

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 20 December 2006

COMMITMENT IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

Women want it; men don't. Women use their wiles to get it; men use theirs to avoid it. For women, it spells security; for men, the loss of freedom. At least this is how it usually is looked upon culturally, whether in midday kitchen chats, barrooms, or the routines of stand-up comedians. And just what is this it?

Commitment.

In its early stages, commitment is just a weightier version of a New Year's Resolution — a promise or deal often made under questionable conditions (inner, outer, or both) that are rooted, however indirectly, in some sort of coercion or pressure, laced with an appeal to what is supposedly higher or more mature in us. Of course, it usually fails, for the same reasons that most New Year's Resolutions don't make it past the end of January: Our heart is not really in it, and there are opposing forces in us that were not sufficiently taken into account when we made, or forced ourselves to make, our "commitment."

Mature commitment, however, is a very different thing, rooted not in the enthusiasm of ill-considered shoulds or similar hype, but in an integral, well-seasoned knowingness.

In immature relationships, commitment usually signals a gain for the woman, and a loss for the man. She weaves her web; he gets sucked into it. She casts her line; he gets hooked. And so on. This way of thinking runs deep in our culture, framing women as having power over men; for example, men all too

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often automatically blame women for whatever erotic interest arises in them toward women, as so succinctly illustrated by declarations like: “She put a spell on me” or “She makes me hard.”

The supposed helplessness of men — whether suave, drooling, or just plain geeky — in the presence of feminine allure has potentially dangerous implications, especially when it contrasts with their investment in maintaining self-images free of helplessness or powerlessness. In short, if she “brings out the beast in me,” I may then feel justified in “preying upon” or “pouncing upon” her. After all, was it not she who got that “animality” all stirred up in the first place?

The fact that being committed has more than one meaning is especially relevant here. In some cases, “being committed” means being taken, often against our will, to a psychiatric institution, because of our psychoemotional instability, delusional leanings, and so on. And do not most immature men apply much the same take — that “being committed” means we’re being taken in or are even “crazy” — to being committed to a relationship?

At the me-centered stage of relationship, commitment is seen only for what it can do for us. It fits our conditioning. We may think that we are committing to another, but in fact our apparent commitment to that other is permitted only because it gives us something that we crave, like a sense of security or belonging or alignment with familial/cultural expectations. So we come first, with our relationship existing mostly only to feed and support us. However selfless or self-sacrificing commitment may seem to be here, it remains at essence a selfish undertaking, an ego-governed contract.

What’s primarily running the relationship is the conditioning of both partners, the mutual enmeshing of which may initially feel satisfying — in that “we” seem to fit with the other — but sooner or later, as the darker elements of both partners’ conditioning emerge more fully, the relationship gets stuck, survival strategies take the field, and things generally degenerate. As high as the divorce rate is, it would probably be even higher if all those who are putting up with deadened, erosive, or abusive relationships were to step forward and honor their deeper needs.

At the we-centered stage of relationship, commitment is seen not only for what it can do for us, but also — and often primarily — for what it can do

for our relationship. Each of us remains important, but the overlap between us, the intersubjective space that we cocreate and co-occupy, is given central importance. That space, that arena of connectedness, is still largely made up of our shared conditioning, but our commitment to keeping our relationship together is much stronger. We have moved from being two cults of one enmeshed with each other to more or less a cult of two (and here, I don't mean "cult" in the automatically pejorative, sensationalistic manner of the mainstream media — which are themselves often quite cultic in their exclusion of anything that seriously challenges them — but rather only a self-enclosed entity all but impermeable to outside feedback and inside dissension).

At the being-centered stage of relationship, commitment to the relationship both deepens the relationship and energetically expands it beyond the two, emanating out to touch many, and not necessarily deliberately. Such relationship feels good to be around; it is naturally inspiring. The couple at this stage may not be working in a field that brings them into contact with many others, but the very presence and quality of their bond nevertheless radiates out, benefitting those who are within its range.

The me-centered relationship does not serve others; the we-centered codependent can under very limited conditions; and the being-centered cannot help but serve others — it's an utterly natural byproduct of their intimacy. Theirs is the freedom of having no choice. They're not trying to serve others, but simply cannot do otherwise.

Real commitment in a relationship cannot be forced.

If it is, it is not commitment, but just a kind of submission. Real commitment is an organic process, unfolding and ripening as we get closer and closer to our beloved other — and to our own core of being. Our moment-to-moment encounters and exchanges ready the soil; the seeds of commitment are already there, needing only suitable ground, care, and timing. There's no point in planting seeds in frozen or unprepared ground, as those in more immature stages of relatedness are prone to doing, in their enthused blending with another.

When we mature, we both take our time and don't waste any time, making haste slowly. We may experience an enormous amount in a short time of being together, but we ensure that we allow proper digestion of what we've

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experienced together. No matter how close we feel to the other in the early stages of meeting, we don't get lost in futurizing, finding all we need in being deeply and consistently present with the other. Simply being with the other like this allows a natural commitment to emerge, a commitment that fits us as we are, rather than fitting us to what we could or might hope to be.

Don't rush commitment, and don't put it off. Ask yourself how ready you truly are for it, and to what degree, if any, your wanting it is based on your conditioning (both familial and cultural). Don't make a goal out of commitment, remembering that we are always already committed to something, including our avoidance of commitment.

To commit is to take a stand that needs to be taken, and to keep taking it, while not submitting to idiot integrity (or staying with a stand when circumstances make it clear that something else is called for, such as when our partner remains consistently abusive toward us and we stay because of our original commitment to stay). Integrity and commitment are closely linked. Without integrity, there is no real commitment, but only promises and reassurances. Without integrity, our word means little, and if what we say cannot be consistently trusted, how can there be any depth of intimacy?

The fact that a commitment can be broken or replaced by a more central commitment (e.g., the commitment not to steal may be overridden by the commitment to feed one's children) does not mean that commitment ought to be taken lightly. If we are not ready to take a stand, we'd do best to wait until we are ready, so that our stand is stably grounded in us.

Commitment is an open-eyed, ongoing yes to a well-considered choice. It is more than a promise, unpolluted by maybe's and loopholes. When we are truly committed to another, we can be counted upon to keep our word: We do what we say we're going to do, and when we cannot, we clearly and openly and currently communicate that, without dishonoring our bond with our partner. Commitment to another includes many other commitments, such as being present no matter what's going on.

Real commitment is more than meeting another halfway. There's a Zeno paradox about crossing a room by going half the distance, and then half that distance, *ad infinitum* — which means we never completely cross the room. Going more than halfway cuts through this; if we and our intimate other are

both doing this, we not only engage in more and more overlap — more deeply mutual intersubjectivity — but *do* get to the other side, so that we can include and benefit from the entire space between us.

In any commitment, we are making a choice not to make a bunch of other choices; that is, we are embracing a particular set of limitations. This will seem entrapping to the immature, but not to the mature.

For example, being confined to one woman may appear very narrowing to an immature man, once his honeymoon with her is over; with little novelty left (other than that rubbed into being through pornographic proclivity), and with little capacity to take things deeper, he almost inevitably loses interest in her (although ironically he was never really that interested in *her*).

By contrast, being confined to one partner is far from narrowing to a mature man; he finds, and keeps finding, his partner interesting, and as mysterious as everything else. His being limited to her is his freedom, for through his deep-diving intimacy with her, he touches far more than just another human being. Some might say that he has sacrificed breadth for depth, and they are right, but only partially right.

Initially, there's little breadth but considerable depth; later on, as more depth is accessed, and he starts to experience archetypal Femininity through his partner, there's more breadth, a wider embrace of the feminine; and still later on, as a dimensionless depth is accessed, there's much more breadth, much more of an encompassing sense of the Other, until that one is none other than him, at which point relationship is but sacred communion.

Commitment makes relational intimacy possible, and relational intimacy deepens commitment, until there is no difference between commitment to our own healing and awakening, and commitment to our intimate relationship.

RADICAL OPENING

THREE DAYS OF GROUPWORK DEVOTED TO DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

with

Robert Masters & Diane Bardwell

March 30 - April 1, 2007, at Brew Creek Lodge, BC

This 3-day residential intensive is for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation.

It is especially suited for those whose longing to be truly free is stronger than their longing to continue distracting themselves from their suffering.

The group will be small and intimate, being limited to 14 participants only, so that there is enough time for everyone to receive in-depth attention.

The group will involve therapy (in its focus on personal history), and will also involve much more than therapy, given its integral nature. Deep catharsis, psychodrama, and spiritual breakthroughs will flow in and out of each other during the group, in spontaneously apt ways. All emotions are welcome.

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, conscious movement, dreamwork, and group practices.

The atmosphere will be one of deep trust; the group will be a safe place to let go of being safe, providing a crucible not only for personal healing, but also for awakening from all of our entrapping dreams.

Participants will learn to become more intimate with all that they are — dark

and light, high and low, shallow and deep, neurotic and transcendent, dying and undying.

The structuring of the group will not be preset, but instead will arise in accordance with group and individual needs. Each participant will have an opportunity to work, in relevant detail and in sufficient depth, with his or her particular issues, and not necessarily just once in the group.

LOCATION: Brew Creek Lodge (15 minutes south of Whistler, BC), a magnificent, secluded resort featuring rustic luxury set amidst lush forest. Buffet breakfasts start the day; gourmet lunches and dinners (three courses) follow group sessions. A river flows directly below the group meeting room; previous participants have especially enjoyed braving the river's cool depths after spending some time in the hot tub right beside the river.

FEE: Tuition: \$795 plus GST (or US\$760). Lodging & all meals: \$250 (includes all taxes). A deposit of \$200.00 is required, payable to Robert Masters at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

To register, contact info@robertmasters.com.

RADICAL OPENING

TWO DAYS OF GROUPWORK DEVOTED TO DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

with

Robert Masters & Diane Bardwell

February 18th & 19th, 2007, in Edmonton

Tuition: \$695 plus GST. A deposit of \$200.00 is required, payable to Robert Masters at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5. **Only three spaces left. To register, contact info@robertmasters.com.**

Reclaiming Your True Voice

A ONE-DAY GROUP FOR WOMEN

February 10th, 2007, in White Rock, BC

with Robert Masters and Diane Bardwell

Many women do not have full access to their true voice, and as a result have not sufficiently represented themselves, attracting situations and relationships that have only reinforced their inability to truly speak for themselves.

This group is about taking back power that originally was given away in order to survive difficult conditions, and taking it back not just cognitively, but physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Doing so involves expressing, *fully* expressing, what has been held back in the name of fear, insecurity, and social pressures.

Part of what is needed is a reclamation of anger (plus a clear differentiation between anger and aggression), so that it becomes a resource, a guardian of boundaries, a potent catalyst for needed change.

This group'll involve deep letting go, through a creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, and spiritual deepening practices (led by Robert), and it will also involve toning, chanting, singing, and healing through sound (led by Diane). The release-work facilitated by Robert will let loose *your* voice, and the sound-work guided by Diane will wing, fill out, and celebrate *your* voice.

TUITION: US\$275 or CDN\$295 plus GST. A \$100 deposit is required, payable to Robert Masters, at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

LOGISTICS: 10am to 6pm. Limited to 10 participants only.

Diane (Robert's wife), is an intuitive energy healer and Reiki master, using sound to deepen healing and well-being. She is a songwriter and professional singer, with a gift for accessing the Sacred through sound and song. See www.dianebardwell.com.

**For more information, or to register,
contact info@robertmasters.com**

Letting Go

A DAY OF DEEP HEALING

**January 13th, 2007, in White Rock, BC
with Robert Masters & Diane Bardwell**

Real happiness takes root when our longing to be truly free is stronger — or permitted to be more central — than our longing to be distracted from our pain. In entering our pain, we lessen our suffering.

In this group we'll face, move toward, and learn to make wise use of our pain and difficulties. The group will involve therapy (in its focus on personal history), and it will also involve much more than therapy, given its integral nature and intention. Deep catharsis, psychodrama, and spiritual breakthroughs will flow in and out of each other during the group, in spontaneously apt ways. All emotions are welcome.

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seeming trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. Each participant will have an opportunity to work, in relevant detail and in sufficient depth, with his or her particular issues, and not necessarily just once in the group.

TUITION: US\$275 or CDN\$295 plus GST. \$100 deposit required, payable to Robert Masters, at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

LOGISTICS: 10am to 6pm. Limited to 10 participants only.

**For more information or to register,
contact info@robertmasters.com**

Embodying the Deep Masculine

A ONE-DAY GROUP FOR MEN

with **Robert Masters**

January 27th, 2007, in White Rock, BC

Embodying the Deep Masculine is about doing what's necessary to reclaim our balls without armoring or numbing ourselves, becoming warriors who, finding a source of strength in their vulnerability, can take needed stands with both heart and full-blooded power.

To enter our true manhood, we need to stop turning away from the wounded boy in us, both protecting him and giving him what he needs to heal. We also need to become more emotionally literate, not turning our anger into aggression, nor our shame into guilt, nor our hurt into an excuse to shut down or get heady.

As we assume our real power, we must at the same time step more fully into our heart; otherwise, we won't be capable of real intimacy. No more hiding out in cognitive strongholds, no more avoidance of our raw strength, no more bypassing of our wounds, no more avoidance of the Deep Feminine. In short, birthing the man.

This group is about working through whatever's in the way of entering and living our full manhood, through a dynamic, spontaneously structured mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, dyadic encounters, dream exploration, and spiritual deepening practices.

TUITION & LOGISTICS: US\$275 or CDN\$295 plus GST. A \$100 deposit is required, payable to Robert Masters, at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5. Limited to 10 men only.

**For more information, or to register,
contact info@robertmasters.com**

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Weekend Intensive For Couples

January 20th & 21st, 2007

with Robert Masters & Diane Bardwell

Intimate relationship has immense transformational possibility, especially when we approach its difficulties as opportunities instead of as problems. Opportunities for what? To know ourselves more deeply, to love and live more fully, to become intimate with *all* that we are — in short, to be freed from our suffering.

In the liberating bondage of committed intimacy, we enter the One through the two, finding the Beloved in both depth and surface, so that the very details of daily life become a potent awakening path. Freedom through intimacy.

This group is for couples who want a more conscious, loving, and liberating relationship with each other, and are ready to cut through whatever's in the way.

Even if you already have a good relationship, consider coming, and taking your relationship from good to great to what it *really* can be.

Individual work will be given as much emphasis as couples work, using a spontaneously structured approach that creatively mixes psychotherapy, bodywork, dream exploration, spiritual practices, and dyadic deepenings.

TUITION & LOGISTICS: 10am to 6pm both days. Limited to 6 couples only (there is room for 2 more couples). US\$1200 or CDN\$1250 plus GST per couple. \$300 deposit required, payable to Robert Masters, at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

***For more information or to register, contact
info@RobertMasters.com***

Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

2007 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

with **Robert Augustus Masters, Ph.D.**

in **White Rock, BC**

An opportunity to learn (1) unique and exceptionally effective psychotherapeutic, spiritual, and bodywork skills; and (2) how to combine these in counselling work.

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, and spirit.

To this end, the training will blend 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.

You'll learn to not rely upon nor necessarily impose structure, but rather to let it naturally arise from your relationship and interaction with those you're counselling. Working this way weans us from the security — the eventually deadening security — of operating from behind a preset structure or methodology, leaving us in a position that requires an appropriately creative response from us. Such creativity keeps us fresh, open, and alert.

Throughout the training we will be working with body, mind, emotion, and spirit. Love, integrity, and presence will be the cornerstones of our practice.

The training will take place over 6 three-day weekends, beginning February 2nd, 2007. Tuition is CDN\$5400 plus GST. A deposit of \$750 is required. The training is limited to 10 participants. Previous work with Robert required.

The training is a prerequisite for further trainings with Robert, including the annual **Bodywork-in-Psychotherapy Practicum modules.**

Applications for the 2007 Practicum are now being taken.

Practicum Schedule

Feb. 2-4, April 6-8, June 1-3, July 27-29, Oct. 5-7, and Dec. 7-9, 2007

***For more information or to apply, contact
info@RobertMasters.com***

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**To see Robert's blog, click on the Blog button
at www.RobertMasters.com**

Robert's 2007 Work Schedule

January 5-7	2006/2007 Practicum: Whistler, BC
January 13	Letting Go: White Rock, BC
January 20-21	Freedom Through Intimacy: White Rock, BC
January 27	Embodying the Deep Masculine: White Rock, BC
February 2-4	2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC
February 10	Reclaiming Your True Voice: White Rock, BC
February 17-18	Radical Opening, Edmonton, Alberta
February 22-25	Advanced Integral Psychotherapy Practicum: Whistler, BC
March 2-4	2006/2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC

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March 10	Letting Go: White Rock, BC
March 17	Embodying the Deep Masculine: White Rock, BC
Mar. 30-Apr. 1	Radical Opening: Whistler, BC
April 6-8	2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC
April 14	Reclaiming Your True Voice: White Rock, BC
April 21-22	Freedom Through Intimacy: White Rock, BC
May 4-6	2006/2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC
May 12	Letting Go: White Rock, BC
May 19-20	Embodying the Deep Masculine (two days): Location TBA
May 31-June 3	Bodywork-in-Psychotherapy Practicum: Whistler, BC
June 8-11	2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC
June 16	Reclaiming Your True Voice: White Rock, BC
June 30-July 1	Freedom Through Intimacy: White Rock, BC
July 7	Letting Go: White Rock, BC
July 14	Embodying the Deep Masculine: White Rock, BC
July 27-29	2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC
August 18	Reclaiming Your True Voice: White Rock, BC
August 25	Letting Go: White Rock, BC
September 8-9	Freedom Through Intimacy: White Rock, BC
September 15	Embodying the Deep Masculine: White Rock, BC
September 29	Reclaiming Your True Voice: White Rock, BC
October 5-7	2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC
October 11-14	Bodywork-in-Psychotherapy Practicum: Whistler, BC
October 20	Letting Go: White Rock, BC
November 3	Embodying the Deep Masculine: White Rock, BC
November 10	Reclaiming Your True Voice: White Rock, BC
November 17-18	Freedom Through Intimacy: White Rock, BC
Nov. 30-Dec. 2	Radical Opening: Whistler, BC
December 7-9	2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC

(For more information, visit www.RobertMasters.com)