing more than a back-alley mugging, slick pickpocketing, and sleight of hand. One of the best ways I have found to recognize coercive and malignant narcissism, fear, manipulation, paranoia, and control in all areas of life where a human is involved, is to study the tactics of cult leaders. By doing that, we can be cognizant of the negative, coercive, and manipulative behavior by individuals, world leaders, lobbyists, special interest groups, and corporations. There are predictable behaviors, tactics, and exploitations they all use, so if we ever find ourselves wanting to silence another person or become intolerant of topics or problems we need to face, follow the money, agendas, and where the information is generated from.

The consequence of our collaboration is that we have amputated our roots and disengaged ourselves from the natural world. As deeply as some would like to believe that we each stand alone in our authority and as superiors in the universe, we are inextricably, intimately, and inescapably connected to every living thing in every reality and dimension that exists or will ever exist. Our shortsightedness and reluctance to change our ways fail to support the psychological and emotional web of networks we have available to us in this reality to make an impactful positive change. Our private inner lives have been strangled by the belief that our inner forces that are there to guide us are untrustworthy. Because of this, small-mindedness has confined the majority to living shallow and narrow lives. By understanding the true nature of animals and our natural world, we can and will free ourselves to live in an age of consciousness where we *understand* consciousness and how it functions. We can do this by allowing ourselves to change internally, not by stopping it.

Given that we are connected to *everything*, it would be wise to develop a healthy relationship with animals and nature and turn to the wisdom of Indigenous elders around

the world to shepherd us into a greater spiritual understanding of the natural world. We could further our relationship with the Earth and protect the planet's natural resources by prioritizing the work of ecologists, conservationists, zoologists, and other environmental scientists. Moving away from deforestation and industrialized farming, we could support community organic agriculture that would benefit us greatly on a local level. If we pay close attention to the world around us, we can see that animals are fully aware of their own consciousness. We can learn from the animals around us because they are here to help us grow and to understand about life, nature, reality, and the nature *of* reality. It is our choice and right to believe and say what we want, but be certain that once people allow themselves to face their own suffering, unenlightened outlook, entitlement, and *it's all about me and the world needs to adjust to me* syndrome, each person will have the opportunity to open their consciousness and awareness to understand and appreciate that animal awareness is far more advanced than humankind's.

If we took the time to look deeply into the awareness of animals, we would learn about instinct, energy connections, emotions, and living in the moment; not living or lingering in the past or the future, as people usually do. We all have stories about ourselves that we carry and for whatever reason that may serve us, we also tend to believe and take on stories that other people tell us about ourselves—unless we have confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem to recognize their falseness and rebuff them. For the most part, people are taught to deny their own consciousness. Again, the consequences are that people believe they are powerless, unworthy, worthless, bad, helpless, and sometimes unwittingly or due to indoctrination or pressure, give their power away to other people. That would include the agendas, ideas, delusions, and narcissism that come from embedded institutions, cult leaders, or conspiracy theories.

It is time to wake up and plant our flag, both individually and collectively, upon the inner wilderness of our own consciousness, creative power, imagination, and free will. The first step to accomplish this tall order is to face and heal the traumas we have experienced in life and recognize how they have shaped our psyche. With healing, we can reflect on how humans have retroactively traumatized other inhabitants of our living world and we can do this with honesty and compassion for ourselves and others. When we change and evolve, it becomes easier to adopt more ethical beliefs and practices.

The day I discovered that many Christian religions believe animals are soulless remains etched in my memory as if it happened yesterday. It was September 1999 shortly after Hurricane Floyd barely missed NE Florida. The state was cleaning up and I was a courier with FedEx. When I pulled up to a house to make my delivery, I was greeted by a beautiful, friendly, sweetest-dog-ever German Shepherd. The recipient of the package was not home so I tagged his door for a reattempt the next day. I stayed a few minutes so I could play with the dog and I gave her some treats that I always kept in the cargo pocket of my pants.

When I returned the next day, the dog was faithfully lying on the walkway to the house and greeted me with eagerness, knowing I had treats. Together, we walked to the front door where the recipient signed for his package, and while talking with him, I told him how taken I was with his dog. He said that he found her wandering around after the effects of

Hurricane Mitch, the year before. I mentioned how she was probably very grateful that he found her, took her in, loved her, and gave her a home.

He said to me, “My mother would disagree with me, but the dog doesn’t have feelings because she doesn’t have a soul—animals don’t have souls.”

Holy crap! Stunned, I told him I agreed with his mother and absolutely, animals have feelings and *are* souls! I figured I better scam at that point because I tend to speak my mind and be very blunt at times, so I left baffled. That afternoon, I asked a work mate and friend who was unloading his truck, whom I knew to be religious, if this was something he too believed.

He said, “Yes, animals don’t have a soul.”

After talking about this for a few minutes, I asked him what happens to all the animals on the Earth and he said, “They just die.”

I asked, “Where are the animals once you get to heaven—where *are* the animals?”

His answer was that there are no animals in heaven and God creates images of animals for companionship so people won’t be lonely. Surprised, I flatly said with a chuckle, “So, God creates fake animals so you won’t be lonely in heaven? Does that really make sense to you?”

After a playful exchange, I promised him that when both of us are long gone from this world, I would find him and remind him of our conversation to see if he would like to amend his belief. He told me with great confidence that I would find out that he is the one who would be right. Laughing, we made a pact to meet in the afterlife. I was truly surprised to learn that this viewpoint existed and for a moment, part of my worldview was bewildered.

The centuries-old beliefs that theologians have held so close to their bosoms about the superiority of man and that animals are soulless, leads me to Genesis 1:26, “And God said, let *us* make man in *our image*, after *our likeness*.” Who is *us* and in whose *our likeness* and *image* would that be? I have my own thoughts about that, but to continue in a religious context, for me, this passage shows the separation of man from nature and the glorification of man. Out of this exaltation comes what we have been taught to believe to be the meaning of the trinity—Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost—the trinity as referenced in the Holy Bible. May I propose that there is another trinity that is comprised of these three bodies: the *Mind*, which is the *Whole of Existence*—our source, our soul, and our core Self; the *Body*, which is our physical body/brain; and the *Spiritual*, which is the desire to know and experience our core Self.

Continuing with verse 26, “... and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth...” Synonyms from my thesaurus describe dominion as supremacy, dominance, authority, or control. The Bible places “man” as the crown of God’s creation. Most Christian religions believe that man is the absolute and all creatures are “given into the hands of man.” Humans are infused with a nescient aura that they are the master species and all other life forms are either insignificant or a part of diminished forms on the consciousness scale—they mean very little to nothing.

We have infected ourselves with dangerous hubris, which does not make room for, and often invalidates, the deep and natural awareness of connection, cooperation, and collaboration that we should—in a positive way—be practicing with each other as well as with nature. When we acknowledge our own pain, ignorance, greed, and how we have placed ourselves above and separate from the natural world, we will realize that animals are far more enlightened than we are. Animals are a gift to humankind that has been sorely unappreciated, misused, and abused based on the views and beliefs that animals are inferior and only here to serve man.

Along the way, scientists have categorized living things as belonging to the plant kingdom (Plantae), animal kingdom (Animalia), and fungi kingdom (Protista) based on Ernest Haeckel's three-domain system. In a children's YouTube™ video on mammals, it explains that animals are divided into two groups; vertebrates (having a spine) and invertebrate (those without a spine). Animals in both groups are further divided into smaller groups called classifications, which are based on their different traits. There are five different groups for all vertebrates: mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians. Mammals and birds are warm blooded, but fish and reptiles are not in the same group because they lay eggs. Mammals that are milk-producing, are divided into three living groups: monotremes (lays eggs and nurse their young by the secretion of milk from pores in the skin), marsupials (carried in a pouch), and placentals.

The fourth group, multituberculates (rodent-like mammals that existed for over 120–130 million years), are now extinct. A human is a placental mammal as are dogs, cats, lions, cows, horses, whales, dolphins, manatees, gorillas, etc., which means there is a tubular passageway and a placenta for the fetus—not all placental mammals have a uterus. Placental mammals are the largest and most well-known group of mammals. Allow me, in a big way, to emphasize that we humans are the infants in the animal world.

By not changing, we will lock ourselves into a pattern of misunderstanding nature, animals, ourselves, and everyone else until we are willing to let ourselves go—not die—but let ourselves go to find ourselves *within* ourselves to be what, and function as, what we really are, and that means seeing ourselves as whole energy beings that are a part of the universe and a part of everything and everyone. Whatever and whomever that exist in the universe are a part of us—someday we will get this. Then, we will be able to function within a higher consciousness.

## **Love**

*Below, is information I received from a guide who sometimes communicates with me through automatic writing...*

“Love matters. Love is the driving force of the universe, which is consciousness. Consciousness is love. Love is the primary law of the universe. It would behoove all to think of our universe as a living, breathable, fluctuating, ever expanding and contracting entity whose sole purpose is creation. Love is deeply implanted in the purpose of the universe and it is out of love that you exist. It is because of love that

you are here to express your own purpose, your own individual and collective expressions of the very love that brought you here. Love does not conquer all because love *is* the all. It is everything. It is out of love that you need to understand that consciousness is the basis of *The Whole of Existence*, and love is the binding factor of all life. When humans understand the fountainhead of love and embrace the love of one's own existence and personhood, love will stream to Mother Earth and all her inhabitants. No longer will creatures fear man as the destructors and will see man as protectors and co-creators of this majestic reality, our shared universe, and universes beyond."

We can be, and in time we will be, our own greatest friend and friends to other animal creatures as well as our neighbors in our universe. No one is coming to save us—humans are responsible for the state of the world and it is our responsibility to clean up the massive mess we have made, not only with animals and the environment, but with our deeper selves, interpersonal relationships, and the habitual leanings for violence and greed as well. We need to make sure that our children, grandchildren, and the future unborn inherit a thriving natural world that can sustain *all* life on Earth in a healthy way.

Love itself expands and contracts with fluidity and integrates itself with all life. Animals understand life and conceptualize it in a far superior way than humans do. They instinctively know and understand the give-and-take of life and they are very aware of their own existence and the existence of other life forms. They have an uncanny knack for perception and unbridled expression—exactly as young children do—and they are brilliantly living the life they have chosen for themselves, exactly as humans are doing. They *know* love and express love without limitations, without conditions, and without any thought of withholding love; animals love unconditionally. They understand instinctively their role in this reality and they have an inner understanding and awareness about life. They form loving bonds and friendships among themselves and with other species, they have families, communities, they grieve, and often have their own rituals for burying their dead.

On July 7, 2012, The Francis Crick Memorial Conference on Human and non-Human Animals gathered international cognitive scientists in Cambridge, UK. *The Declaration on Consciousness* stated that animals have consciousness and declared:

"The absence of a neocortex does not appear to preclude an organism from experiencing affective states. Convergent evidence indicates that non-human animals have the neuroanatomical, neurochemical, and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states along with the capacity to exhibit intentional behaviors. Consequently, the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Non-human animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates."

The declaration, written by Philip Low, was signed in the presence of Stephen Hawking. I am not sure that Stephen Hawking's presence makes the declaration any more valid or credible, but there it is and I am grateful for whatever part he played. It is time to begin looking at animals as being the best thing to happen on our planet Earth. I have great faith

and trust in our own ability to evolve and raise our collective consciousness to embrace the fact that all living creatures have consciousness, are of consciousness, are fully aware, and possess a full range of emotions. From animals, we can learn how to live, how to care for each other, how to get along with each other, and eventually learn how to lay down our arms. We can learn how to move toward each other with outstretched hands in friendship, no longer with disdain for one another and other creatures. This is not some Hippie-Dippy concept or a suggestion that we should all become kumbaya naval gazers. Sure, we will have conflicts and competition, but we can learn to approach life in a more mature and playful way and less of a wrecked way.

People have a lot to learn. We are coming around slowly, very slowly, but surely. Maybe slowly is the way to get things done the right way, because if you thrust all people into love, compassion, and taking care of each other, people would feel confused, paranoid, resistant, and would not know what to do. It would be so foreign to them they would quickly revert to the old ways of comfortable behavior, even if that behavior were self-sabotaging, painful, or toxic to their own evolvment and enlightenment. Our evolutionary path must unfold in a natural way and in its own time. It cannot be forced. How long before we can live in a thriving way for all? As potent as my optimism is, and as I take a deep releasing breath, my thoughts are that it may take hundreds or even thousands of years before we liberate ourselves from ourselves and learn to progress as a people. We will surely digress if we choose division and isolation, which will only create a harsh and disturbing ride for the Earth and ourselves.

### **Awareness, Emotions, and Energy**

Animals, having a full range of emotions, function more candidly and honestly than people. They live in the moment, think, and reason *to a degree* and in their own way. They do not rationalize as humans do, and they know nothing of the concepts of shame, regret, right and wrong, or have moral conflicts, and they are *never* troubled by mortality. They are whole and understand and accept the natural order of life and their place in the world. Animals remain free of limitations of and within their essence, their beingness. They do not clutter themselves with grandiose illusions or postulations and their instincts and emotions guide them.

Animals defend family and territory and they experience life in the most natural and unprocessed of ways. They do not make divisions within themselves because they are, in every sense of the word, whole and are continuously in a state of knowing their own wholeness—wholeness of self and beingness that is void of self-judgment, and they remain whole no matter what physical or emotional condition they are in. They are always living their own truth. Through our domesticated lens, we often see nature under numerous circumstances as being harsh and violent where animals die, become injured, sick, or attacked by other animals. A horny male squirrel will toss newborns out of a nest to get to the female, and when new male lions take over a pride, they kill the cubs to procreate with the females, ending their focus on nurturing cubs that belong to another male. Animal infanticide is common, but more common with males than females.

Regardless of their state of being, they remain complete within every experience that is happening in their reality—there is an acceptance of themselves at every moment even through trauma. We are the only beings in the entire animal kingdom who place judgment on ourselves, others, and situations. Why? Because human beings are fundamentally not as secure within themselves as animals are. Nature does not judge.

Gary Kowalski recounts a story in his book, *The Souls of Animals*, about zoologist Adriaan Kortland, who, in December 1963 witnessed a remarkable and soul-stirring scene in an African rain forest. A chimpanzee, possibly on its way to his/her nightly nesting site at dusk, paused to take in a stunningly beautiful sunset. Adriaan Kortland recounted, “Once I saw a chimpanzee gaze at a particularly beautiful sunset for a full 15 minutes, watching the changing colors [and then] retire to the forest without picking a pawpaw for supper.” For the full 15 minutes, the mesmerized animal was completely immersed in the changing colors of the sunset.

Animals have an appreciation for beauty, their surroundings, and their world. It is not unusual for an animal to be aware of and enthralled by a sunset, sunrise, or other beautiful scenery. What they naturally do is to thoroughly merge, blend, and become one with their surroundings—they *become* their surroundings. To put this another way, they experience their experience from within as well as outside of themselves simultaneously. *They become a part of everything and become part of their own experience.* This is something that people do not generally think about doing, but if we practiced this on a regular basis, we could expand our own consciousness exponentially. Most people distance themselves from their surroundings, negate and push themselves away from experiencing the blending of the oneness of life. The most fruitful and satisfying ways to rejuvenate myself, find solace from a chaotic world, and to replenish my soul is to connect with nature and animals—it is far easier to be present in my life when I feel close with nature. Think how exciting life *could be* if we practiced imagining ourselves blending, merging, and becoming one with our surroundings several times a day. We could set into motion the intention of expanding reality and do what animals do naturally.

Animals, as well as people, dip in and out of other dimensions within reality numerous times all day every day. *Every* form of life will exist in our present physical reality as well as all other dimensions of this reality, or what we term alternate realities, at the same time—all exist in the present moment. *All* bodies that exist in separate dimensions of reality are connected because of, and by, energy. Energy connects everything—remember, dimensions make up reality. Everywhere, life is life and life will exist in every Now Moment in every dimension. While all dimensions hold life, our life form in this reality exists in the same way in other dimensions, yet in slightly different ways. If you look at and understand life in the correct way, you will see everything as energy—nothing but energy. Many theoretical physicists give credence to the existence of an infinite number of versions of ourselves that exist throughout “time.”

We are unaware and often oblivious of our dimensional selves because we are intently focused on being a waking, alive, physical human being in a physical reality. The consequence of that is we cheat ourselves out of a part of ourselves. For example, we *could*

momentarily merge with another version of ourselves. Not permanently, but in a spontaneous spurt that allows thought, emotion, and experience to blend—for a moment. Human beings have a knack of dividing themselves into the conscious, subconscious, unconscious, and superconscious, not realizing that it all bleeds together, is fluid, and there is an awareness between all levels. I do not personally believe in levels of consciousness, but I use the word here and in other chapters because it serves the purpose for making a point. All “levels” of consciousness of an animal work together at one time—in harmony because animals accept themselves just as they are. Of course, trauma and suffering are parts and pieces of a human’s and animal’s creative design for their lifetime. However, we must realize and understand that people, animals, insects, plant life, and everything that is alive has an enduring and powerful desire and impetus to experience all that is found in imagination—everywhere.

Most people don’t understand this because they routinely do not believe they can exist or have existences in other dimensions. The possibility is easily dismissed because most individuals only focus on and understand the reality of what they can see, feel, touch, smell, hear, and taste. When we can move through the illusion and camouflage of our present reality, we will be able to see into and understand other dimensions and how, when, and where they exist.

Animals are quite aware of doing this. They momentarily blend the other, or an alternate dimension with their present reality, which makes them far more alert than human beings. Rarely does this happen on a conscious level for humans, and the dipping in and out of alternate dimensions happens so fast that we are normally unaware of it. Nevertheless, animals are keenly aware and usually *know* when it is happening within them. Because of their innate understanding of energy, domesticated and wild animals are more alert to weather changes, earthquakes, and danger. Our domesticated dogs and cats, for instance, can sense the energy of a person and assess whom they like or dislike and are more aware of the energy around them.

They also gain information about people, other animals, and their surroundings through smell—you know this if you have ever had a dog plant their nose in your crotch. A dog can hear frequencies up to 47 kHz, but the American Kennel Club states dogs can hear up to 65 kHz, cats can hear up to 64 kHz, and the average range for humans is 20 Hz to 20 kHz. These numbers are not set in stone. They reflect an approximation because everyone will have their own opinion. The debate will rage on between dog and cat parents as to which one has better hearing, but to put this debate into context, mice have been found to hear up to 100 kHz.

Because a dog’s (and cat’s) olfactory receptors are superlative, working dogs such as the very intelligent herding dog, the Belgian Malinois, are trained for search and rescue, bomb detection, and used by the military and police. Other breeds are also trained as working dogs known as cadaver dogs that are utilized to find dead bodies and burial grounds—sometimes ancient grounds. Dogs have been trained for identifying cancerous moles, drug detection, and some women have reported that the family dog alerted them to breast cancer by the dog

repeatedly nudging the breast with its nose, long before a mammogram would have detected it.

In WWI, “Trench Cats” were used to boost morale, give comfort, and provide companionship to soldiers in the trenches. As well as companions and keeping rat populations down, some cats were used to detect bombs because of their sensitivity to atmospheric pressure and many perished because of their almost immediate susceptibility to the effects of the near odorless and invisible gases used against the Allies. Pigeons were trained in the late 70s by the U.S. Coast Guard to spot people lost at sea, and dolphins, whales, and seals were researched to be used for military operations.

Sometimes during readings, which I hold over Zoom, a person’s animal companion, usually a dog, cat, or bird will want to communicate with me when they have something to say—as well as deceased animals connected to the person. During a reading with a beautiful young woman, her cat made her way into our session to sit quietly with the woman to communicate a warning she had for her. Through a vision, feelings, and words, the cat expressed her dislike for the last man who had been in the apartment. Thinking it would be a male friend or someone the woman dated, she said there had not been a man in the apartment for some time. The cat was persistent and again she said it was the last man in the apartment and she did not like him because he wanted something from her—he had a controlling personality and to stay away. Thinking again, the woman said that the last man to be there was the maintenance man.

Simultaneously, the cat gave me an image of him standing by the kitchen counter and the woman verified that it was the maintenance man who had recently been there in the kitchen. She said, “He hit on me.” I reinforced the warning her cat gave and she said, “But he seemed so nice.” I told her, “They always seem nice in the beginning until they have you hooked emotionally and invested in the relationship.” Animals always know.

For us, the dipping in and out of other dimensions may give us a feeling that something is different, or a feeling that something is slightly off, and we may dismiss the feeling as our imagination. When people abandon their feelings, they also miss witnessing and realizing their wholeness. Emotionally experiencing one’s wholeness brings a person to the core of the Self. You will always return to *you* no matter the journeys and paths you choose in life.

The deep experience of experiencing your core Self is achievable while consciously awake as well as being in other altered states of consciousness, but this kind of experience is presently out of reach for most people. I can see future generations, as they mature and become consciousness-minded, having natural access to this awareness of themselves. It is something that is so profound and life changing that it cannot be put into words. Just like unconditional love, people do not know what it really means. Unconditional love is void of judgment, is pure love and compassion, and is not translatable, but once emotionally experienced, it becomes a knowing. The same is true when a person transcends time and space to be within the presence of their entire beingness, which encompasses every experience, thought, and feeling that ever existed for that person. It is also void of judgment, filled with love, compassion, self-acceptance, and self-love. Experiencing the true Self gives

an individual the *knowing* that they have always been; having no beginning, no end, and timeless.

The consciousness of an animal is different than human consciousness. The same, because consciousness is consciousness, but theirs is a bit different in the sense that as people regularly dip into dimensions, animals do it more often, which means they not only can connect with their core Self, but also with the other versions of themselves. Just as people have versions of themselves but are normally unaware of it, animals know it and they experience those versions of themselves far more often than people do.

Dogs, for example, can key in on peoples' energy when people are with them or far away from them. Often, our dog Jack will look out the front door glass, lie down in front of the door, or whine at the door when he senses either one of us is coming home from errands. He knows, and I swear he can hear the car a mile away. We had company coming over one day and for two hours before she arrived, he kept checking for her by looking through the glass that is part of the design of the front door, to check the driveway for her. Animals have an intense connection with peoples' energy, which is a normal and highly functional part of who they are. They are constantly communicating with us telepathically and through their body language and actions.

Animals, without inhibition, share their emotions with people and other animals. When you want to communicate with, let's say a dog, the best way to do it is to relax your mind, look into their eyes, send them images, and think and talk to them in a gentle easy voice. It will take practice staying out of your own way and getting out of your head to receive their thoughts and feelings, and at first, the communication from your pet may not pop into your awareness until later. It takes practice on your part to understand and blend with your pet's vibes. When they want to communicate with you telepathically, and it is always by the choice of the animal, and for most people, they will send you images and thoughts. Communicating with your pet is possible for many people, and verbally, animals understand in the language they are brought up with.

Communicating in a telepathic way, language barriers dissolve—I do not know how or why, I only know it works. Maybe there is a merging of not only energy, but each other's experiences. It works in my readings when people come through who have never spoken English. Every animal communicator will work in their own unique way, as do mediums, and like a medium, they will *hear, see, and feel* the images, and then interpret them. Begin by paying close attention to animals—accepting the fact that we do not know everything; we cannot only learn from animals, but we can also see them as mentors and educators as well as companions. Regard how often they pardon our crappy behavior and how in-tune they are with us.

Does an animal have a sense of identity? Yes, absolutely. Using Jack as an example, he developed and lived in his mother's womb along with his brothers and sisters for approximately 63 days. When born, mom, dad, and all the puppies were a pack and they created and formed an identity as a pack. They also created and formed individual identities. As dogs, then and now, they know exactly who they are, what they are, and why they are. When Jack became part of our family, it took him about a week or two to adjust to being a

part of a new pack. With that, he formed new identities—a pack identity with us and an individual identity. Animals do not think like us so a dog will not think, “I’ll run around smelling things, peeing on everything, and doing dog things.” There are times they do think about what they are going to do, and without an inner debate, they just do it. Years ago, I had an encounter with a dog that was very secure, happy, and had a very strong sense of self.

I took two of my dogs, Buddy and Sugar, to the dog park after doing a reading for someone, so I was still very psychically open. My dogs and I were in the swimming area and I was sitting on a lawn chair underneath a large tree at the south end of the pond away from other people, and wearing a ball cap. My dogs were off playing somewhere, and to the right of me at the east side of the pond, there was a young man watching his dog play with a stick in the shallow edge of the water. Sitting in the water facing me, the dog began to bark. I did not think much about it at first, but he was insistent in his barking at me, so I got up and walked over to the man and started a conversation with him.

The man said to me, “I don’t know why he’s barking at you; it must be your ball cap.”

I told him I didn’t think it was my hat. The dog began communicating with me, telling me how much he loved his dad. Without telling the man that I was communicating with his dog, I told him I thought the dog loved him very much. He told me he adopted him from the city shelter, and as he was telling me this, the dog was telling me that he did not mind being in the shelter and he was not afraid because he knew he would be adopted and he knew his dad was coming for him. The man told me he was considering adopting a companion for the dog and the dog immediately told me he wanted a female. My response to the man was that his dog would probably welcome a companion and he would likely want a female. All the while, as I was talking with this man, the dog stayed in the water chewing on his stick. An encounter/communication in public such as this, happens from time to time, but what happened after I returned to my chair was endearing and unforgettable.

Continuing to be very open, it gradually came to my attention that every dog in the swimming area was aware that I had communicated with the man’s dog, because all the dogs in that area, and this holds true for every animal, were connected telepathically. Minutes after returning to my chair, I began having a parade of dogs passing by me with great curiosity about who had just communicated with one of their own. Many came up to have me pet them, and I remember two young Golden Retrievers coming over and each sat on either side of me. When their pet parents came to get them, they refused to leave, but they finally did after some coaxing. It was amusing to have an elderly large Poodle fellow walk by eyeing and sizing me up with great suspicion. He emotionally conveyed that, “People don’t listen to us,” and I responded with, “I hear you,” and he walked away. It was an amazing and exciting experience.

Do animals have the awareness of another animal’s injury or death? Yes. You have probably seen videos where a herd of animals defend the youngest of their herd against a predator at a watering hole and win, or a video of a crocodile attacking a herd and pulling an animal into the water without the herd moving, or the herd runs away. Animals understand there are times when they can do nothing when an animal attacks from the water. If it were another animal, a land animal, there are times when they would gear up and fight that animal

to save the one being attacked, or they would all scatter. Since animals are connected telepathically, they instantaneously decide as a group what their actions will be. Animals have the unique dexterity of letting go. Do they feel badly about the death of another animal? Yes, they do. Do they understand or realize there is nothing that they can do about it? Yes. So, they move on. As far as feeling loss and grief, yes, they feel these things, and as we have seen, some animals never recover from their grief. Typically, they will move through loss and grief quickly because animals are better at moving forward—they have their own reality to take care of, and many times, they will let go of the grieving process to tend to their reality just like some human beings will do.

What about leaving behind or rejecting one of their young that may have a deformity or injury that keeps them from being mobile or capable of survival? Is this something that is understood? Yes, I believe it is. If the need arises to desert a baby or a member of the group, it will be because it is the best thing for the pack, herd, flock, etc., and basically, they all agree because they all communicate, and yes, it is a hard and painful thing for them to do.

A woman posted a video on social media after a mother deer wandered into her backyard from the woods behind her house with three fawns. The third fawn could not keep up because of an injured leg and was left behind in the woman's yard who lovingly cared for the fawn and its injured leg. The next season, the mother deer and her two offspring came back to the woman's yard and the now healed and healthy fawn rejoined its mother and siblings and they disappeared into the woods. Do I believe mama deer knew exactly what she was doing when she left her baby in the woman's yard? Without a doubt.

While driving one day, the car in front of me hit and killed a squirrel. I stopped in horror and within seconds, three birds of different species flew down and began squawking and jumping around the squirrel as if dancing in a ritual-like way to encourage him to get up—also declaring that his death and absence had created an imbalance in their surrounding habitat. Animals understand death, loss, and imbalance, and in those precious moments of being present in their world as well as my own, I was living wholly in life and feeling their loss.

Animals, in many ways are much smarter than human beings. Watch your animal. You can learn a lot from your pets. They know what they are doing; people, not so much. People tend to get a little crazy and create a lot of drama. All creatures, humans included, are curious, playful, and use spontaneity for many of their creations during their existence. Spontaneity and play are the fruits of life, and death for an animal is part of their cycle of life that has no boundaries.

## **Behaviors and Emotions**

Some domesticated animals exhibit mental and behavioral disorders, peculiar habits, and certain conditions. The energies of humans, of course, will affect an animal's energy, and the *emotions* of humans will affect and cause emotions in an animal. Our pets are adeptly tuned into the energy of the people they live with and can develop behaviors corresponding to the people closest to the animal. Because animals come into this world with their own plan and

design, animals also create things on their own spontaneously. All animals, domesticated and wild, can develop mental and behavioral issues such as OCD, which is characterized as repetitive behavior outside of what is considered normal behavior. Many times, OCD is due to stress and anxiety in an animal. After a medical reason can be ruled out, behavioral issues in an animal can include chasing the tail, excessive licking, air licking, freezing and staring, shadow chasing, spinning, separation anxiety, and pacing and circling, which is common for confined animals. Cats may engage in excessive sucking on wool, blankets, fabric, socks, excessive grooming and licking, tail chasing, and unreasonable vocalization. Cats will usually grow out of the sucking behavior, but some do not. Given that domesticated dogs and cats, for example, can pattern their behaviors after the people they live with or other animals in the household, they can also be born with idiosyncrasies.

Every individual is born with *every* possibility imaginable inside of them. People choose deeply within themselves which ones to let loose—when someone alters their course to be any way they want to be, such as an accomplished singer, artist, martial arts master, or anything else, they will focus on that *subconsciously and unconsciously* to bring it alive within them and express it. Everything you can imagine is *within* every individual. Does the same thing occur within animals? Yes, it does, but not placing judgment on this, it happens to a lesser degree than human beings, but pretty much the same thing. Animals subconsciously make their own choices in their own ways.

With Jack, the breeder told us he did not like being left alone. I did not think about the implications of that and how it would affect our lifestyle. Because of his separation anxiety, he has not been left alone since he was eight weeks old and he will never be alone as long as Tom and I are alive. It begs the question as to why any animal experiences separation anxiety. In the animal framework, structure, and domain, animals are born with all possibilities within them also. Jack was born with this form of anxiety within him, and we believe that being separated from his siblings one by one, as they went to new homes, triggered this inner possibility, and it was manifested.

One day, while Jack was sleeping, Tom and I were talking about using his anxiety in this chapter and I could not remember if he was the last one in the litter to be adopted. Tom said, “No, he had a sister that was being picked up later that same day.” With the word sister, Jack woke up out of a deep sleep, perked his head up, and looked directly at Tom—he knew exactly what we were talking about. Immediately, he communicated to me that he was very close to his sister and had been terribly sad about leaving her. He knew he and all his siblings were going to new homes, but he still felt the loss. He is fine now and no longer actively feels the loss, but he has his memory of her and he knows we are a family now, and the experience remains a part of him and his identity, as does the anxiety that was triggered because of the experience.

Take the case of Shadow, a Golden Retriever a friend had. The dog was named before anyone knew Shadow had a fixation about shadows and flashlights, especially on the walls of the house. If there was a moving shadow on the wall, he would chase it and try to bite it, and any contractor or repairperson who came to the house with a flashlight was immediately his best friend and he would excitedly follow them around. Shadow was thrilled when we used a

flashlight on the wall so he could chase it—he would also stand with his nose against the wall waiting for some kind of action whether from natural shadows or from someone using a flashlight. One day my friend was driving with Shadow, who was sitting in the back seat, and he kept trying to bite the headliner of her car. She realized the sun was shining on her watch and reflecting on the headliner, which of course, Shadow had to chase and bite. A total obsession that often kept us entertained.

## **The Intelligence of Animals**

The standard DNA calculations for humans are 99% similar with each other, and the remaining 0.01% of those genes gives us our individual characteristics such as the predisposition to certain afflictions, diseases, and attributes like the color of our eyes. According to the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, the genetic difference between humans and gorillas is 1.6% and the chimpanzee is 1.2%. Other searches calculate that on the evolutionary scale, the Hominidae family, are similar to humans by 98.8%; additional sources state that mice are 85% similar, dogs, 84%, and chickens, 60%. The domesticated Abyssinian cat shares 90% of our DNA and domesticated cattle, 80%.

Human beings are not that far away from chimpanzees and gorillas. They, as well as all animals, have awareness, they know what is going on, and they have the innate knowledge of how to stop what is going on in our shared world. Animals understand things just as we humans do, but they do not use logic. They know how to fix things and they know that humans in general are a danger to them, they know we need more love, and that the world needs more love. It is my opinion that it is well past the time to abandon the ideas and philosophy that regard *Homo sapiens* as being the only animal capable of a superior intellect, asserting that humans hold a venerable place in the universe, and claiming we are the only beings completely open to experiencing the extrinsic world. It is time to change our thinking about separating other creatures from man by reducing them to a soulless neurochemical checklist devoid of complex behavior or any kind of awareness about their own beingness, other creatures, and life experiences.

The South African animal communicator Anna Breyrenbach ([animalspirit.org](http://animalspirit.org)) was highlighted in a documentary produced by Craig Foster, Damon Foster, and Swati Thiyagarajan titled, “*The Animal Communicator*.” Rescued from an abusive European zoo, a black panther name Diablo found a home at the award-winning conservation park, Jukani Wildlife Sanctuary ([jukani.co.za](http://jukani.co.za)). Not adjusting well to his new surroundings, Anna was asked as a last resort to communicate with the panther who was withdrawn, defensive, morose, and refused to leave his night shelter. Anna’s communication changed the panther’s life when he was able to reveal his mistrust of people and the dislike of his name—he felt that his name was a disservice to his true character. With that revelation, his name was changed to Spirit. As you watch the documentary, you can feel and see his immense life force, commanding presence, strong personality, and the wisdom that had not been seen, appreciated, honored, or respected by humans. Once assured his new home was safe and he was free, he relaxed into a comfortable life. Spirit’s life of freedom, safety, and peace may not have been possible without the communication between he and Anna.

*Notation:* On June 18, 2023, Spirit walked on peacefully after 21 years of living in this world—his impact remains powerful. Through him, we can learn more about life, love, connection, and consciousness.

If you have not seen the very emotional and highly intimate 2020 Netflix™ nature documentary, *My Octopus Teacher*, I highly recommend it. Directed by Pippa Ehrlich and James Reed, it won an Academy Award for Best Documentary. The cinematography of Roger Horricks is stunning. Horricks filmed his friend Craig Foster, who unexpectedly found meaning and transformation when he formed a loving relationship with a cephalopod. While free diving in South Africa’s False Bay, the 11-month devoted friendship between the two began when he noticed her small body that was partially out of her den—cautiously curious, she reached out with her tentacles to explore his arm.

Their bond became deep. Foster stated that he was *invited* into her world and was present for 80% of her life. While filming, we witness two brutal attacks from a bottom-dwelling pyjama shark where she loses an arm in the first attack, and while I watched the second attack, I sat on the edge of my seat wide-eyed as she darted about outwitting the shark. The footage clearly shows an animal that thought lightning fast in a life-and-death situation, learned to use shells to defend herself, remembered details, and made strategic decisions to escape the shark. She was clearly self-directed and from her experiences, she refined her hunting skills to capture crabs, lobster, fish, and even drill a hole in the shells of mollusks in just the right place to inject paralyzing venom to get her meal. With a life expectancy of only 18 months, the octopus showed an understanding that her time was limited and conveyed this to Foster in a very tender scene. The documentary is moving, meaningful, profound, and granted Foster a deeper understanding about the fragility of life, the deep connection with nature that we are all inextricably a part of, and reverence for all living things.

To describe the octopus as an astonishingly brilliant creature only pales to the enormity of their intelligence and nature. Foster is co-founder of the Sea Change Project “whose goal is to contribute to the long-term protection of South Africa’s marine environment,” according to their website [www.seachangeproject.com](http://www.seachangeproject.com).

Then there is Otto, the then six-month old resident octopus at the Sea Star Aquarium in Coburg, Germany, who, for three nights in a row, took out the entire electrical system at the aquarium. The staff had taught Otto to squirt water at the visitors, but he used his new knowledge to spit at the 2,000-watt overhead light that was bothering him. To distract and keep him occupied so he would not do it again, they gave him a chessboard, which worked well for a while but it did not take long for him to become bored with that. To make his feelings known, he threw it out of the aquarium.

Koko, the western lowland gorilla famous for learning sign language, was under the care of the California Gorilla Foundation (Koko.org) until her death two weeks before her 47th birthday. For more than two decades, she was the focus of the longest ongoing project for interspecies communication involving gorillas. Her teacher, Dr. Francine “Penny” Patterson, taught Koko American Sign Language (ASL) and helped Koko learn more than five hundred words.

On one of her birthdays, she signed to Penny that she wanted a cat by pulling two fingers across her cheek to represent a cat's whiskers. From a litter of abandoned newborn kittens who had been nursed and fostered by a terrier at the compound, Koko chose a gray-haired tail-less kitten that she named "All Ball." Unfortunately, the cat wandered off the compound and was hit by a car, devastating Koko and sending her into a state of grief. She understood love, she understood destruction, and she understood death. She, as with all animals, had an awareness of her own beingness, the beingness of another animal, and an awareness of life and loss.

While searching for information on Koko and thinking about her, she came through to give me/us a message. She communicated that she came from a highly evolved animal reality (no humans) and she *chose* to come to our reality to help man and to show man the possibilities available to us and the relationships we can have with animals. She went on to say that all we need to do is be friends with animals. She said, "That is all anyone needs to be—a *friend* to animals." She went on to communicate that she is where she can be herself fully. With that, she shared her great joy and gave me the vision of her reality as she moved with purpose into a lush forest.

Below is the message (unenhanced) Koko gave to humankind at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015 using sign language about the urgency of climate change:

*"I am Gorilla... I am flowers, animals... I am nature. Man Koko love. Earth Koko love. But man stupid... Stupid! Koko sorry. Koko cry. Time hurry! Fix Earth! Help Earth! Hurry! Protect Earth... Nature see you. Thank you."*

This message is not only a loving and urgent warning for man, but it also validates that she is a thinking, intelligent, feeling, and self-directed soul with great awareness.

## **Reincarnation**

The subject of reincarnation often stimulates some very spirited conversations, and the topic is something to believe or not to believe—the only middle ground being that in the end, we really do not know what is going to happen at the time of death and where we might go. Regardless of how one interprets life, death, and one's own significance in the grand order of the universe, I would like to offer a simple and uncomplicated analogy; the tulip will blossom regardless of anyone's belief. It will blossom in the spring and it will die away, and the next year it will come back again, but it will not be the exact same flower as it was before. With the bulb representing its core, it is reborn and regenerated into its new form with its own awareness and vivacity. The flower that lived the year before is gone. The flower that *is*, in the simplest of terms, is reincarnated. All life dies and brings itself back—all life. Animals, people, insects—all life.

Since we are talking about all life that comes from one energy source, let us imagine and consider the idea that there are no divisions or classifications and we can see all life as *the kingdom of life*. One kingdom—life. The family of life. Knowing that everything in life is of consciousness and has consciousness, even microbes, bacteria, fungi, etc., we have come to a point in this book where we can now recognize that everything has its own consciousness,

awareness, and cycles of reincarnation. However, everything will reincarnate within its own domain.

Humans reincarnate in the human domain and animals reincarnate within their own domain—dogs remain in their sphere, as do cats, birds, and everything else. Every form of life will have its own domain. Take a cat for example. A cat may reincarnate as a domestic cat, a lion, panther, cheetah, jaguar, lynx, etc. Everything in life recycles because there is a constant flow of birth, death, and rebirth. There are people who believe that if an animal soul is highly evolved spiritually, they can cross over to become a human soul. People have certain beliefs and they live their lives by those beliefs, and that is how life is. I live by my beliefs and you live by yours. I do not know about the designs of other realities, but I do know that in this reality, animals reincarnate within their own domain.

Based on my readings with the discarnate and my conversations with Abram, both human souls as well as animal souls do not wander out of their own domain. The transition from animal to human is not correct, and people do not become animals. People stay people. Animals stay animals, and everything remains in their specific kingdom. Animals do not become humans and humans do not become animals. Period.

Animal experiences mirror our own in this world. Take the horse for example. Scientists believe the evolution of the horse began over 50 million years ago with the dog-sized forest-dwelling *Hyracotherium*, and man's relationship with the horse has existed for thousands of years. These gentle creatures have been friends that serve man in many ways. Horses can be large and muscular like the Belgian draft horse who worked the fields and transported heavy cargo, or the ancient, elegant, and endangered Akhal-Teke, known for its endurance, vigorous nature, versatility, intelligence, and athleticism.

Horses have provided transportation, entertainment, served in wars, and provided estrogen for pharmaceutical HRT (hormone replacement therapy). In PMU (pregnant mare's urine) farms, mares are in a continuous cycle of pregnancy to keep their estrogen levels high where they spend 6 months of an 11-month pregnancy in a stall so small the mare cannot turn around or lie down. Once giving birth, their baby is taken and the mare is impregnated again. The U.S. pharmaceutical company that uses the urine for their hormone treatments still has farms in Canada but has moved its U.S. operation to China where there is less regulation. Approximately 90,000 mares continue to suffer mentally, emotionally, and physically, and in the end, will most likely end up at a slaughterhouse when they have outlived their usefulness, and the cycle continues. Their babies do not fare well either—most are sold at auction and usually end up in a slaughterhouse as well.

*From automatic writing...*

“How often are these gentle creatures seen as sentient beings? They have carried the weight of many of man's burdens. They too, have emotions. They too feel love, sorrow, pain, loss, and grief. They too feel joy, excitement, and happiness. What makes one of these creatures have a life of suffering, abuse, neglect, or starvation while another is destined for slaughter, and another is destined to be cherished and prized living out his or her days being

loved and pampered? What is the difference between those lives and the lives of humans with similar outcomes?

“What causes a child to be born into poverty, neglect, and abuse while another grows to fight in a war only to return maimed or dead, and another who is born into a loving and close family, or is wealthy, never to know the hardships of daily survival? There is no difference between the souls of animals and the souls of humans concerning the experiences of life. For each species, life is about fluctuation of the soul, the enduring heartbeat of life, and what life experiences will bring the optimum outcome for what each soul desires for personal growth. Each soul answers the call for their own desires to be fulfilled. There are no souls on Earth who have not agreed to bring their desires to fruition whether animal or human.”

Animals enter a cycle, or cluster of incarnations, as humans do, and they design their life before birth in this reality exactly as you do. Please, allow me to stress the importance that we all come into this life with a plan, a design, a blueprint, and *all* life has the freedom to change anything at any time—we are not shackled by our own designs—things change and adjustments are sometimes made. Our life design, as well as the designs of animals, includes our agreements with one another, agreements with animals, and agreements animals make between themselves also. The agreements we make are not only designed before birth, but we also make spontaneous agreements along the way, and we can change the trajectory of any design as we move through and experience life—nothing is set in stone because change is constantly in motion. Adjustments *can be* created consciously, but remember that alterations to the trajectory in any life design are mainly created deeply within the subconscious and unconscious.

Just as we choose our parents, extended family, and life circumstances, animals choose their circumstances also—especially domesticated animals—they choose their human family. People think they go looking for a dog or cat to adopt, but really, that animal will find their person or family by sending a telepathic message out to come and find them and they will patiently wait. Jack did this with Tom and me. Sugar, the last of my animal menagerie over 20 years, had died at age 18 and Tom and I went through six months of deep grief. I was not ready for another animal, but a year after Sugar’s death, I woke up one Saturday morning and said to Tom, “The house seems empty without a dog—let’s go look for one today.” Tom was right on it—he had wanted to get another dog immediately after Sugar’s death but I wanted us to go through grieving so we would not project our raw feelings onto another animal that deserved our full attention and not to be a replacement. I wanted my love and affection to be free of my grief and I was adamant that I wanted an older female dog and not a puppy! Looking back, we know that Jack waited for us and that he was aware of us before he was born. He had sent the message, and it didn’t matter when, but when the time was right, I picked up on it that Saturday morning. It was a good day to look for a dog.

That day, Tom and I first went to the city pound and then to the Humane Society, and nothing clicked. When we got home, I searched numerous times on the internet for rescues and nothing came up for our area. What weirdly did happen was, with every search I made, one website would always be at the top of the list—a breeder of Danes. I have never paid

for a dog and it has always been the strays that have found me, and I wanted to keep it that way. But out of curiosity, we drove to the breeder's house that afternoon with \$200.00 for a deposit "just in case." What did we end up with? The last puppy of the litter to be sold who was considered the runt, and a male that did not like being left alone. Oy vey. As I have mentioned, Jack is five years old now and has never been left alone because of separation anxiety. He is 162 lbs., very large, insanely smart, a great debater, a telepathic communicator, our baby, and ruler of our home.

As mentioned, I zealously disagree with the notion that by believing in reincarnation and pre-birth designs and agreements, we are only placing blame on the person or animal who is on the receiving end of difficult, trying, life threatening, or horrific and traumatic experiences. It is a very callous assumption that we all deserve our lot in life for *any* reason or circumstance. We therefore should never deliberately withhold love, compassion, and humanitarianism because we believe an individual or animal is not deserving of these and may be learning some kind of lesson from his or her circumstances.

I also do not believe that we are in "Earth school" to learn lessons; I believe life is about experience—we learn through experience. If you want to create lessons for yourself, try referring to them as creative experiences instead. Lessons may cause people to think about school, performance, structure, grades, testing, and punishment. It is not favorable or productive to function in such a limiting framework. You want the freedom that is found within creative experience that gives you the right and the opportunity to then design anything in any way that you would like to.

Most people do not realize how many choices they make during each day and how every choice has brought every person to where they are today. There is always choice because there is always free will—in every reality, in every state of being, and with every circumstance. Yes, we *do* learn from each other; we learn from life, we learn from our mistakes, we can learn from others' mistakes, we learn by trial and error, and we learn from situations we find ourselves in, both positive and negative. We learn about consequences, cause and effect, how to read and write, and how to survive and navigate in a changing world. Regardless of what, how, or why we learn, we *do not* have the karmic hammer of "lessons" bearing down upon us. Animals do not think, "Why is this happening to me? What is it about me and why have I drawn this situation to me? Why have I created this—it's all my fault." Sometimes shit just happens. Accidents happen, and for people, sometimes it is necessary to let people and things go. Animals, on the other hand, are living and experiencing whatever is happening in their life and they are always living in the moment minus the self-recriminations, placing blame, and other such hand-wringing situations that we, as humans often engage in. If a dog tears up your pillows or spreads the kitchen garbage everywhere, it is not experiencing shame or guilt when lowering its head or cowering—the dog is fearful because he or she reads your energy and relates the event to being punished.

We all, as Earth's inhabitants, are living in the thick-of-it; we are nose-to-nose with experiencing life in the flesh, in this reality, and in the fullest of ways. You would not know the life of being an alcoholic, being a beggar, or being poor unless you lived it fully; you would never know the depths of emotions associated with living in a life situation unless you

*became* an addicted person, became homeless, or lived a life of poverty without any safety nets being available to you. The same is true for animals—they are here to experience life in the flesh for their own reasons and for emotional and spiritual development.

For animals, there is no separation between life and death; for them, birth and death are a seamless cycle. They are not burdened by worry about how or when they will die. Nor are they contemplating their own spirituality and evolvment. An animal is impressively living its life within experience. Coming into this reality fully aware of what life will entail, people and animals agree to a life that is filled with experience. Would any sentient being consciously choose trauma or suffering? No, of course not. For the most part, we are not clued in on the much larger picture, knowledge, and awareness that death provides us. Most of us love our pets dearly and consider them to be members of our family. Luckily for us, our pets, because their lifespans are generally shorter, can reincarnate two or three times within our lifetime to come back to companion and to help the people they want to be with again, because that is what animals do—they help people.

## Animal Communication



On a slow afternoon while I was working the front counter at FedEx as a CSA (customer service agent), a regular customer came in with her niece, who was around the age of 10. While my customer was packaging her shipment and filling out paperwork, her niece asked for a piece of paper and a pen so she could draw. I did not have any paper for her so I gave her a company sticker used for packages. After she drew this on the back of the sticker, she handed it to me and said, “Here, I drew this for you.”

I stood frozen with my eyes welling up with tears. You see, a few days earlier I had to euthanize one of my older dogs. Her name was Betsy and she was a small mixed breed with long wiry hair, was blind from cataracts, deaf, and had recently become incontinent. It hurt so much to have to put her down, but her quality of life was not good. Sugar did not like small dogs and she was constantly after Betsy nudging her with her nose and nipping at her. I could no longer deny that Betsy was old and frail. After I faced the fact that I was hanging on to her because it was too painful to let her go, I took her to the vet with a friend the next day. After it was over, I sat in my car crying with her limp body on my lap wondering where I could bury her in the backyard. The NW corner of the yard would be perfect—I would always know where she was no matter how I landscaped that area in the future—I know where all my buried animals are.

As I was bawling my eyes out in the car, she came to me. She was happy and she showed me her eyes in an exaggerated and enlarged way as being very clear and black. She told me she was happy and could see again! When I got home, I dug a hole, wrapped her, and put a small can of cat food with her—she loved cat food. I covered her with fresh dirt and placed pavers in a square on top of her spot so I could put a beautiful blue ceramic birdbath there.

So, this little girl comes in with her aunt and draws me with a cloud over my head, the birdbath with the sun over it, and Betsy buried below. It has been decades and I still have

the picture, which has become one of my most meaningful memories. The girl knew nothing of my situation, but intuitively keyed in and knew everything. Every time I look at it, I see Betsy's message of love and comfort for me in my time of great loss and grief.

More recently, my family was taking care of a friend's older Chihuahua for a few days. I was at their house sitting on the sofa and the dog was sitting upright on my son's lap close by. The dog, whom I had never met before, was facing me staring at me intently. As I was looking back at her, I heard in my head and felt within my body, "Who are *you*?" I answered telepathically that I was his mother (my son) and grandmother to his children. The dog, very accurately told me personal information about my relationship with my grandkids and told me that she knew about a life in ancient Egypt that I had with one of them—which I was already aware of. She also told me she had a former life as a large male dog in Russia who hunted bear. The image she gave me, which I had to Google, was the Russian Borzoi with calico-type markings. She was matter-of-fact about that life and she gave me no indication as to what her life had been like except that it was very cold. I asked if she wanted me to give any information to her human mom, which I passed on a few days later. During our conversation, she never looked away as we both sat staring at each other. When she finished communicating, she jumped off my son's lap and ventured into another room to see what the kids were doing.

A couple of months later, right after the new year 2023, I was at another relative's house whose adult child was visiting from out of state, who had her dog with her. The dog was sniffing me all over taking in Jack's scent when I heard and felt, "What other animals do you have?" I told the dog that we also have a black feral cat. Being satisfied with that, the dog went on her way to the kitchen. Communicating with animals is not difficult. They are clear and to the point, say what they have to say without judgment, and it is a done deal—no formalities and no bullshit. When practicing sending pictures to an animal to begin communicating with them, remember to keep yourself open to receiving information that may come in pictures, thoughts, or feelings. It takes a lot of practice! Not all animals will want to communicate because they are the ones who choose—if they have something to say, they will say it. If not, they will not bother. To understand *how* we communicate with animals, keep in mind that you are working with consciousness. The animal will send you images and those images register in your consciousness and in your brain, and then in lightning speed you interpret those images as words.

*Here is a more in-depth answer, which I received in automatic writing...*

"Communication with animals is more involved than a few techniques. Just as a thought will traverse the universe, the energy connection made with these beings is, of course, energy, which is consciousness. Telepathy is an instantaneous, simultaneous, and seamless connection and feedback loop. There are molecules that exist within the energy that vibrate at rates undetectable to your scientists. Your scientists know of the existence of the vibrational molecules, which are static driven, but they cannot put their fingers on how to capture the transference of thought."

## **The Reality of Today**

There is the reality of sport hunting for those with money, and for countries that provide this entertainment, it is a money-game even if their fiscal greed means the extinction of certain species. In the U.S., approximately 43 states engage in wildlife killing contests known as derbies and tournaments granted during specific time periods that offer cash and prizes for killing elk, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, wolves, and foxes. Prizes are given for killing the largest or smallest animal, the largest number of animals, and so on. Visit [humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org) to download a toolkit to help end this blood sport in each state that supports such contests or the website of the Animal Legal Defense Fund ([aldf.org](http://aldf.org)) to see how you can help.

*“Animal cruelty does not occur in a vacuum, and the failure to fully examine its origins would likely lead to future criminal acts and the continued cycle of abuse and violence” (Hon. H. Lee Chitwood, Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, Pulaski, VA).*

Because of the pandemic and lockdown in 2020, it was proof to me that the Earth can begin to heal and revitalize herself in a short period of time with less of our footprint. Air pollution declined because we were driving less and not traveling by air, rivers and waterways began to clear up around the world, wildlife emerged and felt safe enough to venture into cities and towns, and noise pollution diminished. It should be obvious that our imprint on the Earth is having devastating consequences—illegal gold mining and deforestation of the Amazon, lithium mining, and fracking, for example. Many life forms have evolved over millions of years and many forms of life have evolved into many variations of themselves. If you take a close look at our world, many things that exist look like they could be from another world—maybe we are all from another world. Maybe Earth was chosen for life because it is ideal for sustaining life—weather patterns, temperature, seasons, land, waters, and all the rest.

## **The Good News**

Rarely do we hear about the good news happening in our country and the world. The media companies, whatever their agendas may be, reinforce polarization, intolerance, and disasters that keep us in a cycle of negativity and fear, and it works because people are malleable. Over the past couple of years in the U. S., we have seen meaningful obstructions and reversals for human rights. The outlook seems dire and destruction is at our doorstep, but there is good news on the horizon if we look for it. According to [www.worldwildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org), leaders from 196 countries came together in Paris and signed the first global deal to fight climate change in 2015. The U.S. announced its intent to withdraw from the agreement in 2017 and in response, more than 3,951 leaders from cities, states, tribes, businesses, colleges, and universities have come together to maintain America’s commitment to the Paris Agreement as part of the *We Are Still In* movement. This coalition spans all 50 states, represents 159.5 million people, over 9.46 trillion in GDP (Gross Domestic Product), and is growing every day ([www.wearestillin.com](http://www.wearestillin.com)).

We have forced animals to coexist with *us*. Nature has its own system for creating balance and all animals have an innate understanding that they are predator as well as prey. To interfere with that balance is not a line that humans should cross. The solution is not to kill, overwork, or abuse animals because they are now in our way or because they fight back; we need to face the fact that we are the aggressors, the violators. We would suffer greatly without animals and our world would be lacking in beauty in the most profound and spiritual of ways.

### **A MESSAGE FROM ABRAM**

“If you look at nature, and if you look at people, you will come to understand that nature and people work together all the time with the exception that people don't realize that. So, they think they can control nature and do what they want with nature. And of course, nature will strike back. Now, nature and animals always work together, but in a different way. People are fixed in their real reality—what they think is their real reality, and this is all they know. Nature is separate from their reality. With animals, nature *is* their reality, and within nature is found an unspoken rule—that working together brings about synchronicity between nature and animals.

“Nature and animals communicate with each other within consciousness—or you can just call it energy. Nature gives animals the ability to find their way home when they are lost. Cats, let me put it this way, have something like sensors in their paws. And those sensors pick up the electromagnetic lines in the ground. This is how they find their way home and to various places that they live at and function at.

“Dogs on the other hand, have those sensors in various parts of their bodies—their noses, their eyes, their ears, and the solar plexus area. All those areas in their body find and work with those electromagnetic lines. Insects, the same thing. All throughout a bird's body are those sensor points, which is how they also know where to go when they migrate. When a storm is coming, they know just where to go and how to be safe. With storms, earthquakes, and tornados, dogs and cats especially, will know beforehand—they will become agitated, irritated, and will often leave the area if able to.

“Animals can recognize other animals as being equal, but each variation of a pack or breed of animal will have their own set of rules. In their own way, animals have access to universal knowledge. Everything, *everything* that you can imagine, has access to universal knowledge in one way or another way.

“Animals function with, within, and by their own consciousness, which is different than human consciousness because, as I have said and I'll say it again, a dog's consciousness is above human consciousness because they do not recognize real reality, because they exist only in the moment. They don't base their life on time like people do. Universal knowledge is found all around, and within all nature—animals and human beings as well, but human beings don't recognize it, and they certainly don't appreciate it. What can the universe offer you in the way of knowledge? Well, if you stop thinking only about yourself, you'll figure it

out quickly. A dog does not do things only for itself. It does things, it thinks and feels, and perceives things for other animals and for nature. That is the communication.

“Everything works together all the time and this is called balance. When things are out of balance with nature, then you will have all the storms, earthquakes, and all the rest that have been taking place, are taking place, will continue to take place, and worsen for people. Animals are not aware of nature striking back; animals only know nature to be taking care of itself. Nature knows animals to be taking care of themselves also. So, there is not much to really understand, because it is all about balance. And, if people would recognize balance, they then would know and understand and appreciate the fact that they *are* nature. Animals *are* nature.

“Of course, there are animals that fight and kill each other. So how about humans? The same thing. Does nature do that with and or within itself? No. It protects itself. It allows itself freedom to be what it is—balance. As animals will attack each other and kill each other, this is still balance within the animal kingdom. It might not seem that way. How can it be balance if one animal is killing another animal? It is still balance; they are balancing themselves out, they are creating balance within their kingdoms. This is one of the rules.

“Now nature, as I’ve said before, is cooperation. If there are two trees growing close together enough, nature will have them grow into one tree. Trees communicate with each other, flowers communicate with each other, all forms of nature will communicate within itself in various ways—animals, the same thing, humans the same thing, but in somewhat of a negative way, because human beings know war.

“Animals do not know war. Nature does not understand war. Animals and nature *are* balance between the two of them. So human beings need to understand, recognize, and appreciate the fact that *the consciousness of nature is their consciousness also*. If they could understand this, there would then be no war.

“If scientists were smarter about animals, there would be less invasive and cruel experimentation on them. Testing and experimenting only present possibilities—watching and learning from animals present probabilities of reality.”

*Animals are always true to themselves*

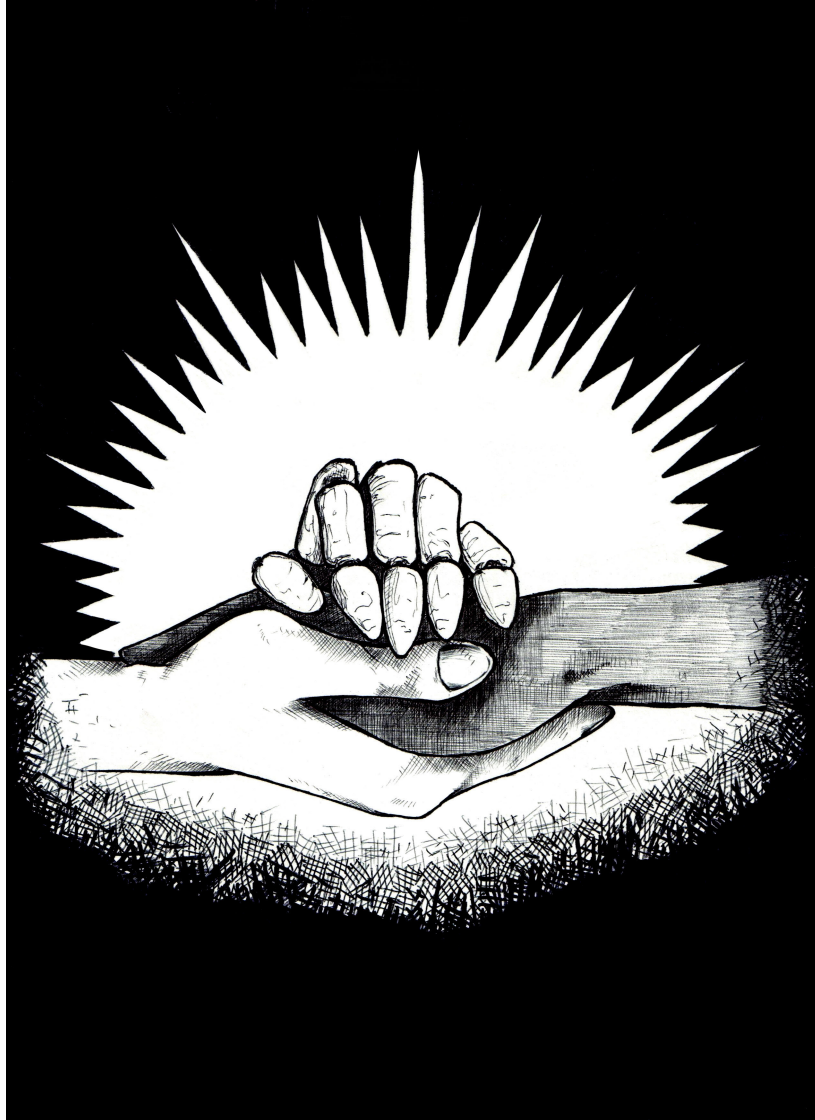


**Our boy Jack**

*Animals are a gift to humankind*



**Kiki the Wanderer**



The skeleton, which symbolizes death and the afterlife, is resting upon a light and dark hand that represent the inner forces that we perceive as positive and negative. Death bathes us in the light and the warmth of our essence as we become a more knowing being through death.

## 7

## THE ART OF MEDIUMSHIP

*“Without birth and death, and without the perpetual transmutation of all the forms of life, the world would be static, rhythm-less, undancing, mummified.”*

—Alan Watts

All people are born into, and as, everything. *Everything is within you* but to a different degree, intensity, and frequency depending on the individual. Meaning, all individuals are endowed with *all* abilities within them, but to varying degrees. People are born with abilities to become anything they choose to be in their present reality.

Even though everyone is born with all abilities, all talents, and all possibilities within them, there is a big difference between using mediumship ability that is available to all, and being born into it. A person does not become a medium, they just are; from an early age they know there is something about them that is different. Many people think and believe they are a medium, and they claim to be one after experiencing a few supernatural events, *feeling* people around them, or getting a few messages. But they are using their ability *to a degree* and an ability that comes naturally to all individuals—*if* they choose to develop those abilities. My point is, just because a person knows how to cut a piece of wood with a saw, it does not make them a carpenter.

The same applies for channeling. People can use their channeling ability *to a degree*, but there is a difference between using the ability in an elementary way and being born into being a channel. To be born into it means that the individual acting as the channel and the source personality, at some point in time between the individual’s physical lives, had come to an agreement to work together in a certain lifetime. Then, the individual who agreed to be the channel is born *into it* because everything had been agreed upon with the source personality.

Certain people are *born into* being great musicians, artists, writers, and so forth. And yes, of course, there are many people who can play an instrument, paint, or write but they may lack an intense desire, drive, and connection. It also means that they may never be highly skillful, or love what they do. So, understand that just because everyone is born, has been born, and will be born with all abilities, all talents, and all possibilities within them, there is still a vast difference between strengthening and sharpening a talent and being born into that certain percentage that will *become* a medium, channel, and all the rest. Since everyone has a distinctive design for their life, there will be people who will choose to develop their gift and some who will not, and those who choose not to will usually do so for a personal and specific reason.

In other designs, people will not become anything specific except to simply be an individual who will decide on having a contented life they can value. Others may create a

lifetime of struggle where survival in society is a daily theme. Despite what seems to be an unfertile, oppressive, or violent life, many gifts often arise from difficult circumstances. Experiences that cause great suffering can also offer deeper meaning to a person's life, gifts, *and* talents. In life, there are always challenges at hand that are woven with opportunities to gain wisdom, courage, and inner transcendence.

Those who are born into mediumship are born with their consciousness available to all forms of life—*every form of life*. A medium will have the ability to allow those in spirit form to communicate with them, and at times, through them. For many mediums, it may be a rare occurrence to connect with a living individual's consciousness because they will stick to what they know and will not allow themselves to stretch their abilities to go beyond that. Some mediums believe that *only* the deceased will communicate with them, and that may be their selected way of working, which is fine, and that may be how they frame their communications and choose to work. I heard one well-known medium state that if a person's spirit comes through, they are deceased.

Personally, I see that as limiting, and I don't believe it is complicated to connect with the consciousness of children, animals, people in comas, or any other consciousness. Ultimately, it remains the choice of the being, whether physically living, deceased, or in some other form, to communicate.

When a medium does a reading, they can invite individuals to come through, but not to summon, because to summon is to command the person to be there, but you can *invite* them in. People in spirit will be attracted to and seek the person out. No one has the power to draw a spirit into a reading. Ask, and more times than not, they will come through before the request is complete. I do not place any individual who was once famous or known on a pedestal—they are equals. We are human beings experiencing our own desires and designs and because of this belief and my willingness to be open, many well-known souls have passed through my psychic doors.

Before birth, those who have the intention of being born a medium, which is part of their design for their life, will construct circumstances where life experiences will train them in how to express themselves. Many people are born with a specific gift—the one thing they excel at doing and what comes naturally to them. Mediumship is not only a gift, but also an *art*, because it requires dedication, development, and nurturing. It must be practiced over, and over, and over, and over again because it can be a patchy and disjointed process in the beginning. It needs to be understood within all of one's emotional depths, because a medium will work with all forms and degrees of emotions all the time, just as anyone else born with a gift will do with their own emotionality.

What is the difference between a gift and a talent? The line between the two is a thin one and you cannot have one without the other if an individual wishes to unfold and cultivate their potential. At times, a gift and a talent *do not* work hand in hand, but independently of each other. A gift is something that you have been born with and is in your life design. It may also be given to you by someone, including yourself, or by a situation. You may be wondering how another person may give you a gift of something you were born to do, that already resides within you. Think in terms of how someone may clearly see your gift and

potential where you have not yet arrived at recognizing it or actualizing it. That person may assist and guide you in a way where you can key into and realize your gift and develop it. Another example is when one or both parents, who are musically inclined, will genetically bestow upon their child or children, the gift of music; it will be passed on and will exist in an individual's genetic makeup. Not all gifts and talents, though, are based on genetics.

A talent is your ability to take that gift and allow it to announce itself, blossom within you, and express itself. Many people have a gift but not the talent to use the gift, so it may never be used. Many people *believe* they have the gift *and* the talent, but they do not—they may have one but not the other. For example, let's say an individual has the talent to cultivate their gift for music, but they don't use it because they do not have the means; they may be focused on making money to live, or focused on their job and raising a family, so their gift may never be realized. For generations, many women and low-wage earners never realized their gifts because of limiting societal expectations and lack of opportunities.

In this crazy world, too many individuals believe they are mediums and declare themselves as such, sometimes with only a hint of ability. They may have a certain talent for expressing their intuition, instincts, and empathic abilities, but not the gift, so their mediumship efforts may remain underdeveloped, limited, and mediocre where he or she may not develop as far as they want or expect to, or their accuracy may fluctuate; they will not have that certain *je ne se quois*—no “it” factor.

In conclusion, many people have a gift *and* the ability to use the gift and the talent together, and many people have the gift, but not the means to use or allow the gift to express itself, and many people may have a bit of talent but not the gift. Everyone has intuition, instincts, and the means to have *some* success however microscopic in experiencing psychic, mediumship, or channeling events, and *every person has their own range of frequencies that work within their unique spectrum.*

There was a girl I knew in college who was in the university's dance program and for her entire life, all she wanted to be was a dancer. Her professor told her that she was not dance material and did not have the feet or body of a dancer and she might want to consider choosing another major. Heartbroken, she dropped out of school and returned home. What if someone has a desire, a deep desire, and knows that they should be a dancer, or whatever their desire is, but it never comes to fruition or they are not very good at what they want to do? My friend may have had the talent to become a decent dancer but maybe she would always be limited and possibly not able to have a career as a dancer. It is also possible she was a dancer in a former incarnation and the energy of that life continued to influence her in this life. If that were to be the case, she would still experience some form of success because ultimately, true success is not about recognition, fame, or wealth. Success is all about knowing the Self, being the Self, and expressing the Self in a way that pleases and brings joy to the individual.

In hindsight, how empowering would it have been if my friend had said to her professor, “Thank you for your judgment,” and walked away with a smile on her face; in fact, with a smile on her face, danced away, not walked away, but danced away. Never let someone tell you what you can or cannot accomplish or what you should or should not accomplish. Be

aware that when you believe someone's opinion about you, you just might be giving your power away to them depending on the situation. On the other side of this, I have seen many people act pretentiously about a talent they really do not have, and they may be secretly or subconsciously believing they would be "less than" if they focused on what they are truly gifted to be. It ends up being an inner game and competition to artificially elevate and puff themselves up. Some people will spend years of frustration trying to be what is clearly not in the cards for them, and this is where some inner work and self-evaluation is needed to figure things out.

You will always run into people who have a desire to tell others what they can or cannot do, should or should not do. There are also those people who like to tell others how to be, how not to be, what to be, what not to be, why to be, and why not to be. When you know yourself, you will be less likely to be influenced by people who think they know you better than you know yourself. Everyone has their own individual set of emotions, which will provide them the opportunity, the background, and the knowledge to be what they will be. However, when a person is born into a particular gift and talent, they do not suddenly think, "Ah, I am the artist, I am the medium, I am this, or I am that." It will take something to bring that awareness to the person—something will trigger the awareness.

An event or circumstance in life will take place that allows an individual to emerge and blossom into what they have designed for themselves and their life. The event or the circumstance can be as simple as placing a musical instrument in the hands of a small child, to something as dramatic as an illness or an accident. An individual most likely will have multiple events of differing degrees during their lifetime that will keep them engaged and nudge them toward being who they are meant to be with their gift and talent.

The circumstance that initially triggered my mediumship was a severe kidney infection at three years of age. Medicine was not the same in the early 1950s as it is today. I was very ill, and because of an extremely high fever, my mother feared for my life. I vividly remember this time because I have the recollection of being bathed in alcohol—the smell and the cool sensation that it gave me can be easily recalled to this day. The high fever was the trigger because it served to affect and alter the structure of the cells in my body.

My second important triggering event happened in the beginning of my relationship with Tom in the 1970s while I was living in the same Victorian home with the psycho dog. My room was on the second floor overlooking the street, ironically named Stowell Avenue, and a yellow wall phone was just outside of my bedroom door. I had a waterbed on the floor, a rocking chair, and curtains made of Eastern Indian print bedcoverings that were yellow with large black flower-like designs. One night while my dog was sleeping on the bed, her head shot up, her ears perked up, and she started with a low growl that led into barking. Scared, she jumped off the bed when the waterbed began to move like a wave coming onto the shore and then receding. The curtains began to sway back-and-forth, the rocking chair began rocking, and the room shook like we were having an earthquake.

I flew out of the room and down the stairs to where my roommates were sitting watching TV and I asked, "Did you guys feel that? Did you feel that earthquake?" They looked at me like I was crazy so I went back up the stairs and as I was passing the phone on

the wall, it rang. I picked it up and Tom said to me, “Are you okay?” To which I answered, “They shook my room!!!” Tom said he would come to get me and I spent two weeks with him before I came back to the house with my knees knocking. I did not realize until decades later what the experience was all about, what it did for me, and who provided the experience. I came to understand that I had agreed to the situation and with whom. The terror I felt served me immediately, and over time, it allowed me to release suppressed negativity and deep sadness from early harsh experiences in life, as well as some significant losses I never knew how to process or express. This release of negativity led to greater emotional healing over time, which allowed me to fully bring to life my mediumship abilities over the decades.

Because of the neuroplasticity of the brain, when perceptions of reality are changed as the result of an event, the brain will create new neural pathways that allow the brain to fire differently. When you learn new things, your brain creates new paths and trails. Your body will naturally respond to it, which will affect not only your physical system but your energetic system also, and that will allow you to open up nicely for you to become the medium, or the musician, or the artist, and so on. Largely, things have to do with intention; the emotional wave of the intention, and the timing of the event that will trigger whatever an individual will take part in. I do believe that many peoples’ triggering events are rooted in a traumatic event or a major change in one’s circumstances, which may be something of a negative *or* positive nature. Being inspired or deeply moved by another person can also be the nudge and spark that an individual needs to become the person they are meant to be—I learned this happened with a few actors by either reading their memoir or watching a documentary about them—all of whom were born to be the actor, writer, artist, and more.

Take the case of Jason Padgett in 2002. He was severely beaten outside of a karaoke bar that left him with a severe concussion—he recovered and is now a mathematical genius, artist, author, and speaker who sees everything as geometric forms, patterns, and understands complex mathematical concepts. Even when a triggering event like this happens as an adult, timing remains the decisive factor as to when the experience happens *within* the design of one’s life. Timing is everything.

Concerning my own recollections that take me back approximately to the age of nine, I started noticing people walking by me and seeing people out of the corner of my eye who were not there physically. I was visiting my grade school friend one day and she asked me if I ever saw people that were not “real.” I told her that I did and she matter-of-factly said that we were seeing people in the fourth dimension. It made perfect sense to me at the time and I accepted it without question. At nine years of age, how did we know about dimensions? What I did know for sure was that I never questioned that there was more to life than what was visible and that we are not alone.

I have always enjoyed an extraordinarily active dream state that has offered a rich reality that is just as valid and real to me as the reality of my waking state. I began having visitations from deceased relatives during my teens and more vivid dreams in my 20s of being out of body and traveling to different dimensions, sometimes being gently questioned as to why I was there. I was having prophetic dreams and moments of deep knowing about myself and

other people, as well as having dreams of being taught about energy while on an extraterrestrial craft—which occasionally still happens to this day.

I became aware of Edgar Cayce, a sleep medium known as “the sleeping prophet,” in the late 1960s. Edgar Cayce was my first introduction into the metaphysical world that I knew I was meant to be a part of. To my recollection, one was either a medium or a psychic during the 70s—I had never heard of a psychic medium. The term “channel” began to emerge later and, Tom, now referred to as a channel or a trance channel—was, at the time, considered a medium. We met while I was in his ESP (Extra Sensory Perception) class, and we began dating. I was present the first time he channeled in public, which happened unexpectedly one night in class. Prior to this, there had been someone speaking through him in private situations, but this was either a new personality or a more expanded part of the entity he was already becoming familiar with. It scared me because I had never witnessed something like that, yet I was also completely fascinated by it, and my fascination and curiosity quickly dispelled my initial fear. Tom and I later went our separate ways and lost contact for over 30 years; we were led back to each other in 2008. Yes, I Googled him.

Over the decades during our separation, I consumed books on Near Death Experiences, children remembering past lives, writings by authors such as Hermann Hesse, Paul Coelho, Alan Watts, theoretical physicists on space-time, and a variety of philosophical, behavioral, and self-help books.

For 30-odd years, with the visions that I had and with all the deceased that I saw in my mind’s eye, I thought I was a psychic and only receiving psychic impressions. I did not realize I could have a two-way conversation with someone in spirit, as I thought that was something only a medium could do, which was what Tom was doing. Because channeling was considered mediumship and I did not have the same type of ability as Tom, how could I be a medium? It sounds ridiculous now, but it never occurred to me that I was able to talk back or communicate with spirit, and because of the label “medium,” I held on to a false belief and a stupid label for a long time that I was just psychic. I began to seriously focus on my abilities when my son moved out to be on his own and John Edward made mediumship mainstream with his TV show *Crossing Over with John Edward* that began on the former Sci-Fi channel (now Syfy). Halleluiah! It was then that I began thinking of myself in a different way and I knew I could do what he was doing.

Of course, as I opened up and my perceptions changed, I had some fear. There were more deceased people showing up and I had not become proficient at understanding their different energies, symbols, and messages. I was not only frightened by waking up at night with someone standing next to my bed, I also felt intimidated with so much coming at me so quickly.

One night while I was in bed lying on my back trying to go to sleep, I saw a large dark cloud emerge over me. I was frightened by it because I did not know what it was and I didn’t know what it meant, but I was tired and I was getting annoyed with myself for being afraid. I was seriously thinking about hiding under the covers—like that would really do anything to protect me or hide my whereabouts. I made the choice in that moment that fear would not

control me and I would not make the progress I wanted to make if I remained afraid of the unknown. It was a *choice* that I made and it became a done and sealed deal—no fear—ever.

In my mind, I said, “Why are you here and what can I do for you?” It dissipated and I knew immediately that my emotions were releasing some negative energy—it was my own emotional energy, not any kind of dark force. Easy-peasy. From then on, I have never been afraid of anything that I have experienced from any nonphysical being or any communication from them. I have been startled and taken by surprise at times, but never fearful. Everything is about energy and communication. Limiting beliefs, being misinformed, and interpreting experiences from a place of fear will inhibit and sometimes block what otherwise would be very meaningful experiences, messages, and communications.

In developing your own abilities, you have to take a deep and honest look at your belief systems and your fears about communicating with the consciousness of other living things. Depending on your mental and emotional openness and acceptance of everything having a consciousness, communication with every living thing in this reality, as well as other realities, is possible. If you have been taught this is the work of the devil or demons, realize this belief usually comes from religious indoctrination that instills fear and control. Communication with the unseen world is a normal and natural part of being a multidimensional being residing in a multidimensional universe.

You are far more than what you think you are, and to *become* far more than what you think you are, you will need to, in a sense, give yourself over to the possibility of connecting with all other forms of life. *All* other forms of life. When you develop the belief that you can open yourself to that possibility, then you will be able to, over time, develop clearer and more concise communications with *all forms of life*. Realize though, that your development may take a lifetime, which may very well be in your life design—it may also take several lifetimes to be where you truly want to be. Be patient and know that all things work for your highest good and it all begins with baby steps—you may be drawing with crayons in this lifetime while others work with oil on canvas. It all depends on what you have designed for yourself.

Without judgment, be honest with yourself about your abilities—development takes time, dedication, and focus. I have seen too many people call themselves a medium or a channel, hang out their shingle and advertise themselves as such, rather than honestly saying they are developing their abilities—you want to remain realistic, ethical, and authentic—especially with yourself. Fake it until you make it doesn’t work here. More people than I can count have proudly told me they were a medium, only to discover they had not done their work and had never done a reading.

It can take years to learn how to get out of your own way and to understand the nuances of energy. It is imperative that your desire to be a medium, channel, healer, etc., is because you want to genuinely help and serve humanity. If you only want to seek attention, impress, be famous, or do it for fun, you should find something else to do.

It took me several years to learn how to give myself up and give myself over to the deceased and I am still discovering new ways to expand my perceptions for greater and

deeper communications. It is imperative to move aside to be a clear vessel for the energy of nonphysical beings. Again, it takes a lot of practice, dedication, faith in yourself, confidence, love for humanity, and an excitement about the magic of life. My readings will continue to evolve by remaining open-minded and emotionally aware. Make no mistake; we are all on a unique and individual path of becoming. Growth never ends and practice never ends.

I call the readings I do for people *soul readings* because the readings are all about emotions. I connect with the emotions of the deceased so they can communicate their beliefs about themselves, their life, and their relationship with the person receiving the reading. The readings also reflect the connections we have with each other, sometimes including past life connections, our relationships with one another, the joys and heartaches we have experienced in life, and the love that ultimately binds us all together. Because of the deep emotional connections, I do not get names or dates, I cannot tell you where the will is, what someone said on their deathbed, and I do not do readings for missing persons—it is not my forte.

For years, there has been a movement and belief system in metaphysics about the 5, 7, 9, or 12 levels/stages/ladders of “Ascension” to reach spiritual awakening, enlightenment, or transcendence. Depending on who is writing or teaching about it, it can be a bit confusing sifting through different opinions. Personally, I do not buy into it and see it as a spiritual marketing tool, but some people are heavily invested with this belief system and it works for them as well as the “Big Shift” and “The Great Reset” that gets regurgitated year after year and month after month, which never happens—it does not work that way. This popular belief system can be attractive for some people and a starting point in their journey in which many different paths will be taken. Emotional and spiritual growth is more convoluted and intricate that does not follow any linear path.

But let’s suppose someone named Hannah is drawn to the idea and she decides to find a teacher. She does her homework according to her teacher’s plan, and benefits from it. That’s awesome, and good for her. Yay! However, let me throw in another point of view for you to consider. What if Hannah has been subconsciously feeling within her, twinges of wanting to take a more spiritual path and she decides to embrace this method for evolvment—she heard about it and is drawn to it. With prior thoughts and feelings that have been forming and wandering around in her subconscious, she creates the *idea* of “the ladder of ascension” *partly* because of her belief in linear events, because that is what we have been taught through various religions (ascension of Christ) and spiritual practices, so this would subconsciously make sense to her. And to me, ascension certainly implies a linear movement.

What if a person wants to move in many directions and many dimensions instead of being married to an idea of evolving from a lower position to a higher one? Think horizontally and not vertically. And for Hannah, because the belief was created in her subconscious and away from her conscious mind, she is drawn to someone who is teaching it without realizing what is driving her. She then gives her power away to the teacher, because she believes the teacher knows more than she. What happens is, the teacher teaches back to her what she already created from what exists inside of her.

So, in a literal sense, Hannah just trained and taught herself through her life experiences. It all comes back around to you really being the spiritual being you want to be; and you are that, just as you are right now. If you have the need to be more spiritual, you will create more rungs on the ladder to achieve, but realize that you are training yourself just by being yourself. At the end of the day, there really are no levels to achieve because all those levels you think you need to achieve are really one. In addition, that one level happens to be every aspect and dimension of YOU—where and as you are right here, right now.

There are dimensions within dimensions within dimensions within dimensions, and there are more realities than you can ever imagine—not only within our universe, but *within* every aspect of this reality also. All it takes is emotion, desire, and a willingness to be open to all possible realities and dimensions at the same time. There is no right or wrong way to evolve, so do what is right for you, and bear in mind that your emotions will always be your vehicle and guide.

## **There is No Time**

Man-made time, or clock time, is based on events, and the events that you create will create time. ***Time does not create the event; the event creates time.*** We have created our day to be of a certain length and we measure that length with the *idea* of time, or the concept of time.

We have done the same thing with our night. We don't pay much attention to the movement of our planet and the movement of the heavens so we measure our day in increments and we call it time—twelve o'clock, one o'clock, and so on. This is a handy way for us to govern our day and for the most part, it serves us well. We can keep track of what we are to do during our day and at certain points within every 24 hours.

I am sure you have heard of “road hypnosis.” You are driving from point A to point B, and when you get to point B, you don't remember how you got there. You have just experienced being in a different dimension *within* our three-dimensional reality while being in an altered state of consciousness. When that happens, you are not experiencing time as we know it to be. While in this state, there is no time, and you are not aware of the construct of time.

When that happens, time becomes a force that you are not mindful of. The force, for example, is like being in a “zone.” When you are deeply focused on something such as an actor being so focused on a character they *become* the energy of the character, or an artist will *become* the painting, or a dancer so focused on the dance, they *become* the dance. The world will fade away, and the awareness of time disappears. During these times, time can move faster for you or it can slow down, depending on your focus and your emotions.

The “time energy” is when physical reality fades away. It is a force that is part of *and* within the space-time continuum. In simpler terms, you can think about it as a primal energy force that blends with space. As space stretches, time will stretch. As space contracts, time will also contract. As space bends, time will bend. When time bends, you arrive from point A

to point B without knowing that you were driving an automobile, riding in a train, or traveling on an airplane or any other form of travel.

Suddenly, you are at point B, but don't know how you got there. You don't know what happened between point A and point B. All you know is you are in, or at, point B with no reason for it to have happened. Time has bent. This also happens in other dimensions of reality. Time bends because space will also bend. Everything is fluid and in constant motion and expression because you are dealing with energy.

## **Communicating With the Dead**

When communicating with a deceased person, ask yourself if you have ever felt like someone was right behind you, and when you turned around no one was there. Do you know someone so well that you can recognize their energy before you visually see them? That is what the energy feels like when a deceased person comes through.

When the energy of a deceased individual pops in, as I like to say, I become the individual's consciousness and the individual becomes my consciousness—to a *slight degree*. With emotion, this is how the connection is made. Being that there is only and always consciousness, we are connected with one another forever, which is something we do not think about too often. We all think we have our own individualized reality, which we do, but we are also all sharing this three-dimensional reality. Simply put, you are creating, as well as co-creating with others; your personal reality is *within* a larger reality that you are collectively a part of and collectively agree upon.

You may think that your thoughts are contained within your physical brain and you see from behind your eyes, but thoughts are energy, just as emotions are energy. As you are consciousness, your thoughts and emotions become part of the energetic psychic network or web that connects us all to one another, as well as to all other living things. This is the life of consciousness.

Now, speaking directly about human beings, we have many chakra points, or more simply put, energy points in the body—far more than just the seven chakras that most people are aware of, which are referred to as the Root, Sacral, Solar Plexus, Heart, Throat, Third Eye, and Crown Chakra. There are primary and secondary chakra points and it is difficult to place a definite number of how many points there are because the body and its energy is always changing. From the electromagnetic field that surrounds the body in conjunction with the electromagnetic fields within the body, we literally have strings of energy reaching out that are continuously ebbing and flowing from all over the body.

Our strings of energy are endlessly in motion and connecting us with the world around us, and as we connect, we are repeatedly exchanging energy with our world and with one another. A concentrated area of these strings of energy can be found in the solar plexus where there are bundles of nerves located in the upper abdomen. There are four components that merge in that area: the splanchnic nerves that reach out to both sides of the body that allow us to feel pain, which are nerves that are regenerative; the vagus nerve (tenth cranial nerve) communicates to the brain about the state of certain organs; the celiac ganglia

are two nerves in the abdomen that communicate information about the digestive system; and the aorticorenal ganglia are an element of the celiac ganglia. Because the solar plexus is such a sensitive area, this is where we often get what we call a “gut feeling.”

Each of the strings, or tentacles of energy coming from us is a variation of our energy and our emotions, which is our consciousness. One string of energy is all that is needed when making a connection with someone, which can be very powerful. The strings do not actually connect, but rather, it is a shared emotional and *energetic wavelength*.

Let’s say I am speaking to a room of about 50 people. As my strings of energy expand from me, every person in the room is doing the same thing. All it takes is one string of mine that is of a certain emotional frequency, to connect with someone in the audience; as I answer an individual’s question, and let us say that person’s one string has the same emotional frequency as mine, that person and I are now in harmony—we are on the same wavelength. Now, other people in the audience may also be on the same wavelength too and may think that I am speaking directly about them. They may say later that they knew for sure I was addressing them personally, or I had answered a question that they have only been thinking about. For that time, when people are in harmony, their consciousness is being fed via the wavelength. When the speaking engagement concludes, the energetic connection will disconnect. The same applies to when I am giving a private reading. Let us say that during the reading, I will function as one of the emotional and energetic strings, and it will be that string that my source (someone in spirit) will be using so we can communicate.

When communicating with nonphysical individuals, there are times when information comes trickling in and times when it is fast, clear, and precise. On the medium’s side, some mediums cannot or will not get out of their own way. I have met some mediums that try to control a reading, which will block the information coming through. We are only vessels; we do not do anything but provide that vessel for spirit and interpret their information. Some are very good at what they do, and some are novices. In the case of conscious channeling, the medium is still consciously aware, but so open and “out of the way” that the message from spirit will stream through without the medium needing to interpret anything. This is a way for someone in spirit to communicate directly with the sitter (client or person receiving a reading).

Over the past 20 years, conscious channeling has spontaneously occurred during my readings, but since the latter part of 2021, it has been happening more frequently with a personality coming through at odd times to speak directly with clients or to provide me with information through automatic writing.

In November 2021, I had a reading scheduled for a woman who was stressed and upset due to a volatile six-month relationship and her recent breakup. The man who was living with her started an argument one night, one of many, which escalated quickly and she was forced to retreat to her bedroom for the rest of the night in fear for her life. She managed to give the man the heave-ho the next morning and she attained a temporary restraining order, but had to go to court a few weeks later to have the protection order made permanent for a year.

I attempted to do a reading for her and even though I could feel people around her, no one came through for her. I advised her that we should wait until after the court date and try the reading again because this was probably something she needed to work through on her own. We talked about how she could keep herself safe by changing locks, securing windows, faithfully using her home security system, changing banks, and changing all passwords. She was so frightened of this man who had abused her mentally and emotionally for months that she began carrying a concealed gun with her (legally) and she entered counseling.

I rescheduled a time in January to do the reading for her, but again, no one in her family came through. However, within moments, I began conscious channeling and below is what my source/guide had to say to her. With her permission to share her information, I have made some minor editing for punctuation and sentence breaks, otherwise it is as it came through.

“When you go through a crisis and you have someone that invades your energy and your energy field, which is what this man did, there is a portion of acceptance, and allowance, and invitation. So, this is not to place any blame. This is to educate you on how energy works when you are living with someone, especially when they are in the same household with you (at the same time), especially then, your energy blends and you exchange energy. You were at a tipping point in your life as to what you wanted to do with your life, how you wanted to steer yourself in a spiritual direction, how you wanted to steer yourself in an emotional direction, and how you want to respond to the world and to yourself. There was an acceptance, allowance, an invitation on your part for this to come into your life at this point.

“This is not to place any blame on you or on him. Your pathways just intersected for a short time for you to be able to realize different things about yourself, to be able to let go of different things, to figure out what is an emergency. What is high on your priority list; what and who you want to be. He is a man on his own path. He has little direction in his life. He has very little direction when it comes to spirituality and he has stunted his emotional growth. He has had people in his life enable him, especially his mother. His mother. His wife. There is someone that has male energy that enables this man also. He has used these as crutches his entire life. He has leaned on other people. He is such a volatile and inexperienced human being that he has had people along the way, which started with his mother, who have enabled him, and childhood friends, and especially this male energy who has enabled him and his behavior.

“And, there’s a part of fear that people have with this individual. That is his identity, which is to cause fear in other people. That’s what gives him life, so to speak. That’s what gears up his energy. That is what gives him control. So, there is no blame here. There is no blame on your part for inviting this in and allowing this in, and there is no blame on his part for being the person that he is. The two of you were in this psychic mesh that is within the universe, and this event was not pre-planned with this gentleman—with this *particular* gentleman—it was not pre-planned before birth. This was what *you* had decided to keep open for *you* and whenever the time was right for you, this person—and it didn’t matter who it was—it just happened to have been

this man—received your invitation and came in. So, this is not your fault. This is not his fault. You merged at this intersection.”

Client: “Is he going to learn anything from this?”

“Probably not. It is highly doubtful, but the experience is within his identity now and what he chooses to do with it is up to him. What you have chosen to do is what you want to do, as far as your personal growth. One day, you’ll be able to look back on this and see the gems that come out of this and be able to take that glass of wine and drink that glass of wine in Salute and say, ‘Thank you very much.’ Don’t hold on to the energy of this man; don’t hold on to the image of the man, because the image of the man is not important, the energy of the experience is what is important.

“You will (in the future) take nothing of what he did as a personal attack. This, in a sense, if you can understand this, was not a personal attack on you. This gentleman came into your life to dismantle whatever you needed inside to be dismantled. So, take it with a grain of salt. Do not—going forward—do not keep the image of him. Do not repeat in your mind the images of him and what he did. Just take the whole ball of wax, as they say, as an entire experience. You take what you need and he will take what he needs. This was just an intersection. That’s all it was. It is just an intersection.

“Do not say, ‘Why did I bring this to me? Why did I choose this? What’s wrong with me? Why did I do this?’

“Get rid of any kind of that type of thinking. It’s on a much higher spiritual level that this happened, and this is only for your emotional growth, your spiritual growth, and the job was done well, even though it is extremely painful for you and it will take you a while to recover—in your own terms. You need the comfort, you need the validation, and you need everything that you’re getting from your counselor. You need what you’re getting from your friends. This is all good. This is all good. I hope this helps. We are only here to guide you, to love you. We impart on you to trust yourself and your inner being.”

Client: “Do I have anything to fear from this man going forward?”

“Only if you want to. Only if you put that intention out there. Only if you put that energy out there. See yourself as a solid whole individual who has taken (accepted) this experience and does not need it any longer. Any thoughts of that, you are only giving him that energy. You are giving him that idea. So, form your life as you would like it to be formed. That is all I have to say. Thank you.”

*Here is the email I received the next day from my client...*

“Last night, I sat down and transcribed it for myself word for word from the recording because it was so profound, so important, and gave me such a new perspective on the whole relationship! You have no idea how much this helped me!!! This enables me to see things in an entirely different light, but I wanted to type it out

so I could print it out and have it handy for those times when I start to think about it in the ‘old’ way.”

Now, the same thing applies for deceased individuals coming through in a reading. Because of the clarity and intention of their energy, some deceased individuals can come through like a freight train, quickly bringing in information that is clear and precise. Some deceased individuals are not yet at that point, so their information will trickle through. It will come with one word or thought, then nothing, then one more here, one more there, then nothing. Sometimes great patience is needed to allow information to come through.

There is a method called “evidential mediumship.” This is where a reading will begin with evidence from spirit that will validate that it is dear old dad coming through. The evidence may include information about the person’s appearance, how the person died, their age, and their sex. If a medium works this way, those are the parameters they set up for themselves and for the people coming through, and it may work very well for them. Personally, it is unnecessary for me and I bypass this kind of process as most of this information reveals itself throughout the reading anyway. I allow deceased individuals the freedom to take the reading in whatever direction they so choose. Simply speaking, mediumship remains mediumship regardless of how someone works and we all work differently. I do not control or navigate a reading—spirit does.

As I have said, when you die a bodily death, it does not automatically and immediately make you enlightened. It takes time. Everything takes time, because time is an energy force and everyone is a part of that force. Keep in mind however; our man-made time does not exist in nonphysical realities, so 40 years of our time could be seconds in spirit. Everyone must get used to the idea of time being a force, and that force also being a part of everyone.

People will evolve and become involved with their own enlightenment in their own timing, and those whose information trickles through today, might come through like a freight train tomorrow. People’s timing and energy are constantly changing whether living or deceased, so do not forget that time, as we know it, is a construct that creates an illusion for us. It is not the real reality.

The question has come up a few times about a deceased person not communicating because they do not like the medium. There is never a case where a deceased individual does not like the medium. It does not have anything to do with being liked or not being liked, but rather, it has to do with the energies of the medium and the deceased. Sometimes the deceased person’s energies may not match or be compatible with the medium’s energies. If there is not a good energy match, the deceased person may decide not to come through for a particular medium.

Timing also plays a part in a reading. Sometimes the person receiving the reading is not ready to hear what the deceased person has to say. I had one client who scheduled a reading three months after her last one and the person that came through for her told her to wait a year—within that year, she divorced her husband and went to Greece, so we had a lot to cover when she scheduled again.

It took my mother 45 years before she came through for me. It was not because of her; it was because of me. I needed to become a whole person by working on my issues I had with her before I was open to being aware of her. Kelly Clarkson's song, *Because of You*, captures my state of being at age 18. A few years ago, I was giving a reading for a woman and as the session began, I was not getting any information for her. Nothing.

She said, "I think I'm supposed to give *you* a reading, I'm a medium too."

She told me that a woman was coming through whose lower intestinal area was lit up. I knew right away it was my mother and I knew exactly what it meant. My mom had multiple miscarriages and could never carry a baby past three months, which led to my adoption. She had her final miscarriage when I was five and she was given a full hysterectomy with no hormone replacement therapy. Yikes.

My mother gave her apologies, which I appreciated but did not really need from her—what I did need was an acknowledgement that she accepted responsibility for who she had been. I understood her and never faulted her for who she was, but what I really wanted was to be seen by her. It has only been in recent years that I have come to know that she has shed the personality she had in physical life and has become an amazingly different energy that is unrecognizable if compared to her previous self. Her former identity is gone and I now experience her as her true Self. Of course, her core vibration is the same, but she is no longer who she was in physical life. She is now one of my strongest supporters, as well as my dad who also caused great emotional pain for me.

There can be deep emotional healing when we have the perspective of the deceased after they gain a greater understanding of their life and the role they played for us in ours. There was never a thought about forgiving my parents—it is not about forgiveness, but all about acceptance and integration of my experiences with them and letting go of old stories and dried up old bones that become just dust in the wind.

## **How Do the Dead Communicate?**

Since the deceased do not have a physical body, they communicate by telepathy. They will give me images such as a picture or moving pictures like a video; they will give me emotions, physical feelings, and I may also hear, taste, and smell what they would like me to. All inner and outer sensoria will be at the disposal of the deceased person, and a majority of the time, I see the deceased within my mind's eye. For example, if I am sitting in my TV room and someone comes through, the energy shifts almost like the atmosphere changes and I will see the room in my mind but it will now include the person that is coming through.

Communication can also be compared to playing charades. People in spirit will give symbols that I need to interpret that will be specific to the deceased person and to the person receiving the reading. There are no set guidelines or rules I set down about the symbols they give, but I do insist upon knowing what side of the family they belong to. If they are from the mother's side, they need to come in on my right and if they are from the father's side, they need to come in on my left.

I give them the freedom to use their imagination and to communicate in ways their loved one will understand. There are some symbols though, that have become “standard” for me. If someone has, currently is, or will be going through a change in their life, I will be shown actual coins. The larger the coin, the bigger the change, and the more coins that are shown refers to how much change the sitter will be going through. I have also been given specific symbols for sexual abuse.

The symbols that have become recurring in my readings have not been chosen by me, but by someone in spirit who used the symbols at one time, and subsequent deceased persons have used them from my memory because they are recognizable to me. If someone died from a brain aneurism, trauma to the head, or some other head injury, I will feel the pain in my head that corresponds to the area affected. Once the information is validated, the pain will go away.

One day, I was watching a show on true crime where this man had stolen ancient gold coins and if memory serves me correctly, he put them in a sack and hung the sack from the ceiling of an empty rented storage unit. During a reading two days later, the deceased person coming through for my client gave me a visual of a large pile of shiny, almost glowing gold coins on the floor of an empty rented storage unit. Far different from the penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or silver dollar coins signifying a change in a person’s life. I asked her if she had received a large amount of money recently and she had not. The next day she contacted me to tell me she had an email from her employer right after our session, giving her a bonus of \$20,000. Her deceased person had used from my memory the gold coins in the empty storage room from the show I had watched, and since it was a new symbol for me, I was not sure if it was for a future or present situation or if it was symbolic.

It is always about the person in spirit, and not me. Spirit runs the session. I do not control who comes through or what information they give. The client will receive the information they need to hear at that specific time in their life and I cannot send anyone back. As funny as that might sound, people may come through who had caused great trauma to the client, but they come through only to help, not to add to the emotional pain one might be carrying. Information may also come through that the sitter may reject but it will make sense to them at a future time. I give what I get and do not question the information.

As I mentioned above, not all people in spirit are good communicators, but in a way, this can be a little tricky too. Every reading is unique and is personality specific. A person in spirit may come through as a poor communicator because that was the way they were in life. They come through that way so the sitter can recognize them, and after the identification and validation is made, they may go on to communicate quite well and often become philosophical with their messages, explain past life connections, or why they played their specific roll in life. An example of a good symbol to get a message across came when a client of mine was receiving an apology from her father because of his abuse when she was younger. He gave me a picture of a football player who is known for kneeling on the side of a football field praying before a game.

The father’s message to his daughter was, “I pray that you will forgive me.”

That was an easy one to decipher, and he chose the athlete because I know of him, and the message would be much clearer and precise as opposed to showing me praying hands that I might have interpreted as the father being religious.

The most challenging symbol I received was when a woman's aunt came through to give information about a dog the client had as a young girl. The woman in spirit gave me a picture of herself holding a Dachshund. My client had no idea about the dog because she never had a Dachshund and did not know what that might mean.

After several back-and-forth questionings and the aunt still insisting, my client said, "Well, we did have a dog named Link."

In the past, Dachshunds have been nicknamed sausage dogs, so I completely missed the connection, especially since I had a dog at one time that was a Dachshund. I thought the aunt was making a reference to a family dog or a dog my client had when she was my age. That was a frustrating one, but when a person in spirit is insistent about something, I must go with what they are trying to communicate and not acquiesce to a client's lack of memory or denials.

Because everyone is an individual and people express themselves differently, the same holds true for people in spirit. When they come through, I feel their energy in different ways because they *present* themselves in different ways, and I must be open and not fearful of it. I have never had an experience with a negative nonphysical being who wanted to harm me in some psychic or psychological way. However, I did have an experience with someone who had been bipolar in his physical life, and I have used this experience as a teaching tool on the pitfalls of being afraid.

The day before a reading for someone in California, I spent the day as an emotional wreck. My emotions were swinging back-and-forth; I was elated one moment, and then feeling despair in the next. All day it felt like there was an energy in the house, but I could not identify it and the energy seemed to be everywhere yet nowhere. Before bed, while I was watching TV, relaxing, and going over the day wondering what the heck was going on, I clearly heard a voice in my head say, "Go ahead, cut yourself, you'll feel better."

I couldn't be mad at the guy. It was a brilliant but dramatic thing to do and he was only preparing me for the reading I would be doing the next day.

After irritatingly saying to him, "Are you kidding me?"

I did tell him that I didn't appreciate the emotional roller coaster ride. After I realized what was going on and how everything made sense, he left. To his credit, he very clearly made his point. For an inexperienced person working on developing their mediumship abilities, this experience could be interpreted in a negative way. It could also be seen as a negative or harmful spirit coming in trying to manipulate someone into hurting him or herself. Therefore, I tell people that they have to ask questions and not be afraid of people in spirit form, because there is no one out there that has the power to hurt them unless they believe they can.

The next day, he came through for my client and I told him what this guy did the day before. My client recognized the behavior right away and knew who the deceased was. I asked if he knew that this man had been a cutter, which he did not, but the client stated that the man was an employee that made his work life extremely difficult because of his instability and being bipolar. He had caused a lot of turmoil and was relieved when the man was no longer in his life. The message he gave for my client was that the man would not bother him ever again and to please not worry that he might be psychically stalking him now that he was dead. For the bipolar man, this must have been a very intense relationship for him to come through with a message easing any thoughts the client may have had about being spirit-stalked, so to speak. Working with people in spirit is like sitting vigil for someone who is in the death process. When giving a reading, I am holding space for the sitter *and* the person in spirit. I must, in a positive way, be in the present moment, suspending judgments, and any religious or spiritual beliefs I may have. Fear will only shrink, block, limit experiences, and diminish personal power in every aspect of life, not just in mediumship.

When you have a reading with a medium, respect yourself, respect the medium, and respect the deceased who come through for you by being on time for your session, being open emotionally without the need to control the session, and having your session in a calm and quiet atmosphere. You need to be present mentally and emotionally. It is highly disrespectful to the medium and to those coming through for you to have your session while driving, standing in line at a fast-food place, cleaning house, cooking, eating during your reading, or to excuse yourself to use the loo. The *deceased* are coming through for *you* with messages!

There is a process and an unfolding that takes place when preparing for and following the course of a reading. Again, every medium has their own way of doing things. What I do and how I work may not work for someone else. I spend fifteen or twenty-minutes relaxing at the computer while waiting for my client to enter Zoom. I am open to communication from spirit and I have a notebook and pen handy to take any notes that may offer a starting point when the reading begins. Meditating before a reading is something I don't do and I do not surround myself with white light to protect myself. My belief is that I am my own protection—my self-esteem, self-worth, self-love, and acceptance of myself are all the protections I need. To me, surrounding one's body and energy with a preferred method of protection is based in fear and a belief that something out there may want to try to "get you." Check in with your beliefs about any fear you may have and do what is appropriate for you.

Frequently, I tell whomever is among my spirit entourage that if they would like to assist me in any way with the reading, I would be honored by their presence. I ask that anyone coming through for my client to please do their best to be clear and concise with their information and to please use symbols that are not difficult to decipher. I also say to those in spirit, *"If you would like to share yourself in a more direct and personal way (conscious channeling) during this reading with the individual with whom I am giving the reading, then please be my guest. This would be good for you, for the person who is here to receive your messages, and for me."*

This invitation will also allow the client to have a more direct telepathic experience with the person in spirit, sometimes without being aware of it. The individual coming through will understand there is a need to create a link with the individual receiving the reading in whatever way they see fit. The medium does not do this; the deceased do it. For this kind of three-way communication, the medium needs to remain out of the way and allow the information to flow.

## **Death Superstitions**

Every culture has beliefs associated with death, burials, and spirits, which are far too great to be referenced and detailed here. I believe superstitions create a safety net for people, a way to explain death and death-related experiences—kind of like emotional oversight or management. In more recent times, we can generally trace death beliefs and practices to the early Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and Indigenous peoples around the world. Because of colonialism, slavery, and combative Christianity forcing domination, oppression, and genocide, many Indigenous peoples were forced to adopt and absorb the belief systems of the invaders who imposed their religions, languages, and economics upon them, which brought trauma and death to many people and numerous cultures.

For Africans, before being abducted and brought to America as slaves, burial rituals followed many of the customs of ancient Egypt such as embalming and preparing the dead for their afterlife. For various reasons, the first slaves in America were not allowed to participate in traditional burial rituals or funeral services once practiced in West Africa. Some slave owners denied them their mourning period out of fear of revolt from the gathering. Most likely out of survival to express their spirituality, they turned to Christianity. However, if you know anything about the history of the church, conversion was rarely “introduced.” I have no doubt there was hostile coercion involved. So, in the final equation, funerals and burials became a celebration for slaves, knowing they would never see their home of origin again and death became a means of escape and a homecoming with *their* God.

The following superstitions and practices may not fit all cultures. Doing an Internet search, you can find many variations and similar threads of superstitions that are woven within different belief systems.

## **Windows and Doors**

One common superstition about death and dying is that a window or door needs to be open for the soul to be able to leave the building after they die so they are not stuck or trapped in this world. The original tradition called for the windows to be closed so the deceased soul could not fly out, but the tradition was changed so the soul could be free. The deceased are no longer bound to this three-dimensional reality, and once the essence or soul leaves the body, they are instantaneously enveloped with unconditional love, peace, and freedom in their new form and in their new reality. An example of this happened with a dying man named David.

I relieved a young man for a lunch break who had been sitting vigil for his dad since early morning. Because his father was declining and would soon be entering the actively dying stage, David had his scheduled bed bath that included fresh clothes and a shave. I asked the son to leave me his cell phone number so I could call him if his dad began to decline further.

His hospice nurse came in to take his vitals after his son left, and at that point, he was stable. When she left, I was alone with him for a while, holding his hand and telling him that his son went to get something to eat and his wife, who was out of the country attending a family funeral, would be returning the next day. The wife explicitly told the hospice nurse to try to keep her husband alive over the weekend.

I swear, minutes after I told David this, he began his final moments. I quickly called his son to come back and then alerted the hospice nurse who was now in another wing of the nursing home. He died quickly and before either of them could return. I noted the time of death and sat with him, waiting for the nurse and his son to return.

While sitting in silence facing him, I felt a strong presence behind me, and thinking it was the nurse walking in, I turned around to talk to her only to see David, in the clothes that he was dressed in, walk out the door. His presence was very strong and I am sure he was aware that I was aware of him. Being that I was still in this reality, it only *appeared* to me as if he was walking out the door. In *his* reality, the room and the door no longer existed. He was not seeing what I was seeing; he was experiencing his new reality and was no longer concerned about the world he just left. The room no longer existed for him. He was just walking on to wherever he was going. This can be an example of how people may misinterpret, create superstitions, or draw incorrect conclusions from their experiences with people in spirit. David did not need a door to leave.

## **Mirrors**

There is a common practice of covering mirrors in the home or within proximity of a dead body. Some believe mirrors are a portal and may trap a soul. Another belief is that covering a mirror will keep the soul from being tempted to stay after seeing their reflection as they are leaving the body. You do not want to be the first person after a death to see your reflection in a mirror because you will be the next to die. In the Jewish tradition of Shiva, the seven-day mourning period after burial, the covering of mirrors was originally based on the folklore that spirits are drawn to mirrors and a soul could be trapped in the reflection, but the modern symbolism seems to have been altered to discourage vanity by keeping the focus and respect on the deceased person and encourage self-reflection.

If you want to connect with the deceased, you might want to try a technique called mirror gazing or psychomanteum, which stems from the Greek word nekromanteion that translates to *oracle of the dead*. Many cultures practice spirit gazing, whether in water, crystal balls, a brass disc, or a mirror, for example. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus gazed into a pit of sheep's blood to speak with his dead mother.

Archeologists began excavating "Necromanteion of Ephyra," an ancient Greek temple of necromancy in 1958 near the ancient city of Ephyra on the banks of the Acheron River in

Epirus. The site is officially known as, and preserved as, the Necromanteion, which is said to have been a doorway to the dominion of the dead and a place of devotion for Hades and Persephone. Scholarly skeptics think the site may have originally been an agricultural tower with underground chambers that stored water and grain instead of being a place of ritual and mystical communication with the dead by staring into pools of water.

If you want to try spirit gazing, I would recommend the psychomanteum technique. Find a peaceful place where you can set up a mirror at a 45-degree angle. Sit in a chair or on the floor in front of it, a few feet away, and have the room dimly lit, or you can use a small light or candle behind the chair. Ask a loved one to come through for you. Relax and have no expectations. It may take only a few minutes or it may take longer—by relaxing and staring into the mirror, you put yourself in a light state of hypnosis, which is a shift in consciousness. Keep your mind and emotions open because you may receive a message in one of several ways. You may see, hear, smell, have visions, or see an apparition. Do not judge or dismiss anything. It is all about communication. The communication might not come until later or while in the dream state. Personally, I consider gazing techniques, scrying, crystal readings, tarot, and other techniques as tools that are used to help a person to focus. I prefer to believe in the power of the mind and the emotions. It is all a personal preference and that to which one is drawn.

I decided that my guest room would be the best place for my experiment. I set up a 15 by 51-inch mirror against the wall, the inexpensive kind that can be attached to the back of the door, and with the room dimly lit, I sat on the floor and leaned against the side of the bed. I had been feeling a little down in the dumps for a couple of days because of the holidays, Covid, and just the general feeling of being beat up by 2020, and I was a little sad. I had no expectations and did not know if this mirror gazing thing was going to work because I don't need it to be able to communicate with the dead.

I stared at myself in the mirror, watching the shape of my face change, and a woman that Tom and I knew in the 1970s showed up in my mind's eye—not in the mirror—like spirit does whenever I am aware of their energy. Sandy was a nurse who worked for a nursing agency part-time when we knew her, and she was very proud of her uniform with the white shoes, white stockings, stiff white nurse's hat, and a dark blue cape. She died shortly after I had met her, and since Tom and I reunited in 2008, I had been waiting for her to come through, which had been almost 14 years. I know I am persistent on this, but timing is so important. I saw her come up behind me in her nurse's uniform and she took hold of her blue cape that she was wearing, opened it, and wrapped the cape and her arms around me to comfort me. It was the sweetest thing; and if she had come through any other time in the past 14 years, her presence would not have been as meaningful as it was that day.

## The River Styx

In Greek and Roman *mythology*, Charon or Kharon, is a psychopomp that carries the newly deceased across the river Styx, which is the river that divides the world of the living from the world of the dead. A Greek coin called an obolus, or a Roman coin called a danake, was placed in the mouth of the deceased person to pay for safe passage to the afterlife. A psychopomp can be spirits, deities, creatures, or nonphysical entities that guide souls to the afterlife without judgment. Another variation is to place coins over the deceased's eyes.

## Other Common Death Superstitions and Beliefs

Turning pictures face down: To keep the living from being possessed by the spirit of the dead person.

White gloves for pallbearers: To keep the spirit of the dead person from entering the pallbearer's body through the hands.

Watching over a dead body, but never yawning: Cover your mouth when you yawn to keep the spirit of the deceased from entering your body by the mouth.

Taphephobia and graveyard shift: Taphephobia is a fear of being buried alive, which was not uncommon in the 19th century. A string was placed in the coffin with a bell attached to the other end near the headstone. If a person was buried prematurely, the designated person sitting at the gravesite, especially overnight, could dig the person up. This is where the term *graveyard shift* came from.

Covering the deceased: Covering the body with a sheet would keep the soul from leaving the body while also protecting the living from being possessed.

Do not whistle: Don't whistle in a cemetery because it will summon the devil.

Pay your bill: Pretty slick that someone started this superstition that the dead will not rest until the funeral bill is paid.

Gun salutes, church bells, and throwing spears into the air: To protect the living from the spirit, the spirit that caused the death, and/or evil spirits.

Feet first: Always carry the deceased out of the home feet first so the spirit won't look for someone to take with them.

There are too many superstitions to list, but what it comes right down to is the fear of death, the fear of the unknown, the fear of where the soul or spirit goes, the fear of being possessed, the fear of the bogeyman, fear of the Self, and on and on. We sure are a fearful and creative bunch!

I think it is worthwhile to restate how we respond to fear. Thinking that fear is an idea that also lives in the imagination, and since we are going to think of it as an idea, also be aware that fear is a reaction to a given situation or a person. Since it is an idea, you can change the fear to become knowledge and strength by *not reacting*, but rather by *taking positive action*. If you find yourself in a situation that brings you fear that is not life threatening and

you look at fear as being an idea, you do have the power to change it to become knowledge, strength, or determination. Too many people react to a given situation or to another person with a *reaction* that is usually of a negative nature, which only compounds the fear itself. You always have the choice to take positive action instead of reacting negatively without thinking.

There is nothing to fear from the nonphysical world; there is nothing to fear when you take a deep dive within; there is nothing to fear from life. I have spent my lifetime experiencing and understanding my own emotions so I can understand how frightening it might be for an individual to begin the journey of finding one's own truths. Feel confident in the fact that you have an entourage of people in the spirit world that love you and want to help you—think of it, if you like, as your personal band of angels, guides, or loved ones that only want the best for you.



Experiencing the dream reality will give you a glimpse and a taste into what it is like being in a nonphysical state of existence. It is the closest all humans will collectively experience that offers an understanding of what it might be like to be in spirit form. The dream state is fertile ground to connect with the deceased as well as your past, present, and future.

## 8

### DREAMS, DIMENSIONS, AND IMAGINATION

*“The world, as imagination sees it, is the real world. Not facts, but figments of the imagination, shape our daily lives.”*

—Neville Goddard

This chapter may be slightly trippy, so fasten your seatbelts, put your imagination into high gear, and wear your 3-D cosmic glasses. To start off, here are what I consider to be a few fundamental truths in life.

- Everything is energy; it is a scientific fact. Everyone and everything are connected by and with energy.
- Energy and consciousness are the same thing.
- Everything exists in the Now Moment—the past, present, and future all exist in the present moment.
- Our reality is an illusion. However, we have created a focused physical reality *within* the illusion.
- There is an infinite number of dimensions, realities, and universes in which versions of us exist. What we perceive to be the person or personality that we are is only a projection, or an aspect of our larger Self—our True Self or Core Self.
- There is no death. We only reorganize our consciousness, awareness, and location.
- We create our reality individually and collectively with our thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and imagination. Awareness, growth, and enlightenment are rooted in the imagination.
- There is no time—we only perceive events in a linear way to make sense of our experiences. ***Time does not create the event; the event creates time. Time is the product of an event.***
- Humans have disrupted the natural balance with overpopulation, the destruction of the Earth, other species, and with war and violence.
- Telepathy is real. There is an energetic psychic network that, without exception, connects *all* life.
- We are powerful creators who deny our own consciousness and inner knowledge. We lack the understanding that universal knowledge is within all of us and we have not yet learned to take full responsibility for our own actions.
- We are not alone; we have never been alone and we are not accidental tourists in an accidental world.

I love to sleep, because when I sleep, I dream. And when I dream, my wiser Self takes me into the wild yonder.

The dream state, which is an extension of your being, is a place without time or space where there is an infinite number of possibilities for you to explore. It is in the dream reality where your dreams and ideas are born. The very existence of the dream state merits a higher value and validity where you can find its true worth by immersing yourself into, and being absorbed by, the energy and creativity of that reality. Allow your dreams to work for you and allow them to clarify your situations to you and guide you. Since your dream state is an extension of yourself, this is where you can find all the answers you are looking for.

In the early days of writing this book, I had three profound dreams that gave me strength and encouragement, not only for my writing, but also for a shift in consciousness that unfolded over the course of a year. For me, when having important dreams that are percipient, they may come in clusters or as individual dreams, each being significant and deeply meaningful. With cluster dreams, they come several nights in a row or within a short period of time in between them—whether clustered or singular, both types of dreams seem to be consistent. They are vivid, I am aware within the dream, and they are unforgettable even years later.

### **Dream One—The Snake**

In the first dream, I was in a hospital situation standing at a nurse's station. A nurse showed me a two-gallon glass specimen jar that was on the counter filled with clear water (symbolizing emotion and spirituality) that contained a large albino Anaconda with orange markings in a dormant state. The snake then appeared in my hands fully awake. As I held it up looking into its eyes and face, the telepathic interaction and connection was immediate. As it opened its toothless mouth, an intense and powerful stream of white-ish translucent energy came from it that went directly into my mouth and filled me with life force energy. I felt no fear. The power and intensity of the dream pointed to inner strength, inner knowing, and the inner transformation that was to take place in the coming months. Looking to ancient cultures, snakes have been a mythological symbol for renewal, immortality, fertility, transformation, rebirth, and are the sentinels of many temples and sacred places.

### **Dream Two—The Bear**

The second night, I found myself at a springtime ceremonial Bear Dance. I was wearing the head and coat of a bear over my body, and while I was ceremoniously dancing, I *became* the bear. For me, the dream meant spiritual inspiration with the same theme of evoking my inner strength and inner knowing. While recounting this dream, I remembered that while in Tuva (officially Tyva), my travel mates and I were invited to the clinic of a respected shaman. The shaman, whose energy was outgoing and friendly, received us with openness and graciousness. Before we left, he gifted everyone with a bear claw, however, being the last one gifted, I was given the wrist of a bear instead. For a moment, it felt odd that I was given something different and I wondered why.

I was honored to receive such a gift, and at the time, I did not know the meaning of the bones or why I was singled out to receive them, but I did know it was meaningful. I have since come to understand that symbolically, energetically, and spiritually, the wrist of a bear holds more power than the claws. Wrists *have* the power and *hold* the power that allows for

great dexterity, locomotion, and the agile manipulation of many small things like opening jars and picking the nuts from pinecones.

Bones represent strength and were used by many cultures in ancient healing practices. Abram, in his life as a Mayan Shaman, told me the shamans, and there were many with various healing specialties, recognized different parts of the body of different animals, including their pets, as having power points. In their practices with people, they focused on the different areas of the animal bones to bring power to them, so they could give that power to the people who needed healing.

To this day, the vibration of the bones can help me to connect with ancient shamanism and have that energy available to me to assist in my mediumship, if I feel the need to. The real power of the energy though, lies in my intention, my shared belief in animism, communicating with the spirits of all life, and what I consider to be meaningful and sacred.

For a little background about Tuva and its shamans, an article in *The Siberian Times*, September 18, 2015, showcased Kara-ool Dopchun-ool, who claims to be the highest shaman in the Tyva Republic as well as in Turkey, conveys that shamanism remains aligned with their ancient practices since the time of early man, during the Scythian empire, and now in modern times. He states that their shamanism consists of many elements; Vedantic philosophy (related to Hinduism) mixed with witchcraft, healing, and the communication with the spirits of all nature—the mountains, the taiga (Siberian tundra), rivers, lakes, and with animals.

### **Dream Three—The Eagle**

On the third night, my dream was about a young eagle. I was walking through an open area in the woods when I came upon a mound of dirt with a young eagle on top of it with its wings spread out fluttering and vibrating over gray baby eaglets, protecting them. I did not know what the eagle was doing because the eaglets disappeared from my sight by being under the eagle's wings. Then it leaned forward, stretching its head and neck toward me, allowing the wings to flatten out on the dirt still vibrating, and I thought how beautiful it was. For me, the eagle represents the spiritual flight I believe was happening within me at that time in my life. The eagle, protecting the eaglets was symbolic of protecting my ideas and my writing, which has become more essential the closer to the finish line I get.

In your dream reality, there is depth, meaning, direction, and direct knowledge and information about yourself, your emotions, and your life—you have an endless resource and pool of knowledge about who you are at your fingertips, which is freely available to you every time you sleep and dream. Dreams are the playground for creating reality and the imagination is a creative force of consciousness that is the basis for all realities. Without imagination our reality would not exist—there is a marriage, a meeting, an intersection between consciousness, imagination, and the physical world that provide pathways, avenues, doors, or windows—however you would like to put it—to altered perceptions and dimensions.

Our imagination and dreams *are* the real reality. In our dream world, it is there that the imagination seems to be the most bountiful and fruitful, only because our conscious mind is

not directly in play as it is in our waking state because we are not bound to the conscious physical framework that we have created for ourselves. It is through dreaming and imagination that we conceive and create our lives, our reality, and ourselves. Throughout our existence, we have utilized dreams and imagination to create and define our societies, our governments, ourselves, and the conjuring of the languages we speak—a tapestry of nuances, sounds, pitches, and emotions shared, borrowed, and woven by ancestors of multiple cultures and lineages. It is also where we can solve problems, create inventions, have direct conversations with ourselves, and have out-of-body experiences.

Does the imagination create dreams or do dreams create the imagination? Or, are dreams and imagination born in tandem from the infiniteness of possibility? When we are in a dream, we are in a reality that is all about imagination and creativity. When we are in our waking state, it is also all about imagination and creativity—because without imagination, we have no reality. Our outer reality will always be in tune with our inner state of being; as we change our thoughts, emotions, and beliefs, our outer world will abide. We are where we are because of where our thoughts, emotions, reactions, and choices have led us. What we determine and imagine can bring anything into being. By far, this is not a new concept, and in part, is traced to some of the debates and philosophies of life from the ancient Greeks.

Abram, over the years has advised people that to “Think It—See It—Form It—Attract It—Become It—Allow It—Act It,” because it is the basic way we use our imagination, emotions, and intent to create reality.

It was while chemist Dmitri Mendeleev (1834–1907) was dreaming, that he solved the arrangement of the Periodic Table and Paul McCartney of the Beatles dreamed the melody for the song, *Yesterday*. It is with dreaming and imagination that two musicians on different continents can compose the same piece of music. Unbeknownst to each creator, two comic versions of *Dennis the Menace* launched on the same day in 1951; one character in the US and a different character in the UK. It is with dreaming and imagination that there are millions of differing concepts and versions of who God is or is not. It was with my dreams and imagination that I conceived of this book. It is with imagination that I have had dreams guiding me in my writing process, dreams that continue to guide me, and it is with imagination that I envision you reading this book.

DNA sequencing has shown us how closely we are related to the animal and plant kingdoms; we share common genetic signatures not only with chimpanzees, but also with bananas, fruit flies, chickens, and mice. So, the characteristics that we have long considered to be only human, have formed our ideas and beliefs about life, and consequently we separated ourselves from animals and nature. The arduous road of DNA discoveries has led us straight to the understanding that we closely share signatures and characteristics found in many other life forms and species. People need to thoroughly grasp that all forms of life are fundamentally one form of life. Animals, insects, and nature are all a part of human DNA, human nature, and human beings; *and*, humans are a part of nature, animals, insects, and so on. It can only be that way—there is no other way.

We know animals dream because we have watched our sleeping pets make amusing sounds, we have watched their limbs twitching, and we have seen their rapid eye movements

(REM)—just like what we do during our sleep stages. We often quip about dogs chasing rabbits or having a good run. But, how exactly does our dream life differ from animals? Animals do not dream like we do because animals live in the moment and have a greater awareness of the nonphysical *and* dimensional aspects of themselves. Thus, they are less tethered to the physical world than we are, so they process their dreams quite differently. Just as animals can merge and immerse themselves in a beautiful sunset, they also merge and immerse themselves with their dreams, and process them by way of using the energy *from* those dreams. With humans, many times we use dreams to help us figure out or resolve a problem. Because animals exist only in the Now Moment, there is no need to figure out problems, because animals do not have problems to solve.

The greatest difference between animals and humans is reasoning, and the difference is how reasoning is processed. Humans reason things out, think about things, weigh the pros and cons, make judgments, assumptions, choices, come to conclusions, and find meaning. The ability to reason and to exercise logic gives us ways, means, and options that enable us to reflect. If we are willing to look honestly within and recognize how we function emotionally, this ability to self-reflect and self-assess empowers us to learn, evolve, and raise our consciousness—to be in alignment and balance from the cooperative assembly of dynamic positive and negative energies. If there is a situation an animal is in, they have the ability and spontaneity to reason it out as a game, they can play with it in their own way, and come to a determination—they instinctively understand that situations only happen in the Now Moment. Concerning how animals process experiences is something we rarely think about, but we could start to play around with the idea of how it would benefit our own processes.

Just as they have their own brand or type of reasoning, they also have their own brand of sleep cycles, even though their sleep cycles are like ours. Dogs especially will go through their dream cycle as they would in physical reality because they are more connected with who they are—more than a human being, but they will still shut down their physical and emotional control while sleeping. For us, beginning with the first dream when we fall asleep, the brain sends a signal to the body to relax muscle control. The deeper we are in the sleep cycle, the more the body restricts the muscles so we will not wander into traffic or run into walls. The brain will give messages to the body to restrict muscle control in degrees as we enter different sleep stages. Because animals have their own “brand” of sleep cycles, a dog can dream of running in a field chasing a ball or playing with another animal and their body will move, but not like it would in the waking state.

### **Sleep Paralysis, Lucid Dreaming, and Out-of-Body Experiences**

The day my son moved out of a rental house to another home, he told me about an experience he had the night before and asked me if the house he was leaving was haunted. I never had any indication that there had ever been an unidentified presence in the house, but that final night was very frightening for him because he woke up during the night not being able to move. He said it felt like an elephant was on his chest, he had a sense of doom, and it felt like there was an ominous presence in the house. I assured him that what he described

was classic sleep paralysis. With sleep paralysis, there are too many unknowns and variables to prove there are any decisive physical explanations for the experience and at best, the cause remains a hypothesis and defined as parasomnia, which is lumped in with other sleep disorders.

The French surgeon, Paul Broca, is best known for his research on the localization of the frontal lobes involving language, which was presented in 1861, now known as Broca's area. Over the centuries, there were many discoveries where science learned, largely through dissection, that every function of the brain was associated with a certain location in one of the four lobes in either of the two hemispheres.

It is a known fact that the frontal lobe is responsible for decision-making, problem solving, emotions, and behavior, for example. The paradigm has been one-to-one function as opposed to many-to-one function, or as Norman Doidge, M.D. talks about in his bestselling book, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, that every brain function is associated with a certain location in the brain. However, scientists have also discovered that the brain can change and create new neural pathways; we do this all the time in our daily life just by learning something new, changing a routine, or doing something differently like using your non-dominant hand instead of your dominant hand.

Thankfully, we have gained greater knowledge about the neuroplasticity of the brain, in large part due to Bach-y-Rita, the scientist spotlighted in Dr. Doidge's book. The book highlights testimonials that support the idea that the brain, through rerouting and creating new neuronal pathways can change itself, because we see, hear, taste, smell, and feel with our brains—it is our brains that perceive the signals from the senses.

After reading about this, I understood what happened to me during a deep situational depression I experienced between the ages of 44 to 45, which I did not recognize for a year prior because I had never experienced depression before. I was swallowed up with stress from dealing with an irresponsible boyfriend, a defiant teenager, and unrealistic work demands while trying to juggle life's responsibilities without a support system; everything became overwhelming.

I would never commit suicide, but I can tell you that I cried everyday begging God to take me out without a care as to how it was to be accomplished. I wanted the pain to stop. I was in such a deep hole that my eyes were seeing color, but my brain saw everything in black, white, and gray—there was no color being perceived at all. The signals from my eyes were not reaching my brain, so I can attest to the fact that we really do not “see” with our eyes, we see with our brains. Within days of starting an antidepressant, I was tapping my foot to music and seeing colors again.

After a few months I was back on track never to experience that kind of fright again. No one can relate to, empathize, or empathically “feel” what it is like unless one has had direct experience with that kind of deep and debilitating depression. I do not judge or feel that suicide is a selfish act. I came to have greater compassion because I understand the toll of persistent stress and the emotional and mental pain that invades the consciousness 24 hours a day.

It seems another arm of human brain anatomy and the localization mapping during the different sleep states, give us a framework to understand sleep cycles and identify sleep proclivities. I would suggest, not being a scientist or psychiatrist, but coming from the standpoint of having an unusual dream life, that it may serve us better if we merged with the idea in a more sophisticated way and see the brain and sleep states as a fluid framework and not a fixed one, because the *source* is unrestrained consciousness.

Many individuals know that consciousness is too vast to have fixed boundaries or limitations—the cycles, states, or stages of sleep we experience are only indicators—road signs, if you will. There is no way to map *where* the mind travels even when we can view activity of the brain with neurometric brain mapping. Our psyche, imagination, playfulness, harmless mischievousness, and life force, will always instinctively seek to freely express itself without the boundaries and limitations that science provides.

Sleep paralysis temporarily renders a person unable to move because of the loss of muscle control, which begins after falling asleep. During an episode, a person may be having a dream in a deep sleep, and as they are deeply dreaming, they may begin to wake up, but they are still dreaming and awake at the same time—sleeping and awake simultaneously. During those moments, they are in another dimension of this reality and perceiving numerous qualities of that dimension. Often, but not always, the asleep/awake person will experience that dimension in troubling and negative ways because of their distorted perception, and that makes them feel as if they are suffocating and there is an evil presence.



**The Nightmare by Henry Fuseli 1781**  
**Oil on Canvas Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Michigan**

Dreams are a dimension in and of themselves. When you are partially awake but still dreaming in the dream you are in, you are consciously awake in that dimension *of* the dream. Being conscious in the dream dimension, anything can be perceived in a distorted way. You might be asking yourself, “Why, over centuries, do people have the same experience with sleep paralysis?” Because, in my opinion, people have created *within* the dream dimension a mass energetic narrative that everyone can draw from to express their specific state of awareness—a pool of energy continually recreated by dreamers wading in that pool. You might also be wondering how we can create a mass story line like this. I will tell you why. Because, and say it with me—*everyone is connected by and with energy.*

There is also something that I call an “awake dream.” I found myself continuing the dream I was having one night, after I had woken up to roll over in bed. While sitting up, as I repositioned myself and with my eyes open, my dream continued for about eight seconds. It was like a movie playing in my mind. It did not feel as if I had been out of body or in another dimension—it was a run-of-the-mill dream where I was the observer and not a participant. The dream continued to play itself out while I was awake in a twilight state. The

dream reality is so fantastic that, to me, it is an unedited world where there are no boundaries and imagination reigns.

Lucid dreaming can happen many times in a person's life. In a lucid dream, you are consciously aware *in* the dream that you are dreaming, aware that you are creating the dream, and aware that you represent all the characters and all the situations that are taking place in the dream. You are within the dream state where a segment of your conscious mind is not only aware of dreaming, it also becomes an active participant within it. When the conscious mind enters the dream, it leaves behind, so to speak, the component that focuses on and deals with daily life, which gives it more freedom to play around in the dream structure.

I can only base my observations on personal experience, but I do believe lucid dreaming is of a spontaneous nature, and I am not completely convinced a person can train themselves to do this on demand by repeated suggestions before sleep—yet, I have read that many people are successful at doing so. According to [sleepfoundation.org](http://sleepfoundation.org), 55% of adults have had at least one lucid dream in their lifetime, and 23% of people experience lucid dreaming at least once per month. I am not foreign to lucid dreaming and there have been times when my conscious brain was thinking in the dream about the possibilities of the dream itself, or even attempting to interpret the dream as I was dreaming, but this too has always happened spontaneously. Commonly experienced, there are times when there is so much on a person's mind while sleeping, their conscious mind is still busy thinking about the day, working out problems, or there is a song that runs through a person's head all night long. Annoying at best, and not conducive to a well-rested night.

Lucid dream studies have shown that the prefrontal cortex activity is comparable to the waking state, and I have read that lucid dreaming is now referred to as a “hybrid sleep-awake state” or “hybrid state of consciousness.” Labels and definitions serve us in numerous ways and they certainly have their place in our world, but when something sounds new, different, and exciting to people, like hybrid stuff, people will, and do understand the label. They will accept it as a truth because it is attractive and more exciting than to simply say they were awake and asleep at the same time, which sounds like old news. People like to hear about hybrid cars, hybrid animals, hybrid genres, hybrid novels, hybrid work, hybrid this and that, self-driving cars, the newest smart phone, or whatever the latest trend is that we are being fed. Labels are modifiable, tradable, and in the grand scheme of things, they mean very little. Humans are hung up on labels, definitions, classifications, and the rebranding of something as if it were a new discovery.

In the spiritual marketplace especially, people are taught what to do, what not to do, how to do it, what to activate, and what labels belong to certain experiences or healing methods. The “dos, don'ts, and shoulds” are the predictable convictions, certainties, dialogues, and mass conformity that adhere to some cryptic celestial book of light. Direct marketing targets the New Age trappings for self-help, wellness, and enlightenment. It seductively appeals to the masses because they make people feel safe as they venture into canned self-discovery that eclipses the deep work required to touch the uncomfortable and destabilizing resonances of life's lesions. The parameters are set, the guardrails are in place, and at the end of the day people become spiritually hijacked, domesticated, and housebroken.

It was transpersonal psychotherapist and author John Welwood who coined the term *spiritual bypassing* in the early 1980s. My friend, Charles Lawrence, coined the term *spiritual trafficking*, both describing—in their own way—the practices in wellness and enlightenment circles that offer a false defense mechanism and a false sense of Self by bypassing and avoiding the deep work necessary in the name of enlightenment—where your aura gets fluffed. It can be terrifying for individuals to unlearn what has become legitimate, familiar, and comfortable for them. Leaving their comfy confines to cross the threshold of uncertainty to become the free wanderer who calls upon their inner wilderness, that is, their deep inner world, will upset their status quo. Change is the basis for all growth including spiritual growth, and the patterns and beliefs that we function under anchor us to our present reality. A lush inner life takes a dedicated focus on understanding what we repress so we can allow emotional balance through inner understanding, self-respect, and have the readiness to drop or distance oneself from situations or people who are not willing to bring their own oxygen to the journey.

Once you allow your inner reality the deep expressiveness that has, up to that point, basically been unseen by you, your reality will change. No one can understand the truths you uncover, or truly understand your awakening, or what has moved you. No one can truly understand and correctly interpret your experiences, so most of all, you are your own greatest witness. With some people, I have found it pointless to share my experiences, even when my intention has been to sincerely show them what is possible within themselves and to encourage them. It can backfire.

A consequence of sharing otherworldly experiences with people who have rudimentary knowledge and experience, is that they may diminish *your* experience to fit into the scope and terms of their limited understanding. People who are unaware of their own truth will often do this without realizing what they are doing. In their search to understand, they will then try to analyze it and interpret it based on their perceptions of their own identity. This will make them feel good about themselves and in their mind, by making comparisons to their own experiences, they may elevate themselves to some status of familiarity on the matter. In a way, when people do this, they are belittling their own experiences by not accepting them as they are and instead, they project them to be *more* than what they are.

No one will truly relate to you unless they themselves have had similar initiatory and deeply moving and profound experiences. Even then, only you can know your own truths, those honest truths that authentically take you far beyond the boundaries of the conscious idea you have of yourself and how you choose to announce yourself. Who and what do you want to be? Do you want to be a person of substance and character who develops a fellowship with wisdom? Or, to put it more bluntly, do you just want to play dress up?

Admission to your lush inner world is the allowance and willingness to meet and understand the depth of your emotions and experiences because ultimately, life happens *for* you, not *to* you, as “they” say. This is not always a Sunday stroll through a beautiful park—it often looks like death, loss, grief, depression, trauma, challenges, conflict, fear, self-sabotaging behavior, arrogance, or what masquerades as failure. Can we, and do we, evolve from positive experiences? Yes, absolutely! But, the troubling, tricky, and messy experiences

often offer a personal tour through the intense caverns of life, and it is there where we often find our greatest epiphanies. Yes, sometimes people do need someone outside of themselves for direction and they should seek assistance from reputable people to guide them. Everyone needs help at some point in their life. I would advise you to avoid the packaged wellness weekends or retreats that dangle the speedy enlightenment carrot. Ultimately though, by aligning with your dream world, it can be the first step to uncover your own truths, beliefs, what makes you tick, and the wisdom you already have about yourself and your inner world—your inner Modus Operandi.

Most dreams come from the conscious mind and they deal more with normal day-to-day living. As mentioned, the conscious mind that deals with outward reality *is* sleeping, yet a part or a segment of it remains active and unencumbered. I believe that when we are aware of the conscious mind being present in the dream state, it means something significant. In a lucid dream, you are creating an opportunity or opportunities for you to take a diligent look at yourself or to shine a light on how you *have been* functioning, how you *are* functioning, and how you *can possibly* function in the future. The lucid dream can teach you what you can be doing differently, how to function differently, or how you can create new patterns or beliefs. If you would like to know more about the skill of lucid dreaming, investigate the pioneering research of the German Gestalt Psychologist, Paul Tholey. His “Combined Technique” offers ways for an individual to develop the skills to induce lucid dreaming. There are many other books written about lucid dreaming that you can find online if you are interested.

I am inclined to also suggest that whatever you would like to accomplish in the dream reality, you keep an open mind, know anything is possible, and do not label anything. See yourself as whole, a being of consciousness and energy where there is continuous communication between, and within, every facet of *you* instead of separating yourself into parts. Specifically in the dream world, see everything you experience as *you* being in a different state of awareness, expansiveness, and expressiveness instead of reducing your experience to, “Oh man, last night I was in a hybrid state of consciousness.” Sure, use it if it fits for you, but maybe you can look at it where you were simply in one of many altered states of consciousness in the dream dimension.

Do not define anything, do not overthink your experiences, dissect them, or control them. You can be in *command* and at the same time be allowing of the natural flow, but it will not work for you if you want to control. Give yourself freedom and acceptance and allow your inner Self to be the guide, and keep in mind that consciousness is energy and energy is consciousness; consciousness has its own will because energy can always change but never forced, controlled, or destroyed. ***Energy will always seek to express and recreate itself.***

In short, see yourself and understand that *you are the dream*. Lucid dreaming is just a part of dreaming anyway. A dream is a dream, lucid or not. It is still a dream because it is its own reality. *You* are the dream because *you* create the dream even if it seems as though the dream is being created for you. *You* create the dream—lucid or not.

Since the dream state is the playground for creating reality, there are many dreams that we will not remember—we do not need to remember every dream because the energy of the dream will always be in a person’s emotional memory. Often, when we try things out or are

creating what we are going to manifest in our life in the dream state, it is worked out deeply within the subconscious, which may be why we may not remember. One way we remember is when Déjà vu happens in our daily life. The energy of the dream, in a sense, has seeped or bled into the conscious mind, then we remember in the form of Déjà vu. We have already created a situation in the dream state and we relive it in the awake state in a certain timeframe—it could be tomorrow or two years from now, and whatever we dreamed and created has then manifested.

Out-of-body experiences or astral projection during the sleep state is something we all experience every time we sleep. As I have explained, we have energetic threads or strings that project from the body. When I talk about there being only one source of energy, the *Whole of Existence*, it does not mean there is a blanket of energy out in the universe that we draw from—in a real sense, we *are* the universe—what exists outside of ourselves first exists within, and energy *is* all things. Just as the body has strings or threads of energy within and without, the universe is made up of threads of energy also.

Think about how a plasma globe works, which is a mini version of Nikola Tesla’s “inert gas discharge tube” or plasma lamp. The plasma globe, which is filled with noble gasses, has an electrode in the center. When you touch the glass with your fingers, it creates static electricity inside the globe with dancing threads of the electricity that connect to your fingertips. Take that image and imagine the universe as having trillions of bundles of the same threads of energy just like the ones that emanate within and from your body. As you are traveling out-of-body and shooting through the universe, you can be traveling through one thread of energy for example, or decide on different threads, but whatever threads you are traveling through, your experience will be unique and different within each thread. Another way to look at it is to think about driving your car and how you take different routes that will have different destinations. You take different roads for different reasons that produce different outcomes. The same thing happens traveling with and through the threads of energy found in the universe.

In my twenties, I experienced astral traveling through a thread/string, which was fully exhilarating and where my thoughts were instantaneous. By comparison, I see how the thoughts I have in my physical reality are *extremely* slow. In my dream state, I knew I was out of body and traveling through the universe in an energy that was white-ish, translucent, and shimmering all at the same time. The thread, some might also call it a tube of light, but it was not, was an electrified energetic thread that I was being pulled through, yet, I was engulfed in it and I was a part of it. It was around me and through me all at the same time. *We* were one. It makes me wonder if the tunnel of light people move through in a near death experience, which I call a *death experience* because the person *does* die for a time, is the individual traveling through a thread of energy, therefore people misunderstand the traditional “tunnel of light” that is believed to be the vehicle by which an individual “crosses over.” The light does not bring a person to a destination because the person *is* the light.

Every time we sleep, we leave our body, even if it is for a second, ten minutes, or four hours. The length of time that we are free from our physical body and environment does not matter, because we are not bound by space-time in a nonphysical situation. I would venture

to say that 98% of the time, most people are not aware of their astral travels. Now, consider this closely—sometimes, when you are astral traveling, you do not go anywhere. Because you *are* the universe, you can *pull everything to you*—you will pull your experience to you. This may sound bizarre, but bear with me. Imagine a huge piece of paper that is in front of you that is so large that you look to be only a few feet tall by comparison. As you are standing on the bottom edge, you have a *desire* to be at the other end, when suddenly, the top of the paper bends over so edge touches edge. You have effectively pulled your destination to you. We can do this because within our beingness, which is limitless, we can go beyond what we think we know to be the structure of the space-time continuum, which is a mathematical concept pioneered by Hermann Minkowski, a former professor of Einstein, where four-dimensional time and space are joined and not seen as separate. The continuum gave scientists a broader view whereby they could further define our physical universe.

Most people are not interested in, or want to understand space and time because they are likely living busy lives, navigating life, and too focused on clock time that structures our daily routines. This is reality for most of the world's population. Space can feel real for them because they can look up into the sky and see the spatial dimension of the universe and everything that exists within the space of what they see. We do this whether it is looking at the stars and planets in the universe or looking at objects within the space of our home. You may believe in extraterrestrial life and the crafts they travel in, or you may dismiss it, but allow me to use this as an example of how we can pull things to us and how ETs travel through space-time; they do not actually travel *through* time, but rather pull time *to* them. This is how they can appear or disappear in a second and travel in ways that defy our understanding of space-time, propulsion, and their ability to make 90-degree turns without slowing down. They manipulate energy.

While living in a lower flat of a house in Milwaukee with my dog Smokey, a German Sheppard, we had an out of body experience one night. I was sleeping on my waterbed and Smokey was sleeping close by on the floor. I found myself out of body looking down at my sleeping self and aware that I was asleep. While looking at my body, I could simultaneously see the whole room, and I saw Smokey out of her body coming toward me as her energetic Self and I knew we would be traveling somewhere together. Looking at her, she did not emerge or float from her body, she just appeared outside of it. Because I was aware of my astral projection, or OOB (Out Of Body Experience), I surprised myself and woke up. Waking up from this experience was disappointing and I immediately regretted waking up.

While many of us only remember what we are supposed to remember while astral traveling, my friend Terry is one of the rare people who can routinely remember being out of body. While living in Iceland, an area of the world I believe to have many points of power, she had a vivid dream where she traveled with a friend while having an OOB.

*In her words...*

“My experiences began while I was living in Tennessee. Almost on a nightly basis, I would drift into a twilight-like state that was between sleeping and being awake. I could feel my astral body kind of shaking—like a rocking back and forth. I knew at that point I was getting ready to exit, and then I would just roll out of my body and

find myself standing at the side of my bed. At that point, I would decide what I wanted to do and I would just do it.

“It was a lot easier to have out of body experiences in Iceland because the frequency there is different than the States. My frequency was different too and I think being on a vegetarian diet helped. One night, I decided I was going to get my friend Darla. We had never talked about any of my experiences and she had no idea I was doing something like this. I never felt comfortable sharing this with her and I didn’t know how she felt about this kind of thing.

“So, one night while I was out of body and not thinking about her reaction, I decided to go get her. I thought about her, and immediately I was standing at the foot of her bed in her apartment on the Naval base—a different building than mine. I walked to her side of the bed and I took her by the hand and pulled her, and then we were standing side by side looking down at her sleeping body.

“I took her hand again and we floated to the ceiling, then through the roof, and I’m thinking in my mind, ‘She’s going to love this!’

“Still holding her hand, we started flying around and looking at the landscape when we see this large house. It was huge and it looked like an older two-story mansion. We flew to the top of the roof, and with feet first, we lowered into the upstairs of the house—the second floor, which was a very large room. Up against one wall was a large piece of furniture that looked like a bookshelf with many people standing in front of it talking with each other. We landed in the middle of the room, which was dimly lit, and there were about 20 chairs in a large circle. People were standing about and quietly chit chatting amongst themselves, but when they noticed us, they all took a seat in the chairs. I started talking, but I don’t remember what I told them, and for a while, I was giving them information and telling them things. Darla was just standing there and when I finished talking, I took her hand and we floated up through the ceiling and through the roof. I dropped her off in her bed, went home, and got back into my body. That was the first time I had ever been out of body with another person and remembered it.

“The next morning, I was super excited about what happened but I was hesitant to call her because I didn’t want her to think I was crazy. After multiple times of stopping myself, I finally called, knowing that this was important and I would never know for sure if it really happened if I didn’t ask.

I said to her, ‘Hey, I have a really weird question for you. I was wondering if you had a dream about me last night.’

“There was silence, and then she said, ‘You know what, as a matter of fact, I did happen to dream about you last night.’

“She told me everything that we did—everything; the flying, going into the room and seeing the people, and once she said that we were holding hands and we flew away.

“For me it was like, ‘Oh my God! Oh my God!’

“I had always questioned myself and wondered if this really happened. After we talked about the dream, Darla said she thought it was interesting, but in the next moment, she changed the subject and we never spoke of it again. The experience with her solidified everything for me!”

When Terry moved back to the U.S. and was living in Florida, her astral travels were less frequent. Florida is not exactly a hot spot for higher learning let alone being of higher consciousness. By moving to Florida, she also changed her reality in a significant way. She had lived in a fertile country known for Viking settlement that began around c. 870–930 CE, rich mythology, Norse Gods and Goddesses, and sacred spiritual sites.

On the other hand, Florida’s history is being a desirable piece of land fought over by Spain, England, and France. Claimed by Juan Ponce de León in 1513, St. Augustine became the first European settlement in the U.S. founded in 1565 by the Spanish explorer Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. His mission was to rid Florida of the French and the French Protestant Huguenot colonists who had an outpost at Fort Caroline that was founded in 1564 by French explorer René Goulaine de Laudonnière. By the mid 1700s, the Indigenous population of the Timucua/Saturiwa chiefdom that had been living there for more than 10,000 years, were decimated by wars, disease, and colonists. As a state today, the only mysterious point of power may be Coral Castle, secretly and single handedly built between 1923–1951 by Edward Leedskalnin who allegedly used his theories on magnetism to move tons of coral rock that he carved. I dare to speculate that the panhandle, which has a different energy than the rest of the state, may have a slim possibility of having a few natural power points such as the Marianna Caves. However, the caves, which have the forms of stalactites and stalagmites, may only be powerful depending on what you are looking for and what your expectations are and the reason for your visit.

*Carol’s experience as a young child...*

“I was somewhere between 10 and 12 years of age. I had heard about out of body experiences, and this didn’t frighten me. In the middle of the night, I found myself hovering by the window that was about five feet up from the floor and over my sister’s bed. I went through the window to our backyard and it felt like I was floating about eight feet off the ground. The first thing I looked at was the fence between our house and our neighbors. It seemed light out, like we had a full moon, but I don’t know if that was the case. I could see the fence in detail as I was floating over it, and then I floated through the branches of our willow tree and saw the power cord that runs from our house to the pole in the alley that ran through the branches of the tree. It stood out to me because I had never paid attention to it before and realized that it was two cables that were black and silver twisted together.

“I then noticed that a light was on in our living room. There was a picture window that looked out onto the backyard. I went through the window and saw my mom lying on the couch reading a paperback book. I looked at the time on the grandfather clock that was near the end of the couch, and it was sometime around

3:10 a.m. Then I looked over my mom's shoulder to see where in the book she was. After a while, I went back outside and again floated in the willow tree, maybe a little higher than before. I started to feel scared, and the thought went through my head that if I went even higher, I could possibly lose my connection to my body and then die. So, as soon as I wanted to go back to my body, I found myself lying in my bed, wide-awake. At this point, I felt a little scared although I wasn't scared during the experience until the very end.

“The next day I asked my mom if she had been reading around three in the morning on the couch, and she said yes. I asked where she was in the book, and it was on the very page I had seen. This was over 50 years ago and I still remember how crisp and clear the things were that I saw—the fence, the branches, and the electric cord. So much time has passed, I don't remember the exact page number my mom was reading.”

Now, with astral projection, sometimes when people get ready to leave their body while sleeping, they might hear a high-pitched vibrating whirring sound, which may be loud enough to wake the person up and interrupt the process. This has happened to Tom several times, but I have not experienced it myself, and I have found this to be true with other people I have talked with. As with Terry, her way is having a sensation of her astral body rocking back and forth before she leaves her body, and with Carol, she just found herself outside of her body.

## **Dimensional Dreaming**

People are prone to separating themselves from their dreams believing their sleeping visions are *only* dreams and they have no meaning—that dreams are just a jumbled way the brain processes the day's events. Many people do not understand the nonphysical because they are so invested in, and focused on, their physical reality—what we call “the real world” that relies on facts. Seldom do people take the time to even entertain the possibility that the nonphysical and the dream state are, in a very literal and real sense, part of their waking physical reality. If they fully understood that, their consciousness would soar. They would then avail themselves to everything dreams and the nonphysical have to offer, which would free them from many burdens and problems that they think are not healthy for them.

Tom was experiencing some very strange dreams for about a year that left him rattled. As he was dreaming, he would begin to moan and yell out—loudly. He was so loud I don't know how he did not wake himself up. The dreams were the same with slight variations and were terrifying for him. It was stressful for me too because I was on alert keeping an ear out never knowing when there would be another occurrence during the night. Our home is very active and sometimes it seems like a thoroughfare for spirits who are just passing through or who visit out of curiosity—we tend to attract that kind of activity as well as our spirit families. One of our strongest portals is the doorway between the kitchen and the TV room that was formerly the garage and converted years ago.

In his dreams, he would walk into the kitchen where there was a strong presence that terrified him, causing him to think it was a grotesque monster after him. He would moan and yell out in his sleep, sometimes calling out my name. In one variation of the dream, he was calling for me while I was sleeping, yelling my name to wake him. In his dream, I would not wake up. This terrified him even more. Sometimes, while I was sleeping soundly, I would hear him and wake him up, and then there were times I slept through them. I consider myself a fairly light sleeper so I have no idea how I slept through some of them.

Seeking Abram's advice about the dreams, he told me that Tom was dimensional dreaming. Meaning that he was dreaming in both this reality *and* in a dimension *within* this reality simultaneously, and he was aware of both dimensions in his dream state. The energy personality that he encountered in the other dimension was so intense he could not recognize it or make sense of it, which caused him to become terrified of it. These dreams were so frequent that we came to expect them on a nightly basis, and just as quickly as they started, they stopped.

I have had many dreams in my lifetime where I was in a different dimension and was aware that I was, but there has been only one "dimensional dream" where the dimension I was in intersected with my dreaming there, dreaming here, and my semi-waking self. It is very difficult to explain and put into words, but I will do my best.

I began very slowly to become aware of not only my dreaming self being in another dimension, I also became aware that I was simultaneously dreaming in this reality also. In the other dimension, I was a marine biologist and an environmental scientist studying, researching, and experimenting with the world's oceanic floors. I was having a conversation with nonphysical beings that were helping me and giving me information for my research. As I became aware that I was coming out of that dimension but still dreaming, my dreaming self in this reality tried to remember the conversation I was having there. I was not yet awake, and I was determined to remember, but it quickly slipped away and I could not recall a word of the information.

As I was in the center of both dreaming worlds, I was thinking to myself, "Why can't I remember? *Why* can't I remember?"

It began to scare me as my frustration grew because I did not understand what was happening. As I began to wake, I saw the energy of my brain—I saw everything about my brain and how it was functioning energetically and neurologically. Not only could I see the physical-ness of it, I saw thousands of neurological connections, synapses firing, and energetic formations that looked geometric. My brain was brilliantly alive, I was seeing it as its own consciousness, working as it should, and it looked like a universe unto itself—truly an awe-inspiring sight.

Then, I was fully awake, wondering, "What the hell just happened?"

*Abram's Insight of the Dream...*

"The dream had taken you into a different dimension of this present reality, and in that dimension, you are playing out the role of the scientist because in that dimension, you *are* the scientist. This is one of your alternative lives and the

conversation you were having was about how you can heal the crust of the earth and the top of the earth by bringing up things from the bottom of the ocean floor. There are things on the bottom of your ocean, that if they were to be brought up to the surface of your planet, they would allow nature to grow in a more complete way. Now, nature, as you know it, right now, is connected with all of the nature at the bottom of your ocean, on the floor of your ocean, and they feed each other. If certain plant life from your ocean floor were brought to the surface of your Earth, nature, as you know it, would be more complete and therefore, it would alter man's consciousness a bit, because nature does that with people. It alters your consciousness, because nature is God, and this is God's job, to alter your consciousness. You can look at God and nature as being the idea of God.

“Being that you were the scientist, you had knowledge of other beings, and knowledge of nature and the nature on the ocean floor also. So, this was a good dream. It was telling you first of all, don't be afraid of anything. Don't be afraid of a dream, or what is taking place in the dream. If you are half out of the dream and half in the dream, there is nothing to fear. The only thing that you feared was the weird feeling of being both here and there at the same time. Do you understand that? Yes.”

Another dream I had that was not a dimensional dream, but it did concern another dimension that happened just after I was falling asleep one night. To give you a brief backstory, I was born with a congenital wrist condition called Madelung's deformity. Because the ulna and radius bones did not form correctly, which may have involved the growth plates for the radius, four tendons were in contact with my ulna bone, constantly being chafed over my lifetime until they ruptured. The four tendons (two in the pinky, ring, and middle finger) were all attached to the tendon of the index finger, and the ulna bone was shaved down. It took me seven months to recover and over a year to learn how to type again, and it is now 99% functional.

In my dream, I was seeing my hand as it is now on one side, and like a side-by-side picture, I was seeing my hand next to it as a healthy hand without any deformity or surgery. What was happening was, I was seeing the healthy hand in an alternate dimension where another version of myself exists within this reality without me “being in it” like you would be if you were dimensional dreaming. I startled myself awake when I realized I was aware of seeing both dimensions simultaneously. I would like to restate that these kinds of dreams—simultaneous dimensional dreaming where you are fully in it, and the garden variety dimensional dreaming where you are less in it and more of an observer, have a quality about them that is different. When you dream within other dimensions of reality, you know it. It cannot be misunderstood as “just a dream.” It is palpable and it takes on a clarity, realness, and a crispness that is unmistakable.

This next dream happened in 2022 with a good friend. She and I were out of body and somewhere outside where we were standing on a rocky ledge overlooking a field that had a forest bordering each side.

As we were looking at the clear night sky together, she said to me, “SUE! Look at this!”

In front of us in the sky, was a swirl of clouds that looked lightly highlighted by a full moon behind it, and in the center of the clouds was a large, black, round hole, and even though it was black, there was depth to it, kind of like the Eye of God nebula. Both of us stood mesmerized by it, and in a few dreamtime minutes, the dream ended, or my memory of it did—my friend and I may have had more traveling to do that night but I do not remember.

Abram later explained to me that the dark circle was a black hole but not how we think of a black hole that sucks in everything around it. It was a portal into a completely different reality than ours. When I asked what would have happened if we would have gone into it, he said that it would have been a dangerous thing for us to do. Asking why it would be dangerous for us to go into a portal like that, he told me there would be a possibility we would not be able to return.

My next question was, “If that were to happen, what would happen to our bodies here and our life?”

He told me nothing would happen *to* them because it would be like we never existed, because this reality would have adjusted itself.

Now, this is different from, let us say, the disappearance of the Mayan civilization. Only hypotheses exist about their disappearance, the most popular ones being two major droughts and over-development. Another hypothesis I have heard about is that another race, culture, or those coming from other lands slaughtered them. If they died from droughts or they were slaughtered, where are the bones? The Mayans were not a bunch of dummies. They were a very advanced civilization that are widely known for their two intricate calendar systems, advanced agricultural methods, elaborate cities, an advanced knowledge of astronomy, and the ability to predict solar eclipses. I am sure they could find water elsewhere if there were droughts.

Across the planet, there are portals or doorways—power points, energetic hot spots, and magnetic lines. We dip in and out of other dimensions within this reality all the time and it happens so quickly that we are not aware of doing so. Once, while at the Atlanta airport waiting at my gate, I was people-watching when a man and a woman caught my eye. As I was watching them walking the concourse, they disappeared. In one second, they were there and then poof, they were gone. My eyes did not stray and I did not blink in those moments—they were just gone. Many times, people unknowingly stumble into an alternate dimension and they find themselves in a different place. Another version of this reality, but just a bit different, and the only indication may be that the person cannot put their finger on what feels different, but they *are* in a different dimension of this present reality. They will return in a matter of seconds, minutes, or they may just feel differently throughout the day—but they do return to this reality. Portals and doorways are opened in a couple of different ways, but usually, they open and close, open and close, back and forth.

*Here is how Abram explained it to me...*

“We, the Mayans, had figured out a way to open the doorway using time, because we figured out time. And, this is something that your present-day scientists are trying

to figure out—time. Your scientists call it a fourth dimension, but it is not. What time really is, is a situation with which people can guide their lives in different ways by using time in different ways. What we did, as the Mayan civilization, when the time came for us to exit this reality, we had changed time. You could call it bending time, but we changed the structure of time and allowed the doorway, the portal, to open based on the changing of time. Doorways open in their own timing and they close in their own timing all across your planet Earth. But, if you know how to change time, you can allow a doorway or portal to open when you want it to open and then close when you want it to close also. So, this is what we had done. We had changed the *structure* of time to let the doorway open, and then in waves, we just walked through the doorway into the next dimension. This is what we had done.

“We had two calendars, a short count, and a long count. Our calendars were based on the structure of the universe plus time. Your present-day calendars are based on movements of time and *not* structure—not the structure of the universe plus time. So, physics people are figuring out their problems on their blackboards, whiteboards, or whatever board they choose to use, and they are boxing themselves into a structure that really has very little room for movement. If they quit writing down their equations on the boards, and start studying the universe in the proper way, and look at time in the proper way, then they will begin to understand how the universe works and how time works as non-time, because time *is* non-time, there is no time. There is the illusion of time, just like the illusion of space and reality, and everything else, because all of it is illusion, all of it, everything. And, thoughts, emotions, and beliefs create the reality *of* the illusion. So, physics people are working with a partial reality of *their* illusion—their science, illusion, and partial reality. They have a way to go, but they are catching on slowly.”

The possibility exists that people, civilizations, and animal species can suddenly appear and disappear within our reality. It might look like discovering a primitive tribe that has never had contact with the modern world, discovering an ancient species that was thought to be extinct, and maybe, just maybe, the reported Sasquatch is a dimensional being. Logically, we may write the event off as being “newly discovered” or an animal bouncing back from extinction from hundreds of years ago. There are scientists who are working on “de-extinction” projects by way of cloning and DNA splicing that could lead to bringing back ancient species like the Woolly Mammoth. The Woolly Mammoth? Why?

There are doorways to other dimensions all around us and we fade in and out of them in an instant all day every day. Because there are alternate versions of us, civilizations, and animals—all life, the possibility exists that when the timing is right, a civilization can appear or disappear out of nowhere, or a species of an animal will appear or disappear. We are all dimensional beings. However, and let me be clear, if you were to go into a completely *different* reality—not a dimension of this reality—and stay there, you and your life here would be as if you never existed and no one would be the wiser.

And to be crystal clear, this idea, concept, and phenomena is in no way associated with the reality that thousands of children, women, and men go missing without a trace every

day—some people go under the radar, are human trafficked, and many people disappear at the hands of someone violent.

Dimensions within our reality are comparable to the rooms in a home. When you walk from one room into another, you are walking into an entirely different dimension within your house as well as within this reality. I like to remind myself of that when I walk into another room and forget why I did so. Sometimes, I will walk back into the room I just came from to remember why I was going to the other room.

While dreaming one night, I found myself in a different dimension where people were hanging out at a lake having a good time. As I was looking at the floating boardwalks on the water and taking in the scenery, a woman appeared before me wearing a one-piece black bathing suit. She was dripping wet from swimming and her dark hair was just below her collarbone.

She looked right at me and asked, “What are you doing here?”

Startled that someone could see me, I momentarily wondered if I was intruding. Then she disappeared. To the left of where I was standing was a semi-large faux-Polynesian style open bar with a thatched roof—formerly known as a Tiki Bar—where people were sitting on bar stools, socializing. My attention was drawn to two tanned men in their swimsuits sitting on bar stools facing each other; they were casually drinking, smoking, and in a deep conversation—as were many others. Later, I came to realize this was a place where people could relax and have a good time while they were discussing, designing, and forming the experiences they would have with each other in their next physical life.

From the bar, I found myself in a field just beyond the lake where I saw a group of WWII Veterans standing in a circle wearing just their white briefs. Each man was standing behind a medium-sized, painted, white rock that outlined the circle. Within the circle were slow swirling clouds and I could feel the depth of the clouds that seemed endless and I knew it was a portal. One by one, in their own timing, they dove into the clouds. They had wrapped up their R&R at the lake, had designed their next life, and began diving into the bottomless clouds to merge with the woman who would be carrying them and circumstances they had chosen to be born into—they were literally entering new physical lives as I was watching them. I came away from the dream feeling privileged to be there to witness everything I did in that dream. You already know this, but it is worth mentioning for clarity, it is important to maintain respect for yourself, respect for whomever you encounter, and respect for the dimension or reality you are in while traveling and exploring.

I once began reading a book where multiple mediums spoke about the afterlife and what it is like. Everyone, including me, has his or her own take on the matter, and each takeaway is partly based on that person’s beliefs about the afterlife. I stopped reading the book within a few pages after a medium stated that when we decide to have another physical life, we meet in a boardroom in a specific building, in a specific room number, on a specific floor, to design our life and make agreements with each other. My kneejerk reaction was to think that this was rubbish, but giving it a breath and a moment and not to judge, her take is based on her beliefs, whichever way those beliefs were formed. Her account sounded too restrictive,

limited, and corporatized for my tastes, but that type of setting may be appealing and comfortable for some. I would much rather have the freedom to be smoking, drinking, swimming, and socializing at an open beach-type bar hashing things out with my pals for my next life—if I choose to come back. You will always have free will and you will always have the freedom to create. When you are in spirit form, you are no longer in a structure that dictates a belief in time so you have unlimited freedom to create whatever you like—so have a ball doing it, and if you want to be, or think you should be in a stuffy business-like boardroom, then enjoy it!

### **Night Terrors, Nightmares, and Sleepwalking**

Night terrors typically occur with children who will eventually grow out of them, although some adults have them also. I do have firsthand experience from being a licensed daycare provider for a short time. I remember one toddler that took two 20-minute naps during the day and had multiple tantrums daily that could last for hours. There were times the tantrums were so bad I expected to see his head spinning while projectile vomiting green puke at any moment. Oh my god, they were bad, and they could be triggered by something so insignificant (to me) like giving him the wrong-colored Sippy cup or because he could not maneuver around a corner with his push-around toy that helps babies learn to walk. Sometimes, I could only say, “Boy, that was a good one!” With every tantrum, I let him ride it out—I never punished him or got angry with him, and as quickly as they started, they could just as quickly stop.

I have also experienced a roommate’s child having night terrors. Out of a sound sleep, she would start crying and figuratively screaming bloody murder, sometimes standing up in the center of the bed with her eyes open, but the look in her eyes was far off like she was here, yet not here. I now know she was experiencing being partially awake but also still in a dream, and the dream was a nightmare for her. Children, and this applies to all children, are acutely aware of positive and negative energies and they will have nightmares because they are working on establishing their identity. And, at times, negative energy can represent itself as a nightmare in the unconscious mind as they are dreaming.

As my roommate’s child was waking up from one of these, she was still in the nightmare dream, unable to completely wake out of it. Kids can react a little violently out of fear and panic because they do not know what is happening to them and they have no control over it—they just need to ride it out until both the body and mind are completely awake at the same time. This reaction can also happen when a child is coming out of anesthesia and they are in that in between state of waking up but still feeling the lingering effects of the anesthesia. This can be terrifying for a child.

Addressing nightmares in adults, these dreams can often be information coming from the subconscious that is being misunderstood, and there are some dreams that seem violent that often have a deeper meaning that is misinterpreted. Winding down from a week-long conference I was attending, we had a group dinner the night before we were to leave. I was sitting across the table from a man I had not met nor interacted with during the conference. He told me he had been in therapy with a Jungian trained therapist and he had been working

through a frightening nightmare he had been having every week for almost a year. Sometimes, certainly not always, I can interpret someone else's dream with as much clarity as I can have with my own, so I asked him if he would like to share the dream with me.

Here is the dream as I recall it. The man, whom I will call Bill, walked into the dining room in a home where his family was gathered at a table for dinner. All his relatives were there—siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. He was sitting with them but he was also an observer of the dream. On the wall behind the table was a picture of his family sitting at the table that was an exact replica of the current dinner they were having. A wolf entered the room and tore out the throats of everyone in attendance, spilling and shooting blood everywhere. The dream was troubling for Bill, which caused a lot of anxiety. He looked at me funny when I told him what a great dream that was and I offered my interpretation, which he wanted to hear.

I told him that being with family, having dinner, and breaking bread is a time for connecting and sharing. The wolf represented Bill's inner strength and the act of tearing out the throats—the throat representing communication—meant that there was a secret in the family that no one was talking about and it was something that needed to be brought to light—and he was the one with enough strength to make that happen. The picture on the wall, being an exact duplicate of the dinner, meant that the family secret was generational. The blood represented the life force of the family that would again begin to flow when this secret was acknowledged.

Having a different perspective of the dream seemed to make sense to him and he understood what the secret was and I sensed he was uncomfortable about sharing, so I did not ask him to. His only response was that his therapist might not agree. Of course, she wouldn't, because I could only surmise that it might be too far out of the parameters of her training in archetypes. But, that's okay. I was excited for him and I thought the dream was not only telling but it was also very creative.

My socks were knocked off after having a powerful dream that began with a nomadic Syrian of high stature from long, long ago. Dressed in fine underclothing and white robes with a gold inlay design around the edges and a white and gold turban type headdress, he was sitting cross-legged in a large tent in a sandy desert with oriental rugs covering the ground inside. He had invited the local people to come to his tent, and as they gathered, they assumed they were there for a wonderful meal. As soon as every person young and old had gathered in the tent, in one instant and in one grand motion, all their throats were slashed at the jugular and blood flowed like a river within the tent. My next vision was looking outside across the desert where there were probably 50 telephone poles—maybe five wide and ten deep with a lot of space between them. The poles were in the shape of crosses with crucified people in different stages of dying on a clear sunny day. Some were dead; some were close to death, and some very much alive and not willing to die. On the surface, this might seem like a violent and disturbing dream.

The Syrian, coming from ancient origins, represented my higher Self. The people invited were the many aspects of my Self that no longer served me and no longer needed to be fed. With their quick and merciful deaths, my life force was able to flow more freely. The

crucified people represented my ideas and beliefs that were in different stages of existence. Some ideas and beliefs were dead, some were dying, and some would remain alive. The telephone poles symbolized the communication that was happening within me expressing itself through the dream, and the clear sunny day represented my clarity. A very, very good dream and one I will never forget.

When you can get past the initial fear of a dream that seems violent or frightening, the opportunity you have to find the nitty-gritty of your emotions is at your fingertips. Dreams come *from* you, they are meaningful no matter how nonsensical they may be, and it is up to you to decipher them based on your feelings about the dream. To get past the fear, trust that you know what is best for you and with your intimate understanding and knowledge of your deepest emotions, you can always count on your dreams to tell you what you need to know even if they do not make sense. When a dream does not seem logical but meaningful, it may be generating from a place that does not recognize logic. If you cannot make sense of it, feel the energy of it.

Distressing nightmares that are not understood in any symbolic manner are the dreams that may originate in the unconscious part of the mind. Generally, we are more familiar with the conscious and subconscious, and not so much with the unconscious mind. Here again, we are dealing with labels. You may be wondering about the superconscious or hyperconscious mind and its role, or this may be the first time hearing about it. The superconscious mind is an umbrella term for the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious minds. When you put those three together, you have the super or hyperconscious—some prefer to call it the higher mind. It does not really matter what you label it, because they are all in the same orchestra playing the same song.

Nightmares that are a result of PTSD from war and other trauma-related experiences are different in their nature from normal nightmares. When a person is traumatized by war or other deeply traumatizing events, a change happens within their consciousness. Something like war will literally *change* a person's consciousness. With nightmares of a trauma, the consciousness is acting out parts of the trauma repeatedly and revisiting the event(s). Even though the individual is on the other side of it, it still seems very real while dreaming. Dreams also allow the individual to come to terms with the trauma, war, or whatever it might be, so that the individual can settle the terms of the war or settle their trauma within himself or herself and arrive at being okay with it. When that happens, *if* it happens, the individual's consciousness has integrated the trauma in such a way as to allow the person to find a balance to live a normal life with the identity created by the integration.

The unconscious is a very deep place in one's consciousness. The dreams that originate there are of an abstract nature and we usually can only remember bits and pieces of those dreams. Because we are not proficient at thinking and feeling in abstract terms, dreams that come from the unconscious can seem like nightmares, because we have difficulty figuring them out with our conscious mind. We then fear them, or brush them off as too weird to be bothered with, which is another aspect of fear. If we could understand without fear and *allow* the deep unconscious abstract dreams to freely come to us, we would be able to recreate our

reality in many, many different and beautiful ways that would bring an abundance of wonderful things to every individual.

How can we begin to use the elasticity of consciousness to invite the impeccable wilderness of the unconscious mind to visit upon us? First, people fear the unconscious because it is not fathomable in our logical terms. Think of the unconscious as having a will of its own that can be very elusive. Yes, it is a part of our whole consciousness, while at the same time, it is not tethered to any standards, so to speak, as it comes and goes and waxes and wanes as it pleases. Although it is a part of consciousness, think of it as a separate extension of yourself and the mind. You can also think about the conscious and the unconscious as, let's say, person A and person B. Person A is the conscious mind who is playing baseball, and person B is swimming. Person A is so focused on winning the baseball game that person B means very little to him or her; the same with person B, who is swimming. Person B, the unconscious mind, knows and recognizes all the so-called "levels" of consciousness, but chooses to, in a sense, be separate and have its own identity but also understands and is aware that it is a part of the consciousness of that person, but playing by its own rules.

The unconscious mind can enter areas of your being that your conscious mind cannot deal with. Going into those areas, the unconscious can take all your life's possibilities and separate them into an infinite number of possibilities for you to inspect. It can show you every aspect of your life. When working properly, it will show you scenes of what you need to know or want to know—scenes that are very different than your everyday reality because they are representations of what you are thinking, feeling, and doing in life. Without an understanding of the unconscious, the abstract dreams can be quite disconcerting and can present themselves as nightmares.

As our conscious mind deals with everyday reality, it is the unconscious mind that stores all the information, catalogs it, files it, and retrieves it when necessary. It deals with all the abstractions of life and death and everything in between. This information contains every action you take or have taken in life, every reaction, every thought, every wish and desire, every emotional state you have experienced, and every life you have lived. When you ask for a solution to a life situation, the unconscious mind will sort through all the information and choose only the aspects and ideas that will assist you in determining the solution to your problem. Not understanding the unconscious, people call it the Akashic Records, some who inaccurately perceive that there is some large building with classical Greek architecture floating somewhere in the universe being a storehouse of everyone's life, past lives, and universal knowledge but, as you know by now, everything is *within* you. It is *all* within you.

Since the very nature of dreams from the unconscious are abstract, the form of the dream will probably be foreign to you until you come to an understanding of what you are dealing with. Abstractions are things that you cannot logically figure out. The scenes of your dream will most likely be in color and will be emotionally intense. Usually, your emotions will be at a fever pitch, and it will be your emotions that will understand the abstractions of the dream and not your conscious mind. As scenes are given to you as possibilities, your conscious mind will begin to work and change the possibilities into probabilities. When you

awaken, you will have already worked out the solution you need, even though it may not seem like it and you may be freaked out by the dream. Your conscious mind will need to process and put the solution into a perspective in its own time where you can understand it in your reality—to put the probabilities into a form that can be manifested as part of your physical reality.

Your reality is a manifestation of several factors merging. As your conscious mind begins to transfer your thoughts into actions, you will form a structure, or framework in which you will arrange space and time in such a way that you will bring to you what you desire. We do not immediately have what we desire because our conscious mind is trained to function in a focused structure that dictates a belief in time. Your conscious mind will need *time* to formulate your desire—but remember, you are always unconsciously arranging and rearranging space and time in your reality. Your conscious mind is focused primarily in the physical structure of time, but your unconscious mind is independent of the idea of physical space and time.

Because your dream reality is just as valid as your waking reality, you can say that your dream state can be the beginning of your reality and reality can be the beginning of your dream state—they go hand in hand and one cannot exist without the other. At times, your dreams will provide ideas that you can eventually use to create your reality, and at times, your reality will provide circumstances that will need processing that only your dream state can provide. In your dreams, you give yourself a time and place where you can comfortably work out ideas or problems that you are dealing with, without your conscious mind getting its sticky fingers in the mix.

Moving on to sleepwalking, according to the Mayo Clinic, somnambulism, pronounced som-nam-byuh-liz-uhm, *commonly* known as sleepwalking, is considered a sleep disorder as are night terrors and talking in one's sleep, which is called somniloquy. I strongly hesitate to contain these experiences into the category of disorders and prefer to think of them as sleep rendezvous that occur in the natural state of sleeping. Sleepwalking is more common with children, which is usually outgrown during puberty, but some adults do sleepwalk on a regular basis. The Mayo clinic cautions that sleepwalking in adults can often be confused with other sleep disorders or medical conditions, and with anyone sleepwalking in the home, that individual needs protection from injury.

You have probably heard of sleep aides causing adults to get up to cook a meal, drive a car, or find themselves walking along a busy street with no memory of doing so—alcoholism, the use of drugs, or medical conditions can also cause an episode. I do believe stress may be a strong trigger for sleepwalking if there are no other contributing factors. An episode usually occurs one or two hours after falling asleep and a person can function routinely and have no memory of it. Because a person can sometimes think they are in a place other than where they really are, people can injure themselves by jumping out of a window, falling down stairs, leaving the house, or driving a car.

You may laugh at this, but a common behavior for sleepwalkers is to urinate in a closet. It's true. It would have happened to me had my mother not followed me through the house during an episode where I walked the length of the house to use the guest bathroom. She

watched me open the bamboo accordion-style closet door, drop my pajama bottoms, and squat to pee. She abruptly woke me up by calling my name and told me to sit on the toilet. I do not remember feeling disoriented or confused because a part of my brain knew what I was doing and where I was going, but it was like the layout of the small bathroom was changed in my mind—things were not in their proper place. It did take me a moment to recalibrate myself, though. There were other episodes, but the main thing I remember about sleepwalking is being asleep yet my brain knew what I was doing. All body systems and senses were functioning as they should, but my brain was taking care of two different realities—the sleeping part of my brain remained asleep, yet another aspect of my conscious mind was taking care of what I thought I was doing, where I thought I was going, and seeing what I thought I was seeing.

## **Dream Interpretation**

Dream interpretation is primarily based on your own beliefs about yourself and your life. People view things in different ways and usually see things in a positive or negative way. No one can give you a list of symbols to use as a guide that is based on their personal beliefs, experiences, opinions, or what people believe are universally known interpretations. Make your own dream book with your personal interpretations that fit you and keep it flexible because your interpretations may change over time as you mature and change your thinking and beliefs. Create your *own* archetypes, or borrow from the philosophy of Carl Jung. Below are some examples of my personal meanings that I use; I do keep them flexible and apply them to where I am emotionally and mentally at the time. One rule of thumb is that every person in the dream is an aspect of you.

- Crows, ravens, and blackbirds are unique, highly intelligent, social, adaptable, complex communicators, good problem-solvers, and are very cunning—meaning skillful. So, for me they represent intelligence and cunningness.
- Being naked in a dream does not necessarily mean embarrassment, vulnerability, or insecurity. You make that determination by the feelings you had in the dream by being naked or naked in a public place plus your circumstances. It will tie into what is going on in your life and how you are feeling. Recently, I had a dream about being naked in my limber younger body walking down a sidewalk on a busy street. My head was high, my stride ebullient, and the people on the crowded sidewalk on both sides of the street were not concerned about my state of undress. This dream symbolized that I am walking in my own truth.
- A wolf will always mean unrepressed inner strength and knowledge. The wolf is also among many animals that maintain a balance in nature by culling the weak, injured, or genetically impaired.
- A horse means freedom.
- All other animals have an element of freedom and inner intelligence.

- Famous actors mean creativity, and an electrician or plumber, for example, is my archetype for the part of me that lets me know everything is running smoothly or not, and can make inner connections if I need their assistance—a fixer of sorts.
- People dying en masse by explosions or other circumstances of death, are typically thoughts, feelings, ideas, or beliefs that are being discarded.
- Walking to or entering a building of higher education means that I have matured because my consciousness is becoming more of itself that will alter my reality.
- Blood represents life force.

There are other common dreams like teeth or hair falling out, trying to scream or calling for help and nothing comes out, or trying to run and your movements are in slow motion. Most likely, the teeth and hair falling out may simply mean that part of your identity is falling away to make room for a change or alteration, or it could be health related. Screaming with nothing coming out may mean you are not being heard, or it can be repressed frustration or stress. Not being able to run could mean you do not have the proper movement with your path in life. Unknowingly, you may be veering from your path or have not determined what your path really is. An example of veering off is a dream I had when I lost focus of a path I had been on. I found myself unsuccessfully trying to run on a dirt path that was parallel to an interstate. The dream was telling me that I had become sidetracked and temporarily veered off the path I was meant to be on, which was the interstate.

Checking in with your emotions for clarity and how you feel about the situation in the dream is paramount. Your dreams are specific to you and it is up to you to figure out what they might mean without fear. For me, everything is symbolic but not every little detail needs deep scrutiny. Sometimes scenes are so unconnected they lack the continuity to know if they should be looked at by each frame, or even if the frames are in any kind of order. In a dream where I jump from scene to scene and the entirety of the dream does not make sense, I ask myself if each scene has the same feel to it and the same message. If the dream has an overall feeling of frustration, it may be telling me why and how I am being frustrated.

## **Dream Visitations and Precognition**

Visitations in the dream state are amazing and when you have one you know it. There is a different energy, feeling, and clarity about it. I have heard many people question themselves, rationalizing the dream and talking themselves out of believing it happened, thinking it was probably their imagination. While run-of-the-mill dreams come from the conscious mind, visitations come from the subconscious. Other types of dreams coming from the subconscious may include dreams of a religious, spiritual, or psychic nature, and all other ideas that do not play out in everyday life in our society. Whatever the type of dream coming from the subconscious, it depends on the individual's state of being at any given point in time. A rule to go by for recognizing a visitation in the dream state is when it is just you and the deceased individual with no one else participating in the dream. You are in it, a

part of it, and it carries that different energy. You may not remember what was said, or it may be a very clear conversation—either way, what was said lives within you. You can also dream of having a party or gathering with deceased family and friends, and the way to tell when you are with them is that you will have the feeling of being *within* the dream and not an observer. Many times, when you are gathered with friends and family, it does not mean impending death—sometimes we like to be with our loved ones just to say hello and share the love.

When there are visitations from the deceased or other beings in nonphysical form, they do not always come *to* you; many times, we go to them. I am thinking of the time I went to see my grandfather—Granddaddy, my mother’s father. The dream began by me walking through a pair of swinging doors into a saloon from late 1800s. The floors and all the woodwork, including the bar, looked freshly stained and lacquered—everything looked brand new. The well-stocked bar with a large mirror behind it was to the left. The saloon was empty except for my grandfather and a man standing to the side of me dressed in a tuxedo monitoring the situation.

As I was thinking of how out of place the tuxedo man seemed, he asked, “What are you doing here?” Being a familiar question by now, I told him I was there to visit my grandfather. I knew Granddaddy was sitting in his favorite spot toward the back and to the right, waiting for me. There was no walking to the table, I was just there as if I went from one frame of a movie directly to the next. He was enjoying the only drink I remember him having—a Dubonnet cocktail, and I know our visit was long and we had a good conversation, but I do not remember what we talked about. When recalling the dream, I can see us having the conversation, but the clarity of that part of the dream turns a bit hazy. In the dream, I had a knowing the Old West was one of his favorite past lives and we were meeting in an upgraded version of his favorite saloon and his favorite place to sit from that era.

Several people I have sat vigil for have come through after their death, but one of the most memorable visitations was from the last hospice person I sat with before the Covid lockdown. George was a tall, stocky man who was well known in the area for his large and successful construction business. He was semiconscious and would soon be entering the actively dying stage. I was with him for a couple of hours in the afternoon then came back the following day, also in the afternoon, and it appeared he was in his final stages—rapid breathing and slightly cold. I made sure he was covered and comfortable, then sat next to him to gently talk, hold his hand, and comfort him.

After a while, I told him that I would give him a gentle foot massage to help with his circulation. I had been looking down while rubbing his feet, and when I looked up after a few minutes, he was wide-awake looking at me. With a big smile, I said a surprised, “Hi.” With a smile on his face, he responded with, “Hi.” I went back to my seat to talk with him while he was still conscious. I told him I heard he owned a construction company and how I wish I had known about him when I was renovating my kitchen and living room. I told him how most contractors had left the area for work after the catastrophic Hurricane Mathew, and it was unfortunate I ended up with a sad sack company whose work had to be corrected by someone else. He just kept looking at me and smiling as I talked. After a short

conversation, he fell back into his dying process. It felt like the few minutes of his “last hurrah” that we had together, had created a connection between us. I have no idea what type of person he was in his life, but on his deathbed, I felt like he was a kind person. On my first visit, a nurse at the facility told me that he had many family members, friends, and business friends that had visited while under hospice care. It would be only hours for me to know just how sweet this man really was.

I left him around 6:00 p.m. and the next morning, I woke up from his visitation at 4:30 a.m. In the dream visitation, I found myself standing in the living room of a newly constructed home (Cape Cod cottage meets modern Tudor/Craftsman) and decorated as I would with an unlimited budget. It had an open-floor plan and from where I was standing, there was a round antique pedestal table near the entrance that had freshly cut flowers in a beautiful crystal vase. I saw George standing in the kitchen wearing a new pair of orange-ish/tan overalls, a crisp white shirt, and new work boots, looking like the TV contractor Mike Holmes. He was standing next to a well-used green industrial hand truck and I could see the new refrigerator he had just put in place in the kitchen. I was thrilled. I handed him a check, which symbolized my gratitude and thanks to him, and then the dream ended and I woke up. Around 8:00 a.m., knowing it was a visitation, I called the hospice nurse that I was friends with and asked her if he was still alive. She told me he died at 4:20 a.m.—ten minutes before my dream. To this day, when I think about him, I remain deeply touched that he made sure I had my dream home that was built correctly and with care. I have not heard from him since, but I will always have a deep fondness for him and I look forward to seeing him again one day.

Sometimes, we do not recognize a prophetic dream or a precognitive insight until the event happens in our reality. There is a well-known fictional work originally titled, *Futility*, and a subsequent edition in 1912 titled, *The Wreck Of The Titan: Or, Futility*, that was written by Morgan Robertson in 1898. Published 14 years before the British luxury passenger liner *RMS Titanic* set sail, the fictional story of the *Titan* is close to being a mirror image of the *Titanic's* fate on April 14–15, 1912. The *Titan*, on its maiden voyage, sank near midnight after running into an iceberg on its starboard side causing it to capsize on an April night while in the North Atlantic Ocean. The *Titanic* was also damaged on its starboard side but split in two, also in the North Atlantic; both were 400 nautical miles from Newfoundland.

Other similarities to the *Titanic* include gross tonnage, triple screw propellers, the length of the *Titan* being 800 ft. and the *Titanic* being 882 ft., both were traveling near, or at 25 knots, the 3,000-passenger capacity were the same, and both were British passenger liners. They each carried the legal limit of lifeboats—the *Titan* had 24 while the *Titanic* had 20. Deaths and survivors on the *Titan* were 2,500 dead with 13 survivors, and the *Titanic* had 1,496 deaths with 712 survivors.

Morgan Robertson vehemently denied any type of precognition after the sinking of the *Titanic*. He claimed that he had maritime knowledge, experience on the sea, and he saw possible dangers for larger ships that were being built at the time. He said, “No, I know what I’m writing about, that’s all.” Later, an “expert” wrote that Robertson took his statistics from

the construction specs of the *Titanic*. However, construction on the *Titanic* began in Belfast, Ireland in 1909—three years before she sailed and 11 years after the publication of the book.

Now, because possibilities exist everywhere, all the time, I believe Robertson was keying into a possibility without realizing it because it would not have been in the realm of his experience to recognize it as such. His truth and identity centered around being a sailor who had extensive maritime knowledge and wrote about it, and he had knowledge about boats and ships. Premonitions or precognitive insight are all about keying into possibilities—that is what premonition is. The possibility has form; it already exists as a real situation, and will remain a possibility until it eventually becomes a reality IF it receives enough focus and attention, which means that a person or people put their intention into it. This is what I believe happened with his story of the *Titan*. A blending of his experience with his intuition and creativity, which allowed him direct access to a possibility that included the events for the *Titanic*.

Keying into a possibility can also come in the dream state as well as through imagination, intuition, and inspiration. While dreaming a prophetic dream, you will be in a reality, a reality of a possibility. You will find yourself *in* the possibility and you will experience that possibility as if it is your only reality—you will be living in the experience of the situation as if nothing else exists. You will be living, breathing, experiencing, and feeling it; it will be as real to you as your awake state is in this world.

## **Creating A Pretend Dream**

When you pretend something, you create it as an intention to be part of your reality. When you create a pretend dream, you are *pretending* to dream with the intention of creating a real dream. Pretending comes from and is your imagination. You use your imagination to create a reality; when you consciously pretend something like a dream you would like to have, you can create that dream.

As you get comfortable and prepare to fall asleep, lie still with your eyes closed and take two or three relaxing breaths—they do not need to be very deep. Then, imagine that you are having a dream, any dream you wish. As you are imagining the dream, begin to see yourself *in* the dream, and imagine you are seeing all aspects of the dream, which means *you* are *in* the dream, *creating* the dream. Depending on when you sleep, do this exercise every time you prepare to sleep and within approximately a week, you can be changing your dream into a real dream. By imagining, you are conditioning your conscious mind to respond by creating a conscious dream, a real dream. It is up to you as to how long you would like to visualize your pretend dream—you can do it for a few minutes or a bit longer, it is up to you.

This a simple exercise but very effective if you stick with it, but it can be more challenging than it seems. For several days in a row, I would think about what I wanted to dream and before I could hone in on something and visualize it, I was asleep. The one night I was successful with my visualization was when I was listening to thunderstorms on a sleep app. I had a clear and precise image of a light rain impacting the water of a puddle with the raindrops making circles of puddle-waves with the centers dancing upward, and before I could envision being part of that dance, I fell asleep. I will continue to practice.



The woman sitting at the desk with the three candles represents the trinity of the Mind, the Body, the Spiritual, and being present in an atmosphere and space of *being within*. The flowing dress of the woman is an expression of her time and identity that flows and connects with the person in spirit who is giving her information. The spent candles represent the many hours she has received information from her source.

## 9

**AUTOMATIC WRITING**

*“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”*

—Rumi

**A**utomatic writing, also known as spirit writing especially in the 1800s, is a form of channeling a source. Let us call the source, Harrison. Harrison will come to you and merge with your consciousness, *to a degree*, that will allow Harrison to give you information for you to write down, type, or record. Seems simple enough. Now, how do you get the information and eventually write it down? Automatic writing is like mediumship in the sense that a nonphysical being is coming to you to communicate with you to give you information. Sometimes, automatic writing is when an individual connects with their higher Self to receive information, which is coming from them, but when it is coming from an independent source, that source has *chosen* the person to communicate through and that source will also choose the proper time to begin the communication.

Isabella Beecher Hooker, the younger half-sister of abolitionist and author Harriet Beecher Stowe, little remembered or honored for her trailblazing dedication and influence of the suffragist movement, was also a Spiritualist. She was a strong, independent woman who created a unique path of her own and did not fit into the expectations society had for women of her time. She said she regularly communed with spirits for advice, sought advice from mediums, and after the death of her husband, a lawyer, abolitionist, and reformer for women’s rights, she became more entrenched with her spirit writing—once writing a communication allegedly from Napoleon Bonaparte, who told her he came to her because she was open. After her death, it was stated that her advice to other spiritualists was to follow their own feelings and judgments if they were in opposition to what someone in spirit was telling them. That advice remains sound.

I tried automatic writing in the 1970s but it was a bust and I have never had an interest in it. Then, in December 2021, I began to sense a presence around me in the house; a presence that I could not put my finger on because it seemed so subtle and elusive. The energy of the *being* felt like it was here, yet not here at the same time. So, one morning I decided to sit down at the computer to see if I was going to get any information. I did. Every time I felt this energy around, I would get information. Sometimes it would be only two sentences, other times it might be two paragraphs, and then there were times when it came through seamlessly or very choppy.

When it comes to the world of spirituality, disingenuous personalities who are mentally and emotionally wounded and not living authentically, will often choose religious and metaphysical platforms to boast that they can access information that other people cannot

retrieve. If you pay close attention, the charismatic and megalomaniac spiritual and wellness teachers, gurus, self-help leaders, energy healers, and all the rest, will let you know who they really are—if you pay attention. Yet, rising above the quagmire, there are many outspoken, talented, and genuine speakers, story tellers, and activists in the modern world who courageously contribute to difficult and painful conversations. They creatively challenge the status quo by speaking out about vulnerability, fear, shame, anger, worthiness, human rights, racism, ecology, and climate change. Those are the people who know, speak about, and encourage the brave, messy, and rewarding inner work necessary for all personal and collective growth.

Tom and I occasionally check out people on YouTube™ who claim to channel just to see what's going on out there, and it is amazing how much nonsense and fakery there is. There is a lot to sift through, but what has caught my attention is the neediness in people to feel special and gifted. They need to feel chosen because they would feel less than otherwise—I would bet they are out of touch with their own woundedness, emotional issues, and vulnerabilities. Tom, myself, and Abram focus on informing people about consciousness and creating reality. If you want to follow us, we thank you. If you don't, we are confident you will find what you are looking for elsewhere and we wish you well. Our mantra in life is that we do what we do and other people will do what they will do, so we focus on what we do and let the world be. We are very private, a bit reclusive, we serve humanity in our way because we want to, and we genuinely and deeply appreciate the people who come to us. For many people in the world, there is an image and perception of what we do that comes with crystal balls, turbans, and flowing white robes. So many charlatans have muddied the waters and taken advantage of the vulnerable since the rise of modern spiritualism in the 19th century that, unfortunately, seems not to have changed much.

I do what I do because my life has had an ample supply of psychic experiences from a young age. My experiences have offered a way for deep introspection and healing; they have not been hallucinatory anomalies. I may have mentioned that I used to think everyone had psychic experiences—I thought it was a natural occurrence for everyone, but for countless people it is not, or their experiences have been very rare. There are many, many people who make outrageous claims about themselves and their psychic or religious experiences and abilities—some are even bestselling authors who have made millions. Be discerning about the flashiness of someone or a person who might be reinventing themselves through spirituality or religion. You are *never* less than because a person has authentic psychic abilities or has spiritual awareness and you do not, and if you do feel that way, you have some inner work to do. I doubt you feel less than because there have been people like Chief Seattle, Sojourner Truth, Montserrat Caballé, Marie Curie, Cicely Tyson, or Jalaluddin Rumi in the world.

Automatic writing is real. Just as I can communicate with the discarnate, I use the same mediumship methodology with the writing, but it is directly between my source personality and me, and I receive information primarily for humankind. Now, my source may change, just as our guides change during our lifetime depending on what our needs are at the time. Sometimes, the information I receive sounds poetic and other times it comes through with

blunt and brutal reality. So, I do believe I am working with different sources depending on what is needed at the time.

I have done minimal editing on this material to keep the information flowing while maintaining the pureness and integrity of the messages. I made the decision to keep the information in chronological order of delivery instead of grouping subject matter together. It became too confusing trying to separate the material because sometimes it blended. This material is for you to reflect upon and is informational; you may agree or disagree. Again, my sources have many facets to their personalities and, at times, they can be succinct and to the point, and other times be poetic. They each have their own viewpoints about life in general as well as religious, spiritual, leadership topics, and who we are in our human experience and condition, and insights into our emotionality and how we need to act *now* to be stewards of the Earth. Communications have come at all hours of the day and night.

**(12-18-2021)**

When you incarnated you came here to *experience* this reality, which is why there is little memory of where you have come from. If you remembered your true origin and had all knowledge of every life that you have ever existed in, it would confuse you and you would not be able to focus on your tasks at hand. Each one of you have chosen your life to experience what you came to experience and that which needs to be fulfilled. You have agreed to be here whether you feel like you belong or not, or that you had no choice in being here; in this, your present moment is where you decided to be and is where you belong. If you feel as if you do not belong, look within and discover where your longing truly resides. Instead of fighting your existence, embrace it and understand that your life here is only a blink of an eye in the larger spectrum of your entire existence and form.

Understand that we are here to help you and assist you in the betterment of all life forms. You currently lack the comprehension to fully understand your impact upon every life form on this planet, as well as the entire universe. Your actions, your emotions, your attitudes, your beliefs, your entire existence affects everything in the universe. It affects other forms of life, it affects the deaths of certain areas upon your earth, it affects the wind and the weather, the health of the streams, rivers, and oceans. All day, every day, you have the power to make decisions and choices and, all day, every day, you are the creators of your own world. If you look at the state of nature and the destruction that man has placed upon the earth, this can only be an indication of how you feel about yourselves as a species. You lack respect for yourselves, which only mirrors your lack of respect for life, in and out of your present reality. We are here to assist you, but the only way to truly evolve is to make your own mistakes. We watch, we listen, we advise, but we will not interfere.

**(12-21-2021)**

The nets and lines your fishers use, the debris in your oceans, and the unsustainable objects in your landfills, all cause harm to the environment and the ecological processes that keep your planet alive and thriving. You must see your earth as a living being—a breathable and feeling being. Her lungs are choked, her veins are polluted, and her arteries clogged with your useless consumption of *things*. Her belly is eaten away by humans acting as if they are

rats scrambling for their next meal. Your earth is crying out. Her emotions are at a pitch, and yet, you still are not listening. Her pain will continue to be expressed through your storms and the rivers and oceans will swell with her tears. It is not too late, but if nothing is done now, generations to come will pay the price. This is not a request, this is not a plea, ***this is a warning.***

The babies born will increasingly carry tainted blood and many health problems will arise with increased mental deficits as well as clinical anomalies. Your food must change rapidly. Your bodies need the freshness of earthy foods yet, you are consumed by chemicals. Your bodies can only take so much. The diseases that plague you can be greatly diminished through your food. Toxins are everywhere in your world and you bathe in them. You allow others to dictate to you as you lean your heads back, open your mouths, and take what is fed to you without question. Rise up (raise your consciousness). An unhealthy body cannot support a healthy spirit, because they are one.

**(12-27-2021)**

There are animals that share a great portion of your DNA. You have kinship with animals that runs deeper than your present relationship with them. They were not created as prototypes of the human. Their DNA is of their own origin just as yours is the unique origin for you. They are to be a mirror for you, a reminder of their kinship with you, not an evolutionary tool for your own sense of superiority in the world. It would be wise to understand that kinship and the relationship between man and animal—animals are not just a placeholder for the devised food chain that has been created by your people. There are many nuances and intricacies in the eco system that keeps nature alive and well. If man would learn and practice *live and let live*, you would be better off in so many different areas of your life.

Corporations have a much larger responsibility to the world—a responsibility that would drive product-making in an environmentally friendly, sustainable, and cohesive way. The drive for *more* is an obsession where *more* will never satisfy the hungry ghost that dwells within them. So many of your people are distant from their inner selves and function only within the conscious mind—eat, sleep, work, and money—never caring what the consequences are to the animals and to the environment. You are not the only ones with families. Animals also have families and friends. They too have lives to live and they deserve to eat, live, roam, gather, and experience the beauty of this world. It will take time to correct this state-of-being for you humans. The earth provides everything for you—there is no need to rape the land, seas, and skies for your personal use with an indifference to a Mother that so graciously gives you everything you need.

Integrity is most valuable when you can search within for what the right thing to do is and to recognize your own intentions, fallibilities, emotional needs. Integrity is also at its greatest when you can recognize those things and do right by them, do right by your “Self.” Integrity springs from taking responsibility for yourself, knowing your own emotions, knowing your intentions, and understanding who you are, and the difference between doing something that selfishly benefits you instead of another. Being able to recognize that and

being able to face that about yourself automatically generates integrity. It is not integrity that is the goal; the goal is to know your Self. Integrity will follow.

Willows in the wind, rain in the forest, the sand between your toes on the beach are the finer pleasures of living if one decides to look deeply within the earth and life. Few people decide to take moments to look fondly at the sky, animals in the forest, or the flight of birds overhead. These treasures of life are not backdrops and scenery for your play called life; they are part of everything about your script. They are also not props for whatever act you are in at the time; the world around you exists so you can interact and co-mingle with all forms of life, for you to remember that you are among and a part of every living form of life on your earth. The world you live in is intended as paradise for you; to live in joy and be refreshed by its abundance of life. We accept that your world has taken the direction that it has and we are here to assist you in learning to live harmoniously with each other and the other creatures upon your earth. Everything lives, everything belongs, and everything has a rightful place on this Earth, just as you do. Humans are not the masters; humans are the equals to every living thing that pulls this planet together.

**(12-28-2021)**

The sovereignty of a nation and the structure of many governments form a class system with its people to create the haves and the have-nots. Many systems of government, by manipulation of their laws, create their own class system, a workable solution for the haves in a society that will keep the haves rich and in power. The poor are calculated into the system and are regulated by those in power and who have control. The system is rigged; the system also allows for many exceptional people to break through. Generally, this gives the illusion that if you are smart enough and willing to work hard enough, you too can be prosperous. There is a monetary class system set up in your government, a system that those in power do not want to see changed. Recognize where the power lies and how you are pacified. Your food is poisoning your bodies, the water you drink is contaminated, and the air that you breathe is toxic. When there is not proper nutrition for the body, it will be hampered in all its systems, including the brain and cognitive thinking. It is not an accident that your educational systems are failing—they are failing for a reason.

Those who succeed in life monetarily through the idea of hard work give everyone else hope that they, too, can succeed through hard work. You are being used. A true and just system of government supports its people in all areas. It builds up its educational framework to teach not only fundamentals, but also your history as it truly happened, not by rewriting events, but by being honest and learning from mistakes—just as individuals do their inner work, so does a nation need to do the same. A just educational system will support its young thinkers to explore as many facets of life as possible within that framework. Your present structures limit opportunities to thrive and flourish within your systems. This will need to change, and it will, when the masses decide that they have had enough.

**(1-8-2022)**

Your astronauts come the closest to understanding the vastness of your world and of your universe. In most cases, every astronaut and every person who is thrust into the

universe by way of your rockets, understands this vastness, feels it within, and returns to Earth a changed person. This vastness, the feeling of vastness, the awareness of the enormity of your life, your life on earth, and life amongst the stars and planets can be felt and experienced without being propelled into the universe. This can be accomplished through mind, emotions, and the development of one's own consciousness. The physical experience of being propelled into space is an accomplishment, life changing, and is an experience unto itself. However, the *understanding* of the vastness, the *emotional understanding* of the vastness, and your place in your life and in the universe, can very well be experienced while sitting in your living room.

**(1-16-2022)**

When a person has the expectation of a rosy outcome in any given situation, the process of the brain that accumulates data from the outside environment accommodates the individual and supports the outlook, which is a belief. The brain will always accommodate the *being*, especially during shock, to make sure the individual is prepared to survive. Without this function, an individual may experience great confusion and, in some circumstances, hallucinations. The body is constructed and built to protect, but is meant for short-term survival of the being. Many people cannot move beyond the initial protected period as there have been natural chemicals released in the brain and in the body. This is where your PTSD is rooted because neural pathways have been altered to accommodate the situation. Repeated stress and traumas will only exacerbate the situation; the brain, the body, and the emotions find a different way of expression and functionality. Once there is a new pattern of functionality, there needs to be a concerted effort for the brain to find alternate pathways. Change is needed with the individual, which can be difficult—changes in thinking, habits, emotions, and introducing new ideas. Most people with severe short or long-term trauma will need assistance in behavioral functionality.

Psilocybin will interact with the brain in a natural way if the dose is from natural means and not synthetic. Psilocybin can introduce new thoughts and forge new pathways in the brain that can enhance healing and offer deep introspection. It is not a shortcut to healing the nervous system or neural pathways in the brain. For people like you (I had been thinking about what would happen if I micro-dosed with psilocybin), the effects, with proper dosing, can enhance one's visions without altering or damaging cells that rise to the occasion for psychic abilities to flourish. You may find enjoyment with such an experience if it is a mild dose.

**(1-25-2022)**

Tom and I were talking how we tend to go through physical and mental changes that correlate with the changes of the seasons, even in Florida. I get bursts of energy in the spring and fall, and slow down during the summer and winter, and we both react to pollen. Because we have so many varieties of oak trees, their pollen is active for many months as well as ragweed. I was not expecting any information about seasonal changes.

*This what came through...*

Winter arises bringing the sting of death. The farmers know it, the animals know it, the streams know it, and the boroughs know it. It is also a time for rest and reflection. It is felt throughout the night sky and among the rolling hills. The trees cannot produce their sap without a time of rest, and the life and death cycles that respond to the changes of the seasons cannot continue with their instinctual cycles unless they too have their time of rest. For every season has its time, yet man does not recognize the gentle changes that occur within the body during these seasonal changes, and if they are recognized, it is seen as an inconvenience or mild illness. Every being on your planet needs their time of rest and for the body to acclimate to the natural changes of the earth and sky.

**(2-5-2022)**

Do you ever get tired? I mean the tiredness that comes from maintaining a healthy balance in a world where people have separated themselves into camps of like-minded doctrines, whether based in fact or not, and being inundated with negative news 24/7. We are in very strange times. For my own mental health, I am basically off social media and watch or read very little news, which releases so much stress. It also helps me to remain steadfast in my humanism to treat people as individuals. Sometimes it is hard to do, especially when I get flipped off from an angry old platinum-bearded white guy hanging out of the window of his run-down oxidized van for two blocks yelling, “Fuck you,” because I gently tooted my horn after waiting a significant amount of time for him to see the green arrow to turn. I guess it’s easier to be an asshole to feel better about one’s self rather than give a thank-you wave.

I was smiling at him the whole time, and maybe my hand made a reflexive gesture back, but I thought it was funny. At the end of the day, his strong emotions of “no one’s gonna tell me what to do, especially a woman,” belong to him.

*In response to my thoughts, here is the writing I received...*

The foretelling of one possible scenario (earth’s dystopian future) is a very limiting view and viewpoint of your reality. You should know by now that what you concentrate on is what you will draw to you. Things look dire and grim at this point in your world—there are those who want you to continue to view your world as such (dire) to maintain the illusion that has been created, which keeps humankind thinking the way they wish people to think and believe. The best possible way to divorce yourself from this is to not watch, listen to, or read your news. Create your life as you would like it to be. Enjoy your relationships. You are the ones who hold your own keys. It is not necessary to keep up with or to stay informed at this point—things will go the way they will go. Humans have collectively agreed to the cycle of what you are now experiencing, and it will take time to move through this cycle. It will also take time to create and enter a new cycle that will be far superior to what you now know. It already exists, you just need to see it. This could take decades or up to hundreds or thousands of years in your earth time to move through your present cycle—it remains your choice.

**(2-6-2022)**

After watching a documentary about a man who went on a killing spree that crossed several state lines, I had wondered what made this man so different than his siblings who had similar experiences in a home with no mother and raised by a violent father. They were all isolated in a very rural area, and if he were the oldest, he probably received the brunt of the father's abuse.

*The next day, this is what came through...*

Damage to the cerebral cortex can sometimes cause an individual to alter their perceptions where random thoughts can be pieced together [like a puzzle—dismantled then rearranged] to cause a line of thinking to be perceived as an abstract awareness—hearing voices, paranoia, and having delusions that can cause a personality change, which may cause the formation of dangerous situations. In the case of the man you referred to in your questions, he suffered many blows to his head by his father, who was quite violent, and his cerebral cortex had been affected many times as well as different areas of the brain. This assisted the man in forming his personality as a killer and (alleged) psychopath, which he silently and deeply within (subconsciously and without conscious knowledge) decided that would be his path. He most definitely placed the possibility of “the killer” in his design for his life, however, he did have the choice early on in his learning about life as it was being taught to him (isolated and with a violent man), and he silently decided he would be the killer. He knew he was not like his siblings. He had a choice and he made his choice. He found greater identity in being “the killer.” He continues to find his identity in being the killer, because it gives him power and status within the community he now finds himself in (prison).

As is apparent with all alleged psychopaths, emotions are nearly non-existent within them. In this man's situation, the damage to his cerebral cortex contributed to his lack of emotions, which was closely associated with his defense mechanism to shut his emotions down to protect himself. With both situations in play, the emotions were nonexistent for him.

*Notation:* The cerebral cortex is the outer surface of the brain where each hemisphere is divided into four lobes. Each lobe houses different functions such as thought, reasoning, emotion, memory, language, and so forth. Damage to any function will depend on where the trauma is experienced. Frontal lobe injury can cause personality changes, inappropriate social behavior, and difficulties with problem solving, decision-making, and memory.

**(2-8-2022)**

*About Covid 19 and its multiple variants...*

The intelligence of a virus is not a random event. It has life, it has purpose, it is driven, and it has intelligence, but an intelligence that is not recognized or understood by your scientists. It moves with instinct, understands very well and intelligently how to recreate itself. Your people are being duped by an intelligence that is out of man's grasp. It would be very easy for people to understand life in a specific way by watching the virus that gripped the world, to understand life in a broader way. It is not about defeating the virus or any virus, it is about understanding how your world intersects with not only biology, but biology that is

intertwined with your thoughts, emotions, and the patterns of interaction with the flow of nature. This virus is not your enemy. This virus is here to teach you about life, and the longer you resist understanding the virus and, thus your reality, and how you create your own personal set of circumstances, the longer the virus will continue to be a part of your reality. The virus is very willing to stop reproducing itself. It is people of the Earth that are keeping it alive and allowing it to continue in its many forms.

**(7-14-2023)**

*I asked Abram about hope...*

“Hope leaves room for failure when someone hopes for an outcome to occur that will give them what they want or need. When someone has faith (not religious), they have trust. When you have trust, you know you do not need hope because you know that everything will work out in a way that will serve you and everyone else. So maybe people should focus on the idea that having faith in the Self is trusting that you know that everything is working out for your highest good. It is better not to believe in a certain outcome because it will limit the play of possibilities, and by play, I mean using possibilities that are available, looking into them, and working with them, because using possibilities that are available will cause probabilities.

“Hope is a desire, a possibility, and an expectation for a certain outcome to happen. What about people who are in a dire situation? Hope for them has become a good thing. It can keep people motivated and functioning until the reality of the situation cannot be denied. But overall, how many times does hope deliver? It takes practice having faith in yourself, so practice trusting and having faith and trust in *you*.”

*I received this the next day...*

Sentimentality *gathers* in the garden of hope. *Hope springs eternal* because hope is all some people have; clinging to a vine that is not well rooted, yet it will climb every wall man builds. Sentimentality holds the innocence of a newborn, the softness of new skin, and the aroma of life. Metaphors of an unbroken melody shift and sway within one’s mind giving comfort, as a haven should, but hope can also shatter. It can shatter the illusions of how we want things to be, instead of how things really are in their own nakedness.

Sentimentality *offers* hope when uncertainty has no moors and sends a boat adrift in the sea of possibility. It is the possibilities that seem unmoored, not the boat itself. The boat floats and drifts with the currents and the tides, so the boat is always on course. The boat knows of no destination and allows the currents to be the guide. Humans, when feeling unbalanced, *seem* like a boat adrift. They project that there is no destination in sight because the possibilities are too overwhelming.

**(8-20-23)**

*I received a nudge to write this down before falling asleep one night...*

Shockwaves that are undetectable to the human will cross your planet Earth close to the land, much like your magnetic lines, and these shockwaves will affect life on your earth. It is a natural occurrence for your Earth—it is like an energetic release valve for the planet. At

times, emotions will be heightened and those who do not know themselves will be affected in undesirable ways the most. Not all though. Those that self-navigate will fare the best. Your emotions are as strong and fierce as the waters that surge midst your storms, hurricanes, waterspouts, and tsunamis. The true power of your emotions is unimaginable to you.

*Abram's expanded meaning...*

“Those shockwaves happen when your planet Earth, in a sense, realigns itself, and those shockwaves can happen much more frequently depending upon the consciousness of people, the mass consciousness of people and how they are treating the planet Earth. Your Earth has a frequency foundation and those shockwaves *change* the frequency foundation when they happen. This allows for nature, in many ways to grow in a healthier way. But those people who are not smart, unaware, or in the know, you know what I mean, those people will be affected by it, usually and normally in negative ways. Those who are smart, aware, and in the know, will be able to unconsciously use those shockwaves for the benefit to enhance their identity. Now, this is not to say that people who are not smart never evolve—of course, they evolve. Everyone and everything evolve, but they will evolve in different ways. You get in your automobile and you decide to drive to a certain point. There are a couple of different roads that will take you to that point. Those who are in the know, who are smart, you know what I mean, will take road B. Those who are, well, not very intelligent will take road A, a slower route to get to the result. So that is what your writing is all about—the shock waves are a good thing.”

*Continuation of the automatic writing...*

Weather changes will continue and Mother Earth will continue to react. There will be volcanoes erupting, hurricanes, droughts, insect activity, flooding, and fires—you must wake up. You will have fires in the sky and your food supply will suffer. As your climate continues to change, there will be a chain reaction all around the world. I am not offering a doomsday prediction; you are only fulfilling your own prophecies.

*Abram's expanded meaning...*

“Fire in the sky; you can call that “fire lightening.” It is a rare form of lightening that can be very harmful to certain things on your planet Earth. If the lightening, the fire lightening, would hit the crops in a certain way, that will cause the crops to catch fire. There is regular lightning, ball lightning, and fire lightening. You don't want to have fire lightening—this is not a pleasant thing to deal with, my friend. So, people need to change their consciousness about your planet Earth. They really, really, as I have been saying, really, really, really need to change their ways on how they treat your planet Earth, because your planet is reaching the point at which it has had enough. With all the weather, strange weather patterns that have not happened before, they will continue, they will keep on going, and they will worsen, but not to the point where all those things will end civilization. There is still time and people just need to get a bit smarter.”

**(8-30-2023)**

My thoughts recently led me to think how drastically the divisions between us have escalated over the past seven years, causing many people to become more intolerant and extreme in their beliefs. We are divided, distrustful, enraged, stressed-out, reactionary, and in spiritual distress. People have chosen sides—instead of spirited debates, the sharing of ideas, and how we can cooperate with one another. Algorithms guarantee that we will consume an endless stream of information that supports our beliefs, and then some. Instead of choosing politicians for their principles, we are choosing personalities, ideologies, and corporate greed over peace and prosperity.

I began thinking about Stella's crying out in *Chapter 5*, whereby listening closely to her I could hear what she was saying in the "in between." Today, in our society, if we listen closely to peoples' screaming and crying and pay attention to the in between, we will hear trauma, pain, sorrow, confusion, grief, guardedness, and loneliness that is all founded in fear—fear of each other, fear of ourselves, fear of ideas and evolvment, fear of life and, yes, fear of loss and death in every form imaginable.

Because I am interested in the pathology of cults (everyone should understand this) and why their followers are so devout, I watched several documentaries on high-profile cults. So, after mulling over why people are hooked into such cults as well as the mental and emotional health of society right now...

*This is what I received...*

Many people are angry. People are afraid for their lives because propaganda is seeping into the lives of everyone; it is an energy that has gathered over many decades that is meant to control. There are times in your history where one person begins with one thought and changes the way the masses think. It takes more than one person and one thought—other ingredients include personality and the ability to woo people who are willing to spread the message of the one. It is the *way* the "one person" reads the times, the places, and the circumstances to plant their thought. It is like the perfect storm of possibilities coming together for "the one" to find the perfect audience for their message. The religious insistence on how things should be, strikes fear in the hearts of secular people. The secular people fear the religious ones because their power supersedes true humanitarian care, love, and compassion. When humanity, love, and compassion are not in a person's heart, there is no religion—there is only power and control. When humanity is walked on, then the road is dangerous.

**(9-3-2023)**

In closing, this next automatic writing (9-8-2023) prompts me to ask you to engage your imagination and be wide open to possibilities. I am confident that what I have written in this book has brought you a bit further to understanding energy, consciousness, and our inextricable connection to one another and to nature. Not only emotional ties, but more importantly, our energetic connections and the many mysteries and magic of life that we have yet to be aware of and to discover. I would also like to ask of you to open yourself to the possibility and idea that our connections with others extend beyond our relationships

with our fellow human beings—we are connected energetically with other *beings*, but people need to accept the idea of possibility to understand this. Based on my experiences, there are highly evolved beings who are intensely interested in our progress, evolution, and humanity.

**(9-8-2023)**

What you consider to be prophecies were not what they are today. To you, prophecies are seen as miraculous. To us, they spring from the deepest recesses of our being. Prophecies *were* us; they were part of our everyday life and a natural expression not only from our inner wellspring, but from how we were encouraged by our outside world—the Earth. *Every day* was miraculous. *Living* everyday was miraculous. We were connected to the world, to nature and all its abundance, and we were attuned to, and listened to nature because there was no separation between us. Nature whispered to us; it told us things. Is it any wonder that the first people of the lands knew how to heal with food, poultices, herbs, flowers, bark, and dirt? We listened. We listened to the land, the sky, the rivers and streams, the wind, the trees and, yes, we listened to the dirt and all the tiniest inhabitants within it. This is the connection you are looking for; this is the belonging that you long for. You belong to the Earth in the here and now.

Compassion begins at home, within your own heart toward yourself. If you cannot be forgiving and compassionate to yourself, who can you truly be compassionate and forgiving to? You must forgive yourselves, forgive your trespasses, and learn from them. Because you are unforgiving to yourselves, you are unforgiving to the world and all its inhabitants.



Friends, family, animals, and other people who are in spirit form are around us checking in, sometimes just sending a hello or to let us know they are only a thought and feeling away.

## 10

### TRUE ACCOUNTS OF THE AFTERLIFE

*“You are a divine being. You matter, you count. You come from realms of unimaginable power and light, and you will return to those realms.”*

—Terence McKenna

All of us have the ability to communicate with deceased individuals, whether it be in dreams, moments when a person can feel someone around them, or direct communication with the individual. Any form of communication is something that all people can experience because everyone can tune into and sharpen their intuition and instinct. Most of the time, people are not aware of what is happening and they may think, “Well, this is just my imagination.” Communication with the discarnate is always available to us at any time.

If one were to pay attention to the nuances of energy, they would be able to hear or feel the deceased communicating with them, in one way or another. When we die, we step out of what we call physical reality, and step into what we call a nonphysical reality. As I have said, it would be like walking from one room in a house to another room, but all the rooms in the house are still a part of the whole structure. When we die, we enter another dimension, because all dimensions are a part of reality and reality is a part of all other dimensions—everything is a part of *The Whole of Existence*. This is how energy works. Everything is connected.

Now, everyone will face their finality in their own way depending on their beliefs about themselves, their Creator, and the unknown. I have been with people who welcome death, found peace with their finality, and had no fear of the unknown. There have been deeply religious people whose fear of abandonment by their God eclipses their faith and they fight death, and I have seen people physically thrash about trying to get out of bed for hours because they believe that fighting death is what they are supposed to do. And then there are those who fear that in the end, their life has been of little significance and they will disintegrate into oblivion believing there is nothing beyond this life.

For those who believe there is nothing beyond this existence, you will eventually discover that you are still alive.

**Tom M.****Grandpa's Presence**

“My grandpa, my father’s father, had gangrene in his right leg—I’m not sure if he had diabetes, but it would make sense if he did. Since it was so painful, I used to hear him when he was upstairs pounding his foot on the floor because he didn’t know what else to do. He went to the hospital and they said they wanted to amputate his leg; he told them no, he just wanted to go home. He told my dad he wasn’t going to have the surgery because the guy next to him at the hospital died the day after having his leg amputated.

“We lived in a two-story house on Central Avenue in Cicero, Illinois, and my grandparents lived on the second floor, as did many extended families of that era. I was 14 years old when he died. Not long after his death, I was lying in bed one night on my back and I happen to raise my head. I saw this blackish energy at the foot of my bed, and I knew it was Grandpa. It scared the hell out of me and I didn’t know what the hell was going on. I didn’t know anything about ghosts, spirits, metaphysics, or anything like that and I really had no interest in it. My sister gave me a book about ghosts and after reading it, I started to understand more about spirits, dying, and the afterlife.

“I began hearing things moving around in the basement and hearing someone clearing their throat, and I knew it was my grandfather. I would hear the front door open and close, then I would hear footsteps through the front room on the stairs. I would hear the light switch go on at the top of the stairs and I could hear the door open to go into the apartment. The door would then close, and the light switch would go off.

“I used to hear this all the time and I would go to my dad’s bedroom at night and say, ‘Somebody is in the house, where’s the gun? Get the gun!’

“And, he would always say, ‘Go take a look’ and I would say, ‘You’re crazy, I’m not taking a look!’

“So, we decided it was my grandfather, but I really knew it all along and I finally told my dad, ‘Grandpa’s in the house. He’s not dead, he’s in the house.’

“So, my dad got a priest to come over and bless the house, and as the priest was walking up the stairs from our front room to their flat upstairs, I grabbed my dad and said, ‘Send this guy home, because he’s not going to do anything because Grandpa is not going to leave. Grandpa is going to stay here.’

“This guy was throwing holy water all around and saying prayers and doing what priests do to exorcise a house to get rid of ghosts. The priest didn’t do anything and it started all over again. Years later, my mother told me that one night my father got out of bed and went outside to walk all the way around the house. When he came back in, my mom said to him, ‘Are you crazy? What are you doing? Why are you walking around outside?’

“He said, ‘Didn’t you hear that?’

“She said, ‘No, hear what?’

“He replied, ‘I heard Pa whistle and then say, *Tommy* from outside the house.’

“Grandpa used to whistle to my grandmother all the time to get her attention when he was outside in the garden, and that night, my grandfather was whistling and calling me from outside the house. My dad knew my grandpa was still in the house and he didn’t have any more priests come over after that.”

### **The Room Was Ice Cold**

“My dad had his first heart attack when he was 42 years old, and after that he had several heart attacks that all landed him in the hospital. He had his first open-heart surgery in the 60s and his second open-heart surgery in the 90s.

“In the 60s, after one of his big heart attacks, but not his first, he was at home in bed recuperating. My dad owned a sandwich shop in Cicero called Smokey’s, on the corner of Austin Boulevard and Ogden Avenue. Two mob guys he was friendly with went to his sandwich shop—I won’t name them—and they helped him out because they liked my dad. They were at the shop flipping burgers and taking care of customers to make sure everything ran smoothly until he got better and was able to get back to work.

“A few times after a heart attack, the doctors didn’t give Dad much of a chance to pull through, but he fooled everyone and every time, he made it through, got better, and went home.

“So, the last time, I got a call from my mother and she said, ‘Your father is having a heart attack and we’re going to get him to the hospital,’ I thought, ‘Here we go again. He’ll be home, he’ll pull through.’

“I went to the hospital and saw my dad lying in bed with an oxygen mask on and hooked up to all the different instruments. I grabbed the doctor out in the hall and asked him to level with me about his chances; he said that my dad was in cardiac shock. I asked how long he had, and the doctor said, ‘Maybe a few hours; but he has pulled through before, so we will see.’

“I was in the room with my sister, and my mother was somewhere else in the hospital. I was talking to my dad and he was talking back to me with the oxygen mask on his face. He stopped talking and I heard the sound of rushing air, and asked the nurse what was going on. She told me, ‘We’re forcing oxygen into him to raise his blood pressure because it dropped significantly, so we’re trying to raise his blood pressure to bring him back around.’ They did that for a few minutes and they were giving him all kinds of medications to help his heart calm down.

“Suddenly, he looked straight ahead fixated on whatever what was right in front of him, which was an open door to the room, and suddenly, the room was ice cold. I knew my grandfather was there. I had my right hand on my dad’s shoulder, my left

hand on his wrist, and I was watching him and looking at the heart monitor. As soon as my dad saw my grandfather, the meter shot up to over 200, slowly came down, and with two deep breaths, his head dropped and he was gone. His eyes were open, and when I looked into them, the spark was gone and I knew he had died and that Grandpa was in the room waiting for him.

### **The Men in Brown Suits**

“My mother had Alzheimer’s for several years and she had been living with my sister. My mom and dad meant everything to each other and they couldn’t be separated from one another. I think that Mom’s dementia progressed because she didn’t keep her mind busy and always stayed home with my sister, not wanting to go out. When she entered a nursing home, things steadily got worse for her and she developed breast cancer. Cancer does not run in our family, so it was very surprising.

“My sister, who is psychic, told me she was visiting my mom and my mom was telling her a story about two men dressed in brown suits that were visiting her one night.

“One of the men put his finger on her leg and said, ‘You’re doing great, kid. You’ll be fine, you’ll be just fine.’

“She never had any pain from the breast cancer, but it was horrible to look at. The cancer was growing out of her breast and it was like seeing something out of a horror science fiction movie. I couldn’t believe what I was looking at, but she never had any pain from it and shortly after that, she went into hospice. While my sister and I were visiting, Mom was lying in bed with her eyes closed in an unconscious state and we knew she was dying. She let out this big sigh, let out all her breath, and I said, ‘Good job, Ma.’ Then she would start breathing again and it scared the hell out of everybody! We waited while she did that six or seven times until she finally took her last breath and died. It did take a while, where my dad went fast.”

### **Hurricane Mathew**

“Sue was on a cruise with a friend visiting the Dominican Republic and Cuba when Hurricane Mathew, a Category 5, became a threat to the coast of Florida; I was home alone with our dog, Sugar. This was my first hurricane, and thankfully, Mathew never made landfall but it came very close to the coast, making the wind and rain severe. The backyard that Sue painstakingly had just finished landscaping was in ruins. Sugar and I began feeling a little panicky, so we stuck close to each other as we settled into the TV room with nothing to do but listen to the wind and rain relentlessly pound the house. The electricity was out and we had no generator and no battery-operated radio, so all Sugar and I could do was sit there and wait it out—we were both getting scared. Then, my parents came to me and I could see them in my mind’s eye as well as seeing them standing in front of me. My mom was smiling at me and my dad peacefully extended his left arm to me with his palm up letting me know everything would be okay and that they were close by. I immediately felt a calmness

come over me and a sense of relief that made any anxiety and fear about the hurricane and our safety go away.”

## **Cheryl S.**

### **Nona’s Promise**

“I was born into a big Italian family whose matriarch was my Nona, or ‘Nanita,’ which means little grandmother, as many lovingly called her. My Nona was a tiny Sicilian woman with a sixth-grade education, a deep reverence for God, and an uncanny ability to foretell the future. Nona spoke in proverbs and in very broken English. She had a sweet, quiet, serene demeanor, and a powerful loving energy that one felt while in her presence that literally dominated a room.

“When Nona gave a gentle warning like, ‘Don’t go today. Go tomorrow,’ you waited until the next day to go wherever it was you had planned to go. Everyone in the family knew that to ignore her advice was a mistake; something would always go awry.

“Nona was the eldest of four children and was only fifteen years old when her mother died suddenly, leaving her to take care of her father and three younger siblings. Shortly after her mother’s death, her father uprooted the family and immigrated to America, settling in Michigan. Her father saw America as the land of opportunity, but for Nona, it was a very difficult time. She was tasked with the responsibility of cooking, cleaning, finding a job, learning the language, and caring for her sister and her two infant brothers, my Nona struggled to do it all, and all the while, she grieved for her mother.

“In Italy, it was the custom to wear all-black attire when in mourning. My grandmother wore black every day for two years. When she was seventeen years old, Nona’s mother’s voice awakened her suddenly in the middle of the night. She sat up in bed and there before her, standing at the foot of her bed, shrouded in a bright white light, was her mother.

“Her mother said, ‘Take off your black. You have mourned too long. I am alive, in heaven, healthy, and happy.’ My grandmother never wore black again.

“When I was a child, my grandmother and I used to wander through her gardens picking fruits, vegetables, and beautiful flowers—we both loved flowers. During our times together, she would tell me many stories, and of course, the most sacred to my Nona was the story of how her mother came to her to tell her that there was a heaven. She told it with such love and reverence, that it left a deep and lasting impression on me.

“Raised as a Catholic, Nona prayed to a patron saint, and according to Nona, her patron talked with her regularly. When Nona was in her sixties, she developed diabetes, went blind, and became too ill to attend church.

“She used to say, ‘One does not need to go to church to talk to God. God is everywhere, in and through all things.’

“These are the metaphysical beliefs I grew up on. ‘God is All That Is and all life is eternal. Our spirit never dies, but only sheds the physical body and continues to live. So, we never lose anyone or anything.’ These beliefs saved my life.

“I grew up in a difficult home environment and my Nona was my only source of love. Since my Nona was the only one who loved me, and her home was the only safe and peaceful place I knew, I built my whole life on the beliefs she taught me. When I was nineteen years old, Nona died. Before she died, I asked her, as I had asked as a child, if she would come back and see me like her mother had done for her so I would know there was a heaven.

“She touched my face lovingly and said, ‘Cheri, if there is a heaven, I promise I will come back and tell you.’

“It took me two years and professional counseling before I could talk about Nona’s death, or really live my life. One day, on my fortieth birthday, I sat on the grass in my backyard in utter despair. My marriage had just ended, my teenage daughter was running wild, my finances were a disaster, and I felt like everything in my life was out of control. Nothing made any sense, and I found myself questioning the validity of my faith and metaphysical beliefs for the first time in my life.

“I looked at the heavens and called silently to my grandmother, ‘Maybe my whole life has been a lie, because you didn’t keep your promise and come back and talk to me. There must be no heaven and no life after death. So, when we die, we must lose everyone and everything we love, and turn into nothing. This life is too painful and I don’t want to live knowing all I love will be forever lost. I don’t believe there is a God anymore. If there were, you would have kept your promise. You didn’t, so there must be nothing but loss.’

“My daughter, like my grandmother, has the ability to ‘see’ and ‘hear’ spirit, and even though she kept her gifts hidden, she would occasionally channel for me privately. At midnight, my daughter, who had just returned home from a movie with her friends, came into my bedroom to kiss me goodnight. I was sleeping and her presence awakened me.

“Kissing my cheek, she said, ‘Happy Birthday. I’m sorry I wasn’t here for your birthday. Oh, and someone wanted to talk to you, so I channeled for you and wrote the message down as a birthday present. I left it on the kitchen table for you. I think it was your grandmother.’

“Of course, I immediately sprang up out of bed to read the note my daughter had channeled. She never knew my grandmother or about her promise to me. She didn’t know what a message from my beloved Nona meant to me, or that it was a promise being delivered after twenty-one years. The note, a life-saving gift of love sent from the afterlife, written in my daughter’s teenage scrawl and communicated to her through her spiritual guide, Grandfather.

“The note read...

*“There are two people here in my plane who were once on your earth with you. One wishes you to know she is with her love and they run together. She always wanted that, and she wanted you to know. She sends her cape of love and peace to you always.”*

“This was a message from an elderly woman by the name of Mary Motherspaw who was my daughter’s babysitter for six years. Her husband, who was an invalid, had died. She killed herself out of loneliness. I loved her and had always hoped that she would meet up with her husband—she did, and wanted to tell me. I was very touched to hear this.

“The rest of the note was a message from my grandmother, fulfilling her promise to me 21 years after her death.

*“The other smiles upon your beautiful face, and always watches over you with love and immense pride. She needs for you to know that she had kept her promise to you in her heart always. She carries out her promise in a different way; she cannot give you understanding of why she must carry her promise out in a different way you cannot see with your eyes. She wishes me to tell you that she sees deep down into your soul, and she knows you have not lost faith in her words, for she sees inside of you—her. She is explaining to me that I cannot express all the love she has for you. She wants you to know that she has been, is, and always will be, by your side picking the flowers. She says, ‘Know for me, Cheri.’”*

“Nona’s message was worded in a way that I would recognize as ‘hers.’ To make it even clearer that the words were from her, she ended her message in broken English and she called me Cheri, a nickname that only she used. “Know, for me, Cheri,” translates as ‘recognize that this is me.’ Say the words aloud and you will hear the broken English as my Nona spoke it. There was no doubt in my mind that this was my Nona sending a message to me fulfilling a promise she made to me when I was a child.

“This brief message from my grandmother may not seem like much to others, but the meanings in her message were completely understood by me. Her message from the afterlife is the most precious gift I have ever received. As I read her words, I felt her presence, and realized that she couldn’t come back and stand in front of me and talk with me as her mother had done with her. The reason was that when she died, I had taken her death so hard that it nearly killed me. Feeling her loving energy and hearing her words through her message, I realized that I could not have endured seeing her again in any form, because when she again departed, I would feel like I was losing her a second time. I could not endure it and I would be tempted to join her.

“I knew these were not healthy feelings and something she did not want. So, she found a way to keep her promise in a way that would not make me feel like we were saying goodbye all over again. Instead, her channeled message, delivered through two other people—my daughter and her spirit guide—provided a way for her to keep her promise without re-igniting my grief.

“Is there a heaven, an afterlife where we go on eternally, still aware of and loving everyone and everything? Where we never lose anyone or anything forever, but instead just experience a temporary parting? My beautiful Nona traveled through time and beyond physical death twenty-one years later to keep her promise. I will never ask these questions again, because for me, they have been answered. We are all so blessed.”

## **Jonni A.**

### **Blue Walls**

“I was Jack Hunter’s sidekick and, after his cancer diagnosis, was his 24/7 caregiver. I was the only one with him when he died. Later that day, I packed my stuff in my car and drove home, completely exhausted. That night, I woke up about 4:30 a.m., which was the time he had died the night before. I saw huge blue streaks of color all over my bedroom, as if someone had taken a 6-inch-wide brush and slathered blue paint all over the walls. Hunter was an artist as well as a writer, and although he was color-blind, the color blue was one he could see well. I could hear him laughing.”

Jack D. Hunter (1921–2009) was an artist and novelist who is best known for *The Blue Max*, written in 1964 that was later made into a movie with the same title. He went on to write 16 more novels, the last being, *The Ace*, which is about WWI American pilots. He was fascinated with aviation but unable to fly because of his color blindness. Since he spoke fluent German, the Army sent him to post-war Germany as a counter-intelligence agent, which inspired his second novel, *The Expendable Spy*. He was a long-time resident of St. Augustine, Florida, and died at the age of 87.

## **Nicole D.**

### **Grandmother’s Mist**

“When I was about eight years old, my maternal grandmother had been sick with cancer for about a year. She was home because she was very afraid to die in a hospital. She had a hospital bed at the house and people were coming and going all the time and I think people assumed that I understood more of what was going on than I did. They kept me out of the room a lot, and I knew she was sick, but here’s the thing, nobody told me she was going to die. Nobody told me that, and because I didn’t know, I thought she was going to get better.

“Time passed and sometimes my mom would drop my two brothers off at my other grandmother’s house and let me come with her, because I was very special to my grandmother. I was her favorite and everybody knew it. She would ask me to sing to her sometimes while she was alone and resting. We just had this deep and incredible bond and I never needed her to say I love you, because I knew.

“One day, my mom said she was going to go down to Boston and then to take care of Grandma.

“We were all in the car, driving to my other grandma’s house, and I said to her, ‘But, Mom, I want to go with you.’”

“She told me that I couldn’t go with her that day and said that Grandma was on a lot of medicine and she wouldn’t know that I was there. That really upset me. So, I went to my other grandma’s house, and after a while, my mom showed up and we all knew something was wrong.

“She sat us down and said, ‘Well, Grandma went to heaven today.’”

“I looked at her and said, ‘I asked you if I could go today!’”

“I think she was more upset than I was that she had held me back. To this day, it’s very difficult for her, and I think she still feels guilty about it, and to a certain extent, not that I hold her responsible for it, but I wish she had just believed me when I said I wanted to go. Somewhere in my little psyche, I was feeling something from my grandma because of our connection. She died on July 8th.

“The next few days were crazy trying to get all the arrangements made. The wake came, and my mom asked if I wanted to go both nights, which I said I wanted to. She was being really careful because she knew that I had been denied seeing my grandmother.

“At the funeral home, when seeing our grandmother, my five-year-old brother asked, ‘Mommy, is this heaven?’”

“I was so sad and remembering it now, just breaks my heart, but we all felt that we were okay. It wasn’t scary, it wasn’t weird, and I looked at her and I kissed her cheek and I knew she wasn’t there anymore.

“That evening after the funeral, I was at my other grandmother’s house and, after going through all of this, I was alone and playing by myself. I looked out the window and my surviving grandmother, Nonnie, my dad’s mother, was outside watering her plants. She had tons of plants, and as I’m looking out the window, she waves to me, then she moved to the front of the house.

“All of the sudden, a little bit higher than the tallest plants, maybe a little higher than that, I start to see what looks like a mist and I’m like, ‘What is that?’”

“Being eight years old, I rubbed my eye thinking I had something in my eye, but then the image started getting bigger, and then it started taking a human form like the outline of a person.

“Even though she didn’t completely materialize, I knew it was Grandma and she held out her hands to me and I was so happy.

“I thought, ‘Oh, my God!’”

“I ran to the phone to call my mother and I told my mother, ‘I don’t have to be sad anymore because I saw Grandma and she’s okay.’”

“I went back to the window after I called my mom, and she was gone, and I was so mad because I shouldn’t have left! No! I shouldn’t have left! I wondered why I decided to do that, but I strongly felt that I needed to tell my mother that she was okay.

“At that stage of the game, even though there was no one around me that had any kind of psychic ability that I know of, I always knew things, and I didn’t know that everyone else didn’t know what I knew because I was little and I figured everyone had experiences like mine. So, when I got information, I accepted it and I knew Grandma was okay and I didn’t have to be sad. I didn’t need to hear it because knowing she was alive and she was okay was now a part of me. She has never left me and she has continuously come to me in different ways in my life, and I’m in my 40s now. My relationship and bond with her is incredible.

“As a little kid, I had no reference point for any of it. The communication was one hundred percent pure, and I’m grateful that that had happened, and ever since then, all I’ve wanted was to go be with her. Occasionally, when I get a reading from a medium, the medium will tell me that my grandma says I will have to wait a long time before I see her, even though I want to come now. I never saw her physically again because I don’t think I needed to. Every year at the end of July, she used to take us on vacation to Cape Cod, so after she died, my parents decided to still go because they didn’t want to take that away from us. So, we went.

“My next experience was really awesome and I still can’t believe it myself, even though it did happen. I had the only picture of my grandmother, which was a little blurry, but I had it and it was my prized possession, so I took it everywhere I went. When we got to the cottage, I laid the picture down on top of my bureau. One day, my mom took us to the grocery store and bought three Wiffle Ball and bat sets for all three kids. That night we were playing and my ball got stuck in the tree, and no matter what my father did, we couldn’t get it down.

“My mother said, ‘Oh, it’s okay, Grandma has it now.’

“I looked up at the tree and I was confused by what she said—I didn’t know what she was talking about.

“The next day, coming back from the beach, I went upstairs and there was my Wiffle Ball sitting on top of the picture of my grandmother.

“I grabbed the ball and ran downstairs and asked, ‘Who found my ball?’

“My mom asked what I was talking about, and I asked again about who found it.

“Mom replied, ‘Nicoletta, no one has been here all day.’

“I told her that I went upstairs and the ball was sitting right on top of Grandma’s picture! When I said that, my mother’s face went pale and she said that she was only kidding about Grandma having the ball when it got stuck in the tree. Even from the other side, my grandmother does things like that for me. She is still here and she never leaves me—ever, ever.”

## **My Grandfather's Teeth**

“I’ve only had one other death experience, which was around 2012, and it was hilarious. This just blew me away. When people ask me if they have to wait awhile for their deceased loved ones to come through, I think it really depends. My family is different than most families. We are a little bit crazy, very pushy, very strong, and I think that’s the reason why I don’t need any time to connect. I believe the closeness of the relationship can play a role in how easily the connection can be made.

“After my grandmother died, my grandfather lived with our family for 30-plus years.

“He was always a part of the family, so every day, I would come in and he’d be in his chair, and I’d say, ‘Hi, Poopah’ and he’d say, ‘Hi, Cole.’

“He was a normal part of our life. So, my grandfather wasn’t doing very well and was in the hospital and on this particular day, he was very, very agitated. He was reaching up like someone was trying to pull him up, and I knew by the way he was reaching up, he was trying to fight death. I thought it might happen really soon.

“The next day, I’m home and I get a phone call from my parents, and my mother says, ‘Nicole, Poopah is gone. I just got a call from the hospital—he’s gone.’

“I just snapped into adult mode, I grabbed the book with all her phone numbers and the hospice folder because it had all the funeral information.

“When I got into my car, it hit me, ‘Oh my God, he’s gone.’ I took a moment and thought, ‘Hey, I should be able to talk to him, let me just open up my head.’

“I could hear my grandfather calling different peoples’ names, and I wondered if this was really happening, so I said, ‘Poopah!’

“He said, ‘You can hear me?’

‘Yeah, I can hear you!’

‘Oh, would you look at this, they didn’t even put my teeth in before I went, I look terrible!’

“I could feel that my beloved grandmother was with him and I could feel them together. It was weird because I always saw her by herself, and now with them together it was a different vibration.

“I’m laughing and crying at the same time and I can hear my grandfather saying to my grandmother that he needed to get back to the hospital to make sure they put his teeth back in, and my grandmother is like, ‘Just mind your business, you’re fine, everything is fine, and you come with me.’

“As that was happening, I’m pulling into the hospital, which was not far from me, and at the time, I didn’t know everybody had not arrived yet.

“Soon, everyone started coming in the room and my mom asked to talk to the orderly out in the hallway because she had some questions, and I said I wanted to go too.

“She asked the orderly, ‘When I was here last night, he was very agitated and flailing around. Was he like that this morning?’

“He said, ‘No, I came into the room and he was fine. I gave him some juice and he asked me for a straw.’

“He had not been talking the day before, so now he was okay and coherent.

“The orderly said, ‘I took his teeth out and gave him a nice shave.’

“I almost shit. That’s when the moment in the car came back to me, and I said, ‘Oh my God, I have to tell you something and you’re not going to believe me.’

“My mom said, ‘Of course I’m going to believe you, why wouldn’t I believe you, I always believe you.’

“I told her that when I was driving to the hospital, I wanted to see if Poopah was around and if I could find him, and when he showed up, he was complaining he looked terrible because they didn’t put his teeth back in.

“So, I said to the orderly, ‘Can you tell me where his teeth are right now?’

“He replied, ‘Yeah, they’re in the bathroom in the cup.’

“See, it’s so funny, because even I don’t believe it half the time, and I’m a medium. I really need to have it proven to me. I don’t know where I got my abilities from and no one in my family ever talked about it—we’re Italian, so it isn’t like a weird topic of conversation necessarily, but they never really talked about anything like that aside from occasionally getting a call from someone and you had just been thinking about them. But, no one ever put much stock into it, and no one was running around saying they saw anyone deceased. But that stuff did go down.”

## **Dana K.**

### **My Father’s Last Breath**

“My father had developed dementia from small strokes, but he managed to walk me down the aisle at my wedding in Ohio. When he returned to his home in Wisconsin, he had a large stroke while swimming in our pool and went under for some time before he was found. I immediately flew home to find that he was in the hospital, but not in a coma. Although his eyes never opened, he could hear us and feel touch. As a family, and with the advice of attending doctors, we decided the kindest thing we could do was to let him go, as he wasn’t coming back to us no matter what we did.

“On the fifth night, I decided not to return to my parents’ home, so I stayed and slept at the end of his bed. When the nurse came in at six in the morning, his breathing was already shallow. I stepped out of the room while she checked on him

and I thought about getting coffee, but thank God I stayed, because when she was finished, I could feel from him that it was time. And that's when things became so strange for me, yet familiar. I saw his arm stretched out to touch me when I re-entered his room, but his arm never moved. I went around to the other side of his bed to climb on it alongside of him and to hold him in my arms. I was kissing his forehead and telling him to let go, as he had been a spectacular dad and we would all be fine because of him.

“Then, I saw his parents walking toward him in the far distance—they were coming to get him. A large, loving hand reached toward us and I knew he was being guided, taken, and accompanied by a warm, benevolent being. Tears strolled down my eyes, dropping onto his cheeks, rolling down his face. He brought me into this world, and I was there when he left it as he took his last breath.”

## **Ellen W.**

### **He Wanted to Be a Politician**

“I met Michael one summer while visiting some college friends in Miami. We met while partying on the beach and I liked him because he was fun and seemed more mature than the guys I knew back home. I admired that he was a mover and shaker at his college and he made a great first impression on me. This and being in South Beach added to the romance and I fell for him hook, line, and sinker. I was young and naïve, and what I thought was sure to be a perfect match, ended up not so harmonious and our relationship bordered on being emotionally abusive. Sadly, the decent times we had were when he had been drinking.

“Career wise, he had high aspirations and was preparing to be a “mover and shaker” in the business and political world. His résumé was gorgeous but not completely truthful, I learned, and it later became apparent that he had created an illusion about himself at many levels. After time went by, I realized that he planned on me being a part of this illusion (we talked about marriage). We had a long-distance relationship and during my almost two years with him, it felt like the best parts of me were disappearing. I didn't grasp that I was being emotionally neglected. I was young and internalized his passive aggressiveness and emotional vacancy, and thought his coldness was my fault. My self-confidence slowly dwindled.

“Interestingly, for each visit when I flew out to see him, I became sick to my stomach to the point of vomiting, but thought it was motion sickness from the plane rides. Each visit, though, I progressively got sick earlier and earlier, and by the last visit, already had motion sickness before I left my house for the airport, which had never happened before. During this last visit, my equilibrium was so off that I was bedridden for most of the visit and we couldn't be intimate. Michael was angry that I was sick and showed no compassion towards me. During each visit, his anger issues about life in general became clear and I had fleeting thoughts that these issues could possibly cause his own death. I often asked myself why I was dating him, but with long distance relationships, it's easy to forget the bad.

“When I got home from this last visit, my mom asked some pointed questions and reminded me that my angels have always told me through my health when something was

wrong in my life, hence my dizziness when visiting him. Her questions helped me to see through his outward allure and I realized that I had not been happy for the last six months, so I broke up with him.

“I moved on and eventually met a great man for me. About fifteen years later, while expecting our fourth child, I still held anger about when I dated Michael and how he treated me, but more so, how I let him treat me. The anger was such that I would pray to be released, begged to be released, from thinking so bitterly about him knowing this was not good for my health. In the last trimester of my pregnancy, I woke from a spectacular dream about Michael, which is still so vivid in my mind over 25 years later. We were walking through a brightly lit corridor—it was pure white light and we were holding hands. We laughed at how seriously we took our roles on earth. We kept laughing about it and I remarked how healthy he looked. There was no anger and it felt like he was my best friend, a soul friend, and we had so much love for each other. It was as if, in life, we were actors in a movie where we played enemies, but after acting out a scene and the cameras stopped rolling, we were the best of friends. The feeling was rich and fabulous. When I woke up that Sunday morning, I sat up in bed and thought, ‘Oh, my gosh!’ as I breathed a deep breath. The huge Michael weight had been lifted from my shoulders, and I felt free! The anger and emotional shackles felt completely dissolved!

“This was when I remembered the last thing he said before I woke up, ‘I needed you to release me so I could move on.’ The thought hit me that Michael was dead, and at that instant, the old analog TV we had on the dresser, that had not been on, made a popping sound, which seemed to confirm my thoughts, but I had to find out for sure.

“My family thought my dream was symbolic that my *feelings* for him were dead, not actually, him, but I was sure that my dream was a visitation from Michael. After an obsessive six hours of Internet research, I found a partial obituary for him, but it did not give a cause of death. I spent days trying to track down people who used to know him in college. One friend contacted me and said Michael called him to tell him that he had cancer and was saying his goodbyes. All so strange, because I kept hearing about different causes of his death from other friends, and none of what I heard made sense to me. I eventually found out that he had died of AIDS. This last contact told me that he was gay and tried to hide it from his business world by dating me long distance, which made the perfect cover story.

“All these odd tidbits helped to make sense of how he had acted with me—the emotional neglect and coldness. I heard that he was trying to fit me into his concocted life, hiding his homosexuality, thinking it would hurt his political and business prospects.

“These new insights helped me to have clarity, compassion, and empathy for this man and his life’s personal struggles. I also realized that my motion sickness while visiting him, which kept us from being intimate, could have protected me from getting sick myself. My prayers were graciously answered. Such forgiveness that was bestowed through my dream.

**Terry S.****A Friend's Healing from A Mean Dad**

“My friend Mike, was the caregiver for his elderly father, Joe, and I was a frequent visitor at their condominium on the beach. When I was there, I spent time with Joe who was a sweet old guy who had a crush on me. He never missed a chance to flirt with me—he was so flirty and I just loved him. He was the cutest old man.

“I didn't know that much about Mike's relationship with his father and he never really talked much about his dad to me. Joe got sick and ended up in hospice and Mike called me and asked if I would come to see his dad at the facility to say goodbye. I did, and when I arrived, Mike, Mike's brother, and the brother's wife were there, and Joe was unconscious.

“When I walked in, I didn't recognize Joe. I hadn't seen him in a while and he had been sick and had lost a lot of weight. I walked to the side of the bed and took his hand. Mike was telling me how Joe wasn't dying and that he kept hanging on and hanging on, and they didn't understand why he was not leaving. Mike's brother was agreeing that they didn't understand why he was hanging on so long. It had been two months that he had been in this state.

“While we're having this conversation and I'm holding Joe's hand, I felt his presence. I felt Joe's consciousness like it was coming into me and I blurted out, ‘I'll go when I fucking feel like it!’

“Everybody was aghast by that, and I'm like, ‘Oh my God, where did that come from?’

“Mike said, ‘Was that my dad?’

“I said, ‘I think it was.’

“I had never seen that side of Joe, so that overwhelming feeling and urge to say that shocked me. Then I started saying other things that Joe was saying to me.

“Mostly his message was, ‘You guys need to leave me the hell alone. I'm doing what I need to do. I'll die when I fucking feel like it. Lay off. I'll go when I'm ready to go.’

“That was his whole attitude and Mike said that that sounded just like his dad. We sat in the room awhile longer and I didn't get any more messages. I went home and I think he lasted another week.

“I went to the funeral and I was half expecting to see him, but I did not see Joe. I didn't feel him either. Maybe a month or so later, Mike asked me if I wanted to come over and hang out and watch a movie. He was lonely since his dad passed and he invited me to stay if I wanted to. We were just friends so it wasn't anything romantic. He said I could stay in his dad's room, ‘okay, creepy,’ so that's what I did. After we

had dinner and watched movies, I went to bed in Joe's room and I felt a little uneasy. I didn't know if he was there, but I still felt uneasy and a little creepy. Then, I had this vision; I witnessed a past experience between Mike and Joe.

"In the living room, there was a recliner that Joe sat in—that was his chair. In this vision, I saw Joe sitting in the chair and Mike was bringing him food on a tray. He walked over to Joe and put it on a little table next to the chair, and Joe just started berating him. I don't remember what he said exactly, but it was the look on his face, and calling him stupid and other things. It was not a nice encounter and Mike was just quiet and didn't say anything back to his dad. He just stood there and took his dad's abuse, and then Mike just walked away.

"It seemed like the experience only lasted a few seconds, but I really had the sense of the anger Joe felt toward his son. I could feel Joe's feelings. The next morning, I wanted to bring this up to Mike, but I was really hesitant.

"My first reaction was, 'What if that wasn't what Joe was like?'

"I didn't want to say that to Mike with his dad just passing away, and I didn't want to upset him. So, we were having breakfast and I had this compelling urge to say it, to just to tell him.

"I fought the urge for a while, and finally I just said, 'Okay, look Mike, I had this experience in your dad's room last night and I need to tell you about it.'

"I explained what I had witnessed and his mouth was open as he's listening to me, and he said, "That actually happened on multiple occasions. I never told you about my dad and how he was with me and how we didn't have a good relationship. I took care of him because I had committed to doing that, but he was so mean to me. My father was such an angry man. But you nailed it. That was how he was with me."

"I was glad I told him.

"A few months later, I was at a MeetUp group and Mike was there also. He started to talk about his dad and that is when this woman thing came up. I started to get this feeling like it was coming up from my gut and what I wanted to say was stuck in my throat. I wanted to say it, but I didn't want to say it at the same time. I started to feel this 'knowing' about something and I wanted to spit it out but it wasn't nice, and would not make somebody happy, and I didn't want to say it. So, I'm choking down this thing about his father that I want to say so badly.

"Mike continues to talk about his dad and finally I blurted out, 'Mike, I'm going to tell you why your dad was so mean.'

"Your father hated women. When he was young, he was madly in love with this woman and they dated, but it wasn't a long-term relationship and he was head over heels in love with this woman. He was obsessed with her. She broke up with him and he was devastated; beyond belief devastated. It made him so angry that from then on, he set out to screw, literally and figuratively, screw every woman that he came into contact with. He cheated on your mom. He was angry with women and he used them

for sex and was basically a whore. It made him a very hateful human being. All because of what that one woman did to him.

“While I’m telling him this, I could *feel* Joe’s rage. I could *feel* what he felt toward that woman. I could *feel* the hurt that he experienced.

“I talked for maybe five minutes and then Mike said, ‘That would explain so many things. My dad, when he was married to my mother, used to take me as a young boy to meet women under the pretense of father-son time. He would meet up with a woman and he would make me wait out in the living room while he would have sex.’

“Mike also told me that when he was a teenager and started dating, his dad would start sleeping with his girlfriends. That’s how angry he was at women.

“So, Mike said, ‘Yep, that’s my dad—you nailed it.’

“I told him it all stemmed from this one woman whom he was head over heels in love with. I don’t know if she cheated on him, or what, but she ended the relationship and that ruined him completely.

“After I told him all of that at the MeetUp group, he was able to heal a lot from that. He always thought it was his fault. He felt he was the one that caused his dad to be so angry by something he did, or he wasn’t good enough, but he always thought it was about him.

“He said to me, ‘It’s not about me.’

“I said, ‘No, it isn’t about you. It’s all about what had happened to him.’

“I also felt at the same time I was telling him this that his dad felt really badly for putting him through it all, and I told him, ‘I’m not hearing I’m sorry, or tell him I’m sorry. I’m not hearing any of that, but what I *feel* right now is that your dad is conveying that he apologizes for putting you through that your entire life.

“All of this was very healing for Mike and I’m glad I spoke up on both occasions. He really needed to hear that, because throughout his whole life he didn’t understand why his dad hated him so much, and it wasn’t about him. That was my first experience with a person who was getting ready to pass, and had passed. The damages we do to people while we are alive, you know, we really need to fix that before we leave this planet because it just leaves such unfinished business if we don’t do that. It is important to clear things up, to clean up all your mess before you leave and for those you leave behind. I think it is really important to do that.

### **My Father’s Death**

“My second experience was after my father died. He was Hispanic and raised in a family of migrant farmers that worked the fields—he was not a very nice man. He hated it so much that when he was 17, he snuck into the Air Force. He was too young, but somehow, he got in and he became a career military man. Some of it was because of his generation, but he really didn’t know how to treat his kids, so he

treated us the same way he was raised, which was the kids were beaten and there was no love in the family.

“No one ever said, ‘I love you,’ so he was just carrying on the legacy of how he was raised. He didn’t have any interaction with us unless it was putting the belt to our backside or screaming at us. That was my relationship with my father. Never did I ever have a conversation with just he and I about anything—not the weather—nothing. He was very quiet, kept to himself, he disciplined the seven kids, and he was very angry.

“When he got sick, we assumed that he would be just fine, but he ended up not being fine. I went to see him when he was in the hospital and at that point, we didn’t know if he was going to live or die. He wasn’t eating and he was wasting away and basically starving himself to death. My gut told me his body instinctively did that because it was time for him to go. He didn’t feel hungry and he didn’t want to eat.

“I was there in the hospital with my mother and my siblings, and I was outside of the room talking to my siblings. We were talking about why Dad wasn’t eating and their whole thing was that we needed to get Dad to eat, and if we could get him to eat, he wouldn’t die. My point was he was ready to go and maybe we should leave him alone and let him do what naturally he needed to do. Well, they weren’t hearing any of it, so I gave up on that. We were switching off taking care of him and I volunteered to spend the night with him, which scared the crap out of me because I’ve never been alone with my dad before. He was very quiet and complacent, he did whatever someone told him to do except eat, he wouldn’t talk, and he would lie there and watch television or sleep, and he wouldn’t have a conversation with anyone. It was like babysitting a person who didn’t want to have any interaction with anyone.

“I decided that I was going to have a conversation with him because everyone was telling me I needed to talk to him to try to get him to eat. So, I decided I was just going to ask him what *he* wanted and I recorded that, and I still have that recording.

“I said, ‘Dad, everybody is worried because you’re not eating and they really want me to try and talk you into to eating. If you are ready to go, it is okay. Just tell us to leave you alone and just go. Is that what you want?’

“He said, ‘NO! That’s not what I want!’

“I told him to try to eat some breakfast when they bring it in the morning. I cried a little bit and told him we would certainly miss him and that this was his decision. I told him that if he were ready to go, then we would deal with that and he needed to do what he wanted to do. I was met with a big fat ‘NO’ and lots of grumbling.

“I thought, ‘Okay, as long as we’re clear.’

“I decided to fly home. A couple of months went by. He had gone home at one point, and he still wasn’t doing well, so he ended up back in the hospital. He had pneumonia and they put him on a respirator and put him in a coma. They were pumping him full of antibiotics hoping his lungs would clear up. Nothing was

working. On a Friday, my sister called me at work and said that she and my mom decided they were going to pull the plug, and I told her I thought that was a good decision. He was also diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma, but the doctor told him he would die of old age before the cancer killed him because the cancer was so slow growing. My family had been adamant that he needed to go on chemo and they wouldn't listen to why I thought that was such a bad idea. I argued that chemo is poison and kills the immune system and if it is so slow growing, just leave him alone.

"Again, I was overruled. He began chemo treatments after the first hospital stay, but then he got sick, and that's when he ended up in the hospital again.

"The doctor came in and said to my family, 'The chemo killed his immune system and that's why he got pneumonia, and the antibiotics are not working. His immune system is basically non-existent and there is nothing more we can do and you need to make a decision.'

"They decided to pull the plug.

"You have no idea how badly I wanted say, 'If you had listened to me before, we wouldn't be going through this right now.'

"But, no. During my lunch break I drove to a park. I'm sitting in the parking lot and I start talking to my dad.

"I said, 'Pop, it is time for you to go. You have lived a great life and you have had a lot of great experiences. You have a family that loves you, and it is time for you to go.'

"I heard his voice as if he were sitting right next to me and I heard him say, 'I know, Terr.'

"He hadn't called me Terr in 25 years, so when I heard that, I thought, 'Oh my God.'

"He knew it was time for him to go and he acknowledged that I was talking to him. It was huge for me to be acknowledged. That was huge for me. After a lifetime of never being acknowledged or seen by my father, he actually spoke to me, and the tone of his voice was a little on the sad side. Like he had given all that he could give and he knew it was time for him to go. I started bawling at that point because I knew it was a done deal. For me, that was our goodbye even though he didn't say goodbye.

"I had tickets to a conference in Orlando that I decided to go to. I wasn't overwhelmed with a lot of emotion or grief because my dad and I were not close. Seriously, we were not close. While driving to Orlando, I was wondering when I would get the phone call—I finally heard during dinner. I wasn't feeling much at that point, but Sunday morning, I felt like I needed to be home, so I left.

"My dad was a very devout Catholic and deeply involved with his church, and as a result, he raised us as Catholics. I still don't understand why, when he was sick in the hospital, a priest came to give him his last confession, and he refused. I do not

understand why he did that. I don't know if he felt like he didn't deserve it because of all the cheating that he did on my mother, the way he treated his kids, or what."

*At this point in my interview with Terry, her dad came through. It began...*

"He didn't want that; he didn't want a confession and he didn't want last rights—mostly the confession. He expressed that when he was in his final dying phase, when he was still able to make a decision about 'yes, I want this, or no, I don't want that,' he said that during that period of time, it was the most honest he had ever felt between him and himself. During that time, he didn't want God to see him like that. He did not want God to see him while he was being honest about himself.

"Even though he knew God would see him anyway, he didn't want God to see him in all his rawness, the totality of who he was. He didn't want God to see him right then, see him being vulnerable, naked, and raw. Whatever that meant to him, and why that did mean something to him by having God not see him at that point, was because he was on the threshold of dying and going to God.

"He further stated that he did not want to have anything to do with the confession at all. Having a priest there giving confession felt false because he was emotionally in the rawest state that he had ever felt, the most honest state, the most truthful state, and the most vulnerable state he had ever experienced in his physical life. By having a priest there, the priest would not understand that, would not feel that, and it would have been false. So, he was making his peace with himself and making his peace with his God."

### **My Dream of Dad**

"I did have a dream about him and it is the only time that I have seen him since he passed. We were sitting in what looked like a movie theatre and he was sitting to my left, and I don't remember if there were other people there. The movie was playing and the lights were on and we were just sitting there; then he took his arm and put it around my shoulder and I felt like he was saying that he was here and I love you. He never would have said that to me when he was alive. He did start to mellow out when he got older, though. The dream experience allowed me to see his "real" self and not the man I grew up with. It helped me to let go of some childhood trauma that I had been carrying around for 65 years and for that, I am grateful."

## **Susanna Massari**

### **Sugar, Buddy, and Betsy**

“In January 2023 I dreamt I walked outside to the covered porch where Tom and I have our morning coffee. It was dark but I could see through any structural parts of the house—they were there but not solid, and as I was looking at the fence between the neighbor’s house and ours, my sweet dog Betsy that I buried under the birdbath, whom I spoke of in the animal chapter, came bounding through the fence followed by my dog Buddy, another one of my fur babies. Then, Sugar, our dog who died six years ago, just appeared. They were in high spirits and happy to see me. When I saw Betsy come through the fence, I telepathically yelled in surprised, ‘Betsy!’ I was so happy to see her and I felt elated that the three of them came to visit together. The only one missing was Snickers, my cat. All four of my babies lived together and they all had long lives and I miss them deeply—it was a great visitation dream and one I will never forget.

### **My Shared Crossing Experience**

It was my first vigil with hospice at the end of 2016. When I entered the room at the nursing home, there was another volunteer there with the daughter-in-law of an elderly woman named Julia. I had the pleasure of visiting Julia just days before her transition and found her to be a loving woman who seemed genuinely grateful for the visit. She had Alzheimer’s and made undistinguishable sounds while I sat with her. As we held hands, she repeatedly kissed my hand and when I left, she blew me kisses until I was out of sight, and I blew kisses in return.

The other volunteer sat quietly in the corner allowing me to take the lead knowing it was my first vigil. The daughter-in-law, Sarah, stood on one side of the bed and I on the other. We talked for a long time about Julia’s life and I found out that she was a giving person and had lived a trying but meaningful life. She had one devoted son who could not emotionally be with his dying mother, had worked low-end paying jobs that ruined her knees from standing for long hours, had become deaf over the years and had learned to read lips because hearing aids were too expensive for her. Looking at her, she was frail, her body thin and contorted, and her hair was extremely thin.

About four hours in, Julia began to have more apnea cycles than breathing and we knew she was close. Sarah had shown me a video of Julia from two days before where she was sitting up in bed, fully alert and coherent talking and reminiscing about the past, which is how her son wanted to remember her. For several long periods of apnea, Sarah and I would stare at Julia wondering if each time would be the last. After an unmeasurable period, Julia took her last breath. As she did, she simultaneously took me with her as she “crossed.” We were immediately in this enormous valley filled with shin-high yellow flowers of every variety and we were surrounded by

smaller mountains with a large mountain in our line of sight, which reminded me of Mount Rainier. The mountain was snow-capped and I could see the lush and compact forest of trees. Every color in this beautiful place was deep, vibrant, and embodied and radiated vitality. Julia had reverted to the age of 12 when she was at her peak of aliveness—long beautiful hair, a healthy body, and had no responsibilities. I could feel but not see her father in the background waiting for her. As she ran through the flowers feeling great peace, love, and freedom, she did not step on or harm one flower; it was as if they made way for her but there was no path.

This experience was not only extraordinary, it deeply affected me that she would be so kind toward me by sharing her journey with me. Words cannot express how moved and honored I was and continue to be by her act of love.

## THOUGHTS

*“Loyalty is a wonderful thing. But with undeserved loyalty, you are only giving yourself away—you are giving your power away. Recognize, authorize, and pledge your loyalty to the inner Self first. Encourage your Self, be forthright with your Self, and be all things to your Self.”*

—Susanna Massari

The above quote came from automatic writing as I was working on this page. There will be some people who will not understand the cavernous meaning of the quote and will misinterpret it as hubris, vain, or an offense to monotheism. Not at all. It is valiant to choose the wilderness path of our inner Self to accept accountability, take stock in who we are, face our fears, and choose to become a person who is consciousness-minded. In life, we all choose multiple paths—some for a short time, some longer. With each path we take, it is so we can better understand our identity. So, it all begins with *you*, because no matter what your religious or spiritual views and affiliations are, no matter what your political views are, no matter what gender you are or what pronoun you identify with, no matter what race you are, what your cultural origins, history, and traditions are, we are all having a human experience—and we are all deserving of being counted, seen, and treated in a humanizing way. People are angry and in pain right now, and there is something we can do about it.

Every day, there are many ways that each of us can foster our human connection that we all need as a species—even animals are social, form communities, and help each other. And make no bones about it, we all need (in a healthy way) community and relationships. The trick is to not inflict our pain onto others with hate, name-calling, and diatribe that dehumanizes an individual or a group. The only true and authentic threshold to cross is the one that leads us to our inner world and landscape, to genuinely *become* and *be* who we truly are, as scary as that may be for some. This is the most direct and authentic path that will lead us to a change in consciousness and spiritual transformation. You cannot let go and leave what no longer serves you until you can stand naked and alone with yourself and take full responsibility for everything that you are, every choice you have ever made, and how you cradle meaning and belonging. If not, you will be a captive of the past, and whatever patterns and pain emerge from that captivity will always be your pimp.

I may feel the weight of gravity and the little aches and pains that come with it, but my excitement for life has nothing to do with my aging body. I think of myself as being formed by my experiences, not made by them—a person not willing to collude with how society thinks I should be, how I should act, or how I should think. I still have the rest of my life to live just as anyone else on this planet and I will continue to be disobedient and an activist in my own ways. As people I know and love are rapidly leaving this world, I am not immune to the fact that one day I will not be here. “Stuff” means less to me, and as my view becomes more minimalist, I am also aware that my *stuff* will be sold, donated, or thrown away when I

die. Only I know the seasoned aliveness, achievements, and connections of my life, and that is what I will take with me—stuff is just stuff.

I will also leave you with these final thoughts. Whatever your dirty, messy, traumatic, and limiting ills of your existence are, take care of it now, because we all die, live on, and that kind of *stuff* may not be the baggage you want to take with you—you will have to face yourself eventually and it will be either here or in the hereafter. Your choice. You are consciousness in the flesh—everything *is* consciousness and *of* consciousness and your life is meaningful. You are significant, worthy, and loved, even when important people in your life have told you otherwise and have not provided safety for you. Believe it or not, you have ancestors, guides, helpers, and your version of angels who are aware of your struggles and joys who support you. You are not alone. If you can be open to the possibility that our consciousness does indeed survive physical death, then maybe the idea of communicating with the deceased isn't that bizarre or forbidden, and if you can make that leap, then reincarnation is not far behind and may not seem to be that weird either.

Pillar your children. All young people deserve a new story and new ground to walk on as they make their way through life. Teach them about meaning, connection, belonging, and more importantly, how to belong to one's Self as opposed to fitting into society's demands of same-ism. Raise them with acceptance, affection, warmth, and tenderness. Instill in them the vision of spirit work and being consciousness-minded stewards of the planet. They are the ones who will lead us out of the spiritual destitution and crises that surround us today. You can lead, show, and teach them to see themselves as being so exceptional and worthy they defy definition. Do that for yourself and do that for the children. Allow children to show you who they are and be there for them when their talents and gifts emerge—they will need a gentle hand to help them understand that every talent and gift will take time and practice to develop into what it is to be.

Within the nucleus of my son and grandchildren's memories and inner stirrings, they will always be able to find my thumbprint and thread as they conjure their life's tapestry of who they are. They are loved deeply, unconditionally accepted, and will always know belonging. They, too, are in my tapestry of my life and their thumbprint is significant; I would not *be* or *know* who I am without them. Tom is my rock. We are a rudder, mirror, and motivator for each other through acceptance, love, banter, and we are infinitely "married" in ways we have yet to understand.

Well, fellow travelers, here we are. This is life. It matters who we are to one another so remember to meet the moment, dream big, savor the ride, and arise from slumber while the window is open.

*"It may have been in pieces, but I gave you the best of me."*

— Jim Morrison —

## **The House by the Side of the Road**

*Sam Walter Foss—1858—1911*

There are hermit souls that live withdrawn  
In the place of their self-content;  
There are souls like stars, that dwell apart,  
In a fellowless firmament;  
There are pioneer souls that blaze the paths  
Where highways never ran—  
But let me live by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

Let me live in a house by the side of the road  
Where the race of men go by—  
The men who are good and the men who are bad,  
As good and as bad as I.  
I would not sit in the scorner's seat  
Nor hurl the cynic's ban—  
Let me live in a house by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

I see from my house by the side of the road  
By the side of the highway of life,  
The men who press with the ardor of hope,  
The men who are faint with the strife,  
But I turn not away from their smiles and tears,  
Both parts of an infinite plan—  
Let me live in a house by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

I know there are brook-gladdened meadows ahead,  
And mountains of wearisome height;  
That the road passes on through the long afternoon  
And stretches away to the night.  
And still I rejoice when the travelers rejoice  
And weep with the strangers that moan,  
Nor live in my house by the side of the road  
Like a man who dwells alone.

Let me live in my house by the side of the road,  
Where the race of men go by—  
They are good, they are bad, they are weak, they are strong,  
Wise, foolish - so am I.  
Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat,  
Or hurl the cynic's ban?  
Let me live in my house by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

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*Every effort has been made to accurately cite my sources. If there are errors, it has been unintentional.*