

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 64 August 2010

So much happening for us, such fertile upheaval and opportunity...

Our home in Canada (White Rock, 45 minutes south of Vancouver) now up for sale; our moving to Ashland, Oregon, once that sale has happened; Diane's new all-in-English chant CD almost done; our vastly improved online work site (www.MastersCenter.net) almost ready for its relaunching; and my new book, *Spiritual Bypassing: When Spirituality Disconnects Us from What Really Matters*, finally out in print!

SPIRITUAL BYPASSING

**(Published by North Atlantic Books
and distributed by Random House)**

can be purchased at Amazon at a 33% discount. Go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/24vaqfz>

A Psychotherapy For The 21st Century

We need — really need — a psychotherapeutic approach for the 21st Century that is not only inclusive enough to hold the incredible complexity and fears of our times, and deep enough to guide us into and through our darkness and woundedness, but that also is as efficient as it is effective. Just about everyone could use at least a few sessions of such psychotherapy — which is far, far more than just “talk” therapy — especially those who are convinced that they don't need it.

The Crucible of Awakening

Sensing what lies ahead and taking fitting action is of course of paramount importance, but so too is clearly knowing — and knowing more than just intellectually — from where we are coming, to the point of not being bound by it. Without a lucid sense of — and intimacy with — our conditioning (whatever we did to adapt to or survive our early influences), we will tend to identify with it, letting it make “our” choices.

High quality psychotherapy teaches us, firsthand, to know our conditioning so well that it cannot masquerade as us or run the show.

Psychotherapeutic work can be — and ought to be — far more effective, far more efficient, far more creative. It involves coaching but is much more than coaching; it involves consulting but is much more than consulting; it involves healing but is much more than healing. It has so much potential to catalyze and support truly life-giving changes — yet so often falls far short of this, often to the point of normalizing such dysfunction.

Whatever its approach — cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic-analytic, humanistic-existential, transpersonal, or eclectic — psychotherapeutic practice often tends to settle into the shallows after a honeymoon with potential depth, sometimes then cutting off the work prematurely or, perhaps even worse, keeping psychotherapist and client together too long in a therapeutically rationalized codependence, roughly paralleling in many cases the very dysfunction that first made some sort of psychotherapy seem necessary.

If a psychotherapeutic approach stays put, simply reinforcing and operating from within its already-established methodologies — be they conventional or unconventional — it will of course still in some cases do some good, but will miss out on doing a deeper good, namely that of playing a foundational role in the denumbing, awakening, healing, and integration (both personal and collective) needed if we are to move through this century’s enormous challenges with any substantial success.

This is not about psychotherapy making some minor changes or embracing more alternative approaches (which themselves often suffer from overattachment to or inordinate fondness for their methodology), but about opening itself up enough — with regard to both depth and width — to become a truly integrative undertaking, as efficiently effective as it is compassionately present, working intuitively and practically with our physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions.

This constitutes a tremendous shift. Yes, it is already happening here and there, but has not yet been significantly embraced by the vast majority of psychotherapists. “Integrative Psychotherapy” is not a new concept, but its actual practice has not yet taken root in very many places — and its deep practice is far from common.

Such practice, at once dynamically intuitive and radically inclusive, wastes no time in getting to the heart of the matter. It does not merely collect data and connect some dots and supply some analysis and insights, but uses whatever is being presented, however obliquely or ephemerally, to help create access to what truly matters, in the process of which the crucial connections, insights, and fitting follow-through clearly emerge. The times we live in require something that generates genuine healing and breakthrough effectively and quickly (without rushing, however!) — and this takes us through rather than above or around our pain, at a pace optimally suited for us.

Intuitive integrative psychotherapy can do this, with as keen an eye for detail as for context, taking into full account what is going on with us not only personally but also collectively, teaching not adjustment to a diseased culture (which most of us would agree we already have), but navigational skills for both our internal and external realities. Not only does such psychotherapy help wake us up to who we are and what we are doing, but also gets us really functioning, no longer investing our energy and attention in outdated or life-negating patterns of behavior.

These are scary and increasingly unstable times, more and more easily undercutting our capacity to comfort or distract ourselves. Many of us

are feeling an amplifying not just of personal fear, but also of collective fear. Psychotherapy that has become genuinely integrative does not drug or mask this fearfulness, but skillfully guides us into and through it, until its energies are no longer committed to fear's programs, but are simply available for more life-giving purposes. No lengthy string of sessions is needed for this; the journey begins before the first session is over, with us already starting to really understand, right to our marrow, that most fear is just excitement in drag.

The storm we dread is already here level upon level, gathering undeniable momentum; what's needed are not higher decks or thicker walls or more engrossing distractions, but navigational savvy — which we don't acquire to a significant degree without having put in some quality time in psychospiritual bootcamp, developing intimacy with our own darkness and dysfunction, an intimacy that provides us not only with an inside look at the darkness and dysfunction all around us, but also with the capacity to deal with it sanely and skillfully.

Such self-exploration can, given the darkness it must enter and travel through, very easily go awry — detouring, for example, into narcissism or spiritualized dissociation — but doesn't have to, especially when it is carried out under the able guidance of deep-diving, truly integrative psychotherapy, in which all of our dimensions are taken into fitting account, being allowed to coexist and co-evolve in fruitful tandem.

Unfortunately, most psychotherapy is not equipped to do this. Again, not only must psychotherapeutic work become much more effective, but also much more efficient — and this is no more possible for most schools of psychotherapy than is significant change for our schooling system (mistakenly termed our “educational” system). With few exceptions, we simply don't have time for long-term psychotherapy. Seeing a psychotherapist once a week for years is usually a case of codependence in professional drag, militating against getting the needed work truly done. Not seeing or not admitting that we don't have much time is itself a sign of dysfunction and unresolved wounding, the proverbial head-in-the-sand.

The psychotherapy we now need does not make our head-in-the-sand situation more comfortable or tolerable, but instead wakes us up to both our current situation and our conditioning, empowering us to take fitting action.

Psychotherapy that does not get to the heart of the matter in the very first session with a client (or group) is not the kind of psychotherapy we now need. It's not that psychotherapeutic work has to be rushed, but that there's a way to quite quickly identify and work with what's not working, a way that is more than what is traditionally thought of as psychotherapy, much more. It is far more intuitive, far more body-including, far more emotionally literate, and is naturally integrative, working with the totality of each client even as it uncovers, illuminates, and coherently connects relevant details.

About intuition: It doesn't help that our culture tends to devalue or marginalize it, especially when comparing it to rationality. We easily juxtapose "intuition" with superstition and fringe-thinking and psychic pretensions, even as we under certain conditions grant considerable weight to our "gut" feelings and hunches. But intuition is not fringy or fuzzy or a lesser way of knowing. Intuition is what we sense — to take but one mode of intuitiveness — when we suddenly find ourselves in a difficult situation or crisis, and have no time to consider what to do. I'm not talking about knee-jerk reactivity or mere impulsivity, but about a sense of direct knowingness that is neither cognitively or emotionally based (even though it may peripherally include and be colored by cognitive and/or emotional material).

Intuition is there for all of us, but we may be so compellingly established elsewhere — in, for example, excessive abstraction or emotionality — that we don't really register the voice of our intuition. A mind jammed with thoughts has little or no room for intuitive messages to get the attention they need. If we're filled with anxiety, messages of fear will block out or cloud over messages of intuition — and may even masquerade as them.

We need to clear space so as to be able to readily hear our intuition, and we need to learn to trust it. Skillful psychotherapists hear their intuition loud and clear, because they cultivate enough quiet space internally to pick up intuitive messages, hints, directives very quickly — it's second nature to them.

(Some would call intuition instinctive knowing, but intuition is more than instinct, carrying instinct's imprint in much the same way that a symphony orchestra carries the imprint (or echo) of the first musical instruments. Instincts are drives, innate and automatic, taking over with compelling authority when necessity demands it, whereas intuitions, however instinctually informed, are readings, inviting not our submission but our attunement to and alignment with their message. So instead of being driven, we are guided. Intuition is the result of instinct learning to speak, to represent reality through fitting messages, verbally, pictorially, and otherwise. Instinct is a very fast takeover; intuition is a very fast download.)

“Integrative” means inclusive in a radically comprehensive manner. All of our dimensions (physical, mental, emotional, energetic, social, spiritual) are taken into account, and brought together — integrated — in a fully functioning whole that requires no diminishing or overriding of individual differences. So “integrative” is more than eclecticism, more than a slapped-together reunion of disparate elements, more than a merely intellectual framing of the various qualities that constitute us personally and culturally. “Integrative” leaves nothing out, even as it keeps a discerning eye on whatever enters or would enter its domain.

The mess we're in has arisen because of our massive longtime collective dysfunction — ecological, economic, political, relational, religious — having reached its tipping point with minimal interference along the way. The Titanic has hit the iceberg, and is going down, even as we scramble to normalize things, hoping for the best; but there's no going back. We're in crunch time, and all too many of us still don't think it's all that bad, seducing ourselves with hope (nostalgia for the future).

The fact that just about every crisis is an opportunity in disguise doesn't register very deeply when we're in denial that the ship is going down. Doing some psychotherapy so that we can occupy an upper deck or get more comfortable with our furniture just makes things worse, as does engaging in spiritual practices that float us above what's going on. What's needed, in part, is a psychotherapy that potently opens our eyes — and, soon thereafter, our entire being — to what's happening, while at the same time empowering us to make the best possible use out of the situation. Inner action to outer action, catalyzed by fitting interaction.

Before us — and also behind us — is a bloody amalgam of unresolved wounds, mishandled pain, and crippled leaders. So, so much pain. So much hell. And so much blindness. Just look at America — a crippled giant still enduring civil (actually, not so civil) wars, trying to “help” other nations when it can't even help itself. The suffering is overwhelming, and the solutions to it mostly underwhelming and, more often than not, simply making things worse. Designing better umbrellas for acid rain...

Various programs and strategies, mostly governmental, have arisen to deal with such suffering outwardly, and other program and strategies, psychotherapeutic, pharmaceutical, and otherwise, have arisen to deal with it inwardly. And the results? Mostly just more dysfunction, more numbness, more turning away from what really matters. What's actually going on simply doesn't get much air time; the case of mistaken identity most of us are suffering rarely gets addressed, let alone even seen. The pain we're in is mostly medicated away, risen above, avoided, muted, turned away from, as if it has nothing to teach us, and conventional psychotherapy is complicit in this. And so is plenty of nonconventional psychotherapy, as when it makes a spiritual virtue out of bypassing pain.

The partial healing that most psychotherapy at best catalyzes doesn't help much with our cultural dilemmas; we're then just not far enough along to make much of a difference. We've come too far to be caterpillars, but not nearly far enough to really fly; from our chrysalis we still tend

to operate and think in the old ways, even though we're starting to know better.

So what to do? Regression does not work, especially when it slips to a level — fundamentalism — where we are sure we're on track, clinging to our certainty so tightly that we don't know we're clinging. And getting ahead of ourselves — engaging in premature transcendence, for example — also doesn't work, leaving us just as ineffective to bring about needed change as if we were to go to the opposite extreme, into the “only way” tunnel vision of fundamentalism. What we can do is recognize where we are — in bigtime transition — and uncover and work in real depth with whatever is slowing or obstructing our maturation.

It's time for psychotherapy, wherever possible, to expand its chambers and to make a leap into a more fitting way of working, a passage into a truly integrative approach to healing and awakening. The times demand it. We are, to put it mildly, at one hell of an edge, and we need to have access to the kind of psychological/spiritual work that helps us make the very best use of our time at the edge. Psychological bandaids won't do; nor will just recontextualizing our thoughts; nor will mere emotional discharge; nor will spiritual bypassing. Something deeper and more inclusive is needed, something simultaneously vital and conscious and integrative.

Psychotherapy is not just for those who are deeply troubled or severely impaired. It's for all of us — that is, if it is sufficiently deep and inclusive and unconstrained by preset methodologies.

This of course is a very big “if” — clouded by the considerable failings of psychotherapy in general. There is an enormous range of skill among psychotherapists, along with an great variety of psychotherapies, few of which are integratively informed. But only an intuitively-based integrative psychotherapy has enough reach and depth to work for all of us. If psychotherapy isn't integrative, it's too limited; and if it isn't strongly intuitive, it's too fixated, lacking the presence and flow and creativity needed.

So we need a psychotherapeutic approach for the 21st Century that is sufficiently inclusive to hold the incredible complexity and fears of our times, and sufficiently deep to guide us into and through our darkness and woundedness. Such an approach serves both as a crucible and sanctuary for the needed work, transporting us from fragmentation to wholeness, from frozen yesterday to fluidly alive now, from being at war internally to making compassionate space for all that we are.

Healing means to make whole. Imagine a psychotherapy which serves the journey to wholeness with optimal effectiveness and efficiency, liberating us not only to be who and what we really are, but also to act decisively from that perspective for the good of one and all. It would be an understatement to say that we need to have such work become far more common.

BREAKTHROUGH

Deep Healing & Integrative Awakening

August 21-22: Canmore, Alberta

September 11-12: Boulder, Colorado

October 16-17: Mexico

Tuition: US\$550 (\$595 for Mexico). \$200 deposit required.

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Transformational Weekend for Couples

October 9-10: Mexico

Tuition: US\$990 per couple. \$350 deposit required.

Starting November 11th!

MASTERS INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY PRACTICUM

An opportunity to directly learn from a master psychotherapist and spiritual teacher (1) unique, exceptionally effective psychotherapeutic, spiritual, and bodywork/energywork skills; and (2) how to creatively and effectively integrate these in counseling and coaching work.

2010-11 Apprenticeship/Training Program

The purpose of this training is to deepen the capacity of participants to effectively counsel others through a dynamic, intuitively structured approach that integrates body, mind, emotion, energetics, and spirit.

To this end, the training will blend exceptionally deep work on oneself and equally deep work with others, in personal, social, and spiritual contexts. Healing will be the primary intention and activity. Approaches that are taught and practised will be held, as much as possible, in a perspective that transcends them.

WE WILL ONLY BE TAKING TWELVE PARTICIPANTS.

NOTE: The Practicum is intended for those who want to learn and practice a deeply intuitive, integral, and bodywork-including approach to psychotherapy, and who at the same time also want to participate with kindred spirits in a year of exceptionally deep personal (and interpersonal and transpersonal) work, during which they will learn skills that will serve them in every area of their life.

Graduates of previous practicums have not only found themselves at home with new skills (sufficient enough to begin working as an integral counselor), but have also done work of such depth — and not just a few times, but *many* times — during the practicum that they invariably emerge more grounded, open, intuitive, and confident about both themselves and their ability to effectively guide others.

Much of the depth and quality of the work done has to do with being with a group of individuals who are all deeply committed to their own healing and awakening. In such a setting, there's not only more than enough safety and trust, but also a rare intimacy, generated by sharing such deep work both as a participant and as a counselor-to-be.

LOCATION & STRUCTURE:

The Practicum will take place over 5 four-day modules in Boulder and Ashland. Each module will include individual and group work, plus facilitation by participants of each other's work (with fitting feedback and guidance from Robert and Diane).

After the training concludes, participants who have attended it in its entirety will receive a diploma indicating that they have completed a one-year training in Masters Integral Psychotherapy.

PREREQUISITE: Previous work with Robert and Diane.

TUITION: US\$7000. Nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 required. Lodging and meals will be extra. Contact info@robertmasters.com to arrange payment.

SCHEDULE:

November 11-14, January 6-9, March 3-6, May 5-9, July 7-11

The Crucible of Awakening

For more information regarding groups and trainings with Robert and Diane, contact info@RobertMasters.com.

To join the Masters Center for Transformation (Robert and Diane's online work), go to: www.masterscenter.net (available by mid to late August).

Payments for most groups and trainings (plus Robert's books and Diane's CD) can also be made online at our Store page. Simply go to www.RobertMasters.com and click on STORE.

For other payment arrangements, contact dianebardwell@gmail.com.

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To get Robert's daily posts on Twitter, go to www.twitter.com and join, and then go to twitter.com/RobertMasters to "follow" Robert.

2010 Schedule

August 21-22: Breakthrough, Alberta

September 11-12: Breakthrough, Boulder

September 26-Oct. 2: Bodywork Practicum, Gabriola Island, BC

October 9-10: Couples group, Mexico

October 16-17: Breakthrough, Mexico