

# THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

**Issue 68 December 2010**

## Contents

PHANTOM LIMBIC PAIN: Emotional Healing and Breakthrough	2
Robert & Ken Wilber in Dialogue About Spiritual Bypassing	8
Masters Center for Transformation's Premium Memberships Reduced From \$50 to \$20	9
Beyond Awakening Teleseries: Nov. 4th Dialogue With Terry Patten interviewing Robert & Diane	10
Upcoming Groups	12
2011 Training/Apprenticeship Program	14

# Phantom Limbic Pain

## EMOTIONAL HEALING & BREAKTHROUGH

Imagine this:

You lost your left arm from the elbow down two years ago, and you often feel as if that missing section of limb is actually still here, especially when “it” hurts — and that sometimes “it” really hurts, no matter how much you try to tell yourself that it’s just *phantom limb pain*.

So you don’t have a left hand, but you nonetheless frequently feel the fingers of that hand curling in with painfully gripping intensity. No matter how much you tell yourself that your left arm is gone from the elbow down, something in you is convinced otherwise, something that is impervious not only to even the most compelling arguments, but also to further amputations of the stump. In short, one hell of a situation...

Now imagine this:

You didn’t lose your left arm (or any other part of your anatomy), but four years ago your seven year-old daughter, to whom you were very close, was raped and murdered. You grieved heavily, repeatedly slammed by maddening shock, understandably having a very hard time dealing with daily concerns for the first year or so after your daughter’s death.

So now you function reasonably well, but still are far “from over” what happened, despite the well-meaning advice of friends who keep telling you it’s time to move on, to let go of the past, that what happened was long ago, etcetera after well-meaning etcetera. All kinds of things remind you of your daughter, and when you are thus reminded — or haunted — you often feel yourself sinking into a very dark sorrow, a despair that

closes in on you with crushing ease. Medication helps some, but you're sick of the side effects, and you still feel too uncomfortable to go to psychotherapy. But you know that you have to do something different, because this *phantom limbic pain* (the limbic system of the brain deals with emotion) is slowly killing you...

Telling others that the pain of their unresolved wounds is all in the past (or is just something that they are creating) is akin to telling those with phantom limb pain that such pain is not really there (or is just something that they are creating) — after all, if the limb is gone, how can they feel pain “there” now? But they *do* feel pain “there” now, sometimes to the point of suicide.

Their gone limb is a phantom, but not its neurological correlates! The brain of such people is still mapping (or representing — *re-presenting*) that gone-limb area, still treating it as though it is very much present, thereby generating a corresponding pain in much the same way that in our sleep-dreams our foot hurts when we kick a stone (a dream foot, yes, and a dream stone, too, but not necessarily a dream pain!).

If we feel pain in our nonexistent arm, we may understand that such pain is being created by our brain and not by our departed arm, but our felt sense of it is that our phantom limb is producing the pain — after all, that's where we are feeling it, are we not? And in the same vein, if we feel emotional pain over what happened long ago (as in the example given earlier), we may understand that such pain is not actually being created by that long-gone event, but we nonetheless still strongly associate our pain with that particular time (including when we are not resurrecting it through our thinking processes).

We might say that we have been “storing” the feelings and imagery of this long-past event in our memory — or that it is wired into us — but where exactly is this thing (or activity, for it may be more verb than noun) we call memory? And is its storage like that of literal containment, or is it more like that of a largely nonmaterial field of presence? The here-

## The Crucible of Awakening

and-now presence of certain aspects of our past is not necessarily just a ghostly hangover from our history, and may in fact be running our life far more than we want to admit. The presence of the past...

Our unresolved wounds don't merely hang out in our cells — our issues are not just in our tissues — but exist as uniquely personalized energetic fields that not only pervade and alter our cells (including biochemically), but that can easily *outlive* them. Such psychoneurological occupying forces broadcast and establish themselves through generation after generation of cells, keeping our past very much present.

It is well known that unhealed emotional wounds and traumas are not just embedded in our minds, but also in our bodies — how great it would be if all we had to do was think differently or take on a new set of beliefs to heal our old hurts, but it just isn't that easy, despite various assertions, "spiritual" and otherwise, to the contrary.

We don't so much need "better" beliefs as we need to change how we relate *to* our beliefs (along with doing fittingly deep somatic, emotional, and psychological work). Just because what is most real is beyond belief does not mean that it is not accessible! If we truly want the treasure, we're going to have to face the dragon, realizing that our very encounter with it (that is, journeying to the heart of our pain) prepares us to make as wise as possible use of the treasure.

Just as we can get trapped in negative thoughts, we can also get trapped in positive thoughts, blinding ourselves — and likely also emotionally numbing ourselves — to the more painful or troubling dimensions of Life, confusing dissociation from them with actual transcendence of them.

Dramatizing and otherwise indulging in our pain — turning it into suffering — is obviously a far-from-helpful strategy, but so too is disconnecting from, fleeing, and otherwise avoiding our pain. How ironic it is that when we treat our pain as though it is but a phantom,

we ourselves become more phantom-like in our trying to get away from it! (*Up, up, and away* is the mantra of unhealthy transcendence. And the mantra for healthy transcendence? *Going beyond all, excluding none.*)

We need to develop the capacity to both stand apart from and relate to our thinking process, whatever its contents may be, not letting ourselves get absorbed in it to the point of forgetting that it is simply thinking. This nonconceptual holding of our capacity to conceptualize can be very liberating; thinking still arises, of course, but we don't get lost in it (including thinking about thinking), but keep it in relatively lucid focus for more than just a moment here and there.

If we don't maintain such clarity at least to some degree, we will find ourselves feeling *phantom thought pain* — the thought is gone, but its psychoemotional tagalong energies (the emotional charges that often accompany certain thoughts) may have taken partial root in us, which in most cases simply revives the original thought or something akin to or supportive of it. (And how interesting it is that though thoughts are basically just electronic apparitions, they so often are, with our unwitting cooperation, resistant to giving up the ghost.)

What's also needed is the capacity to deeply and openly *feel*, to feel into, to feel with, to feel for, to feel as, to feel in all these ways — and without getting lost or overly absorbed in feeling. Our thoughts and beliefs can be very seductive — and so too can our emotions, especially when we automatically take them as living truth, not bothering to distinguish reactive emotionality from its nonreactive counterparts. It's so easy — and commonplace — to grant legitimacy to doing something by saying that we feel it, as if its having some emotional heft or backing automatically makes it more real.

The visceral quality of emotions makes them seem very unphantomlike, but sometimes they are not much more than melodramatic ghosts with resoundingly impactful footsteps, as when they arise in reaction to something that is perceived as a threat but that in fact is not at all. So

just as there is phantom limb pain, there is *phantom limbic pain* (again, emotions are primarily processed via the limbic system of the brain).

Those with phantom limb pain have in recent years found some relief through innovative work with mirrors — viewing and moving their functioning limb (their right arm, for example) as though it were their missing limb (their left arm, for example), so that their brain maps the movements of their real arm as if it were the missing one. This means that immobilizations in the missing limb — which were there before the loss of the limb (from being in a cast, for example) — can be unjammed, loosened up, de-paralyzed, *rewired*.

So by literally seeing the missing limb as the non-missing one — through an ingenious placing of mirrors — the pain-inducing contractedness or frozenness in the missing limb (or, more precisely, in the part of the brain that is still mapping it) starts to loosen and expand, thereby significantly lessening phantom limb pain.

In similar fashion, we can bring our current capacity to function into our areas of dysfunction — areas haunted by unresolved trauma and pain — and generate needed movement there, using a combination of viewpoints (“mirrors”) and psychotherapeutic savvy (intuitive bodywork, emotional release, fitting breathing patterns, and so on, in conjunction with therapeutic direction) to generate a way of being that allows us to shift and give liberating voice to what has previously been stuck or frozen in us. For example, we may have desperately wanted to get away from a brutally abusive parent when we were little, but didn’t dare do so, for fear of getting even more hurt; so we kept our running — and perhaps also fighting — urges intact, under wraps, immobilized (and very likely didn’t connect our later times of actual running and fighting with our original sense of entrapment).

But imagine being in an environment in which we feel sufficiently safe to reenter that “old” pain, and are able to mobilize our legs — and our entire body — in the very way we once needed to but couldn’t, while

simultaneously recalling, emotionally and otherwise, the originating events of our pain. Then we are no longer in a paralytic nightmare or numb trance, but are clearly awakening, kicking free the covers, kicking through the abuse, kick-starting our whole being into full-out expression, the very expression that arose in us long ago, but had had to be suppressed.

This is much more than a temper tantrum or mere emotional discharge! It is a literal reentry into — even a gatecrashing of — our preserved personal history, with enough awareness and mobilizing capacity to de-fossilize and de-constrict that time, bringing it into a present that unknots and unravels it, freeing it energies for something far more Life-giving.

Thus is phantom limbic pain allowed to give up the ghost. Echoes may remain of such pain, but it no longer is in a position to run the show or masquerade as us. Just as phantom limb pain needs not amputation but freeing movement, so too does phantom limbic pain need the same sort of movement, movement into and *through* the emotionally-knotted context of then, movement that unshackles us, transporting us into the healing we need.

Our original woundedness, however phantom-like or hidden, remains present until we decisively bring our wakefully embodied presence into it, enlivening and liberating and giving full voice to what was previously frozen and mute. Through such psychoemotional ghostbusting, the knots and immobilizations of yesterday become but fluidly alive now, serving rather than obstructing us, leaving us anchored in our heartland.

## ***Avoidance In Spiritual Drag...***

**“Every spiritual practitioner would do well to study *Spiritual Bypassing* again and again.** So would every one of us who presume to teach any spirituality at all. Thankfully, it’s as much compassionate antidote as prophetic critique. May it be put to grateful use as long as the illness it treats continues to ravage human bodies, souls, and lives.”

— Saniel Bonder, founder, Waking Down in Mutuality, and author of *Healing the Spirit/Matter Split* and *Waking Down*

“This is a wonderfully significant and important book, and is highly recommended. Its contents are truly mandatory for this day and age.”

— Ken Wilber, author of *The Integral Vision*

### **ROBERT & KEN WILBER**

### **TALK ABOUT SPIRITUAL BYPASSING**

My discussion with Ken Wilber about my book *Spiritual Bypassing* is finally available!

It is in three parts, the first of which (What Is Spiritual Bypassing?) is free. The second part (Compassion, Judgment, and Transcendence) is available to Premium members of Integral Life, as is the third part (Pain, Anger, and Spiritual Bullying). Please note that the first month subscribing to Integral Life is free.

**<http://integrallife.com/node/8598>**

# **MASTERS CENTER FOR TRANSFORMATION**

**<http://www.MastersCenter.net>**

## **PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP PRICE REDUCED**

In order to make our Premium content and Community website more accessible to everyone, we have decided to reduce the costs of our Premium monthly memberships from \$49.97 to only \$19.97! This will remove the financial obstacle for many, allowing many more who sincerely want to participate at a deeper level in our intuitive integral way of working to join our online community and have access to *all* of its offerings.

Because of this change, we have removed the Basic Membership Level and will have only two membership levels going forward: Free and Premium.

## **IMPROVED FORUMS & NEW COMMENT FEATURE**

We have also simplified the community forums so that they are more concise and easier to navigate. And in addition to the improved forums, we have added a *Comment* feature below Premium Library articles, audio, and videos, so that you can now easily post your comments and questions directly on the library page itself. You may, of course, also still discuss matters in more depth in the forums.

## **NEW REWARDS POINTS SYSTEM**

When you log in to [www.MastersCenter.net](http://www.MastersCenter.net), you will notice the “My Points” section underneath your Membership Information. These “Points” constitute an incentive system that rewards you for regularly visiting the site, participating in polls, posting comments, and contributing to the community forums, giving you points for specific actions.

Your accumulated Rewards Points can be used to access special content on this site. Some pages and content on the site will only be accessible once a certain point level has been reached.

## The Crucible of Awakening

Once you've reached a particular point level is reached, you will gain access to additional writings, audio meditations, video trainings, and live session discounts.

To learn more about the new Rewards Points system, please visit:

**<http://www.masterscenter.net/reward-points-system>**

### **NEW TEACHING VIDEOS**

We are happy to announce that we are now releasing new live teaching videos to Premium members that we recorded recently in Boulder, Colorado. They are posted in the Masters Center for Transformation Library.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **BEYOND AWAKENING**

### **A FREE TELESERIES**

### **ON THE FUTURE OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

**Thursday November 4th series host Terry Patten interviewed Diane and me.**

Here's the intro I wrote for our dialogue with Terry:

### **TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INTIMACY**

#### **Relationship As a Crucible/Sanctuary**

#### **For Transforming Human Consciousness & Culture**

For a very long time, intimate relationship has been viewed and lived, with few exceptions, as an alternative — and not necessarily an equivalent alternative — to spiritual life. Now there is not only a significant opportunity for something profoundly liberating to happen in and

through intimate relationship, but also a greatly increasing need for it. So intimate relationship has, at its leading edge, become less a prelude to spiritual opening and awakening, and more a crucible/sanctuary for it, modeling a conscious, deeply embodied “we”-space into which human culture needs to transition.

In truly intimate relationship, we learn to find freedom not from limitation, but through limitation. And we also learn to become intimate with all that we are, high and low, dark and light. So no matter how unpleasant or uncomfortable a quality in us may be, we choose to relate to it rather than from it.

Such intimacy cuts through the us-versus-them mentality and projections that plague our culture, generating a sense of “we” that beneficially impacts not only us, but also those around us...

Relationship then becomes not something to partially participate in, but rather something to fully embody and live, especially as we realize, right to our core, that everything — *everything!* — exists through relationship. In the liberating bondage and radical transparency of real intimacy, everything that arises can serve our healing and awakening, both personally and collectively.

The life-giving impact of such intimacy should not be underestimated — we are doing this not just for ourselves, but for all of us, shifting from “me” to a dynamically inclusive “us” without any homogenizing of our differences...

In this dialogue, we’ll explore the spiritual and cultural relevance of relational intimacy, the stages of relationship, and the need to equally honor the personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal.

Go to **<http://beyondawakeningseries.com>**, and sign up there for the series (it’s free), and then go to:

**<http://beyondawakeningseries.com/blog/general/archive/>  
and scroll down to November 4th to download our dialogue**

# Upcoming Groups

## **BREAKTHROUGH**

### **Deep Healing & Awakening in Ashland, OR**

December 4th

Tuition: \$195. 8 participants only.

Private session available in Ashland from Nov. 26 to Dec. 12.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **BREAKTHROUGH**

### **Deep Healing & Awakening in White Rock, BC**

December 18th

Tuition: \$250 plus HST. 7 participants only.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INTIMACY**

### **A Weekend in Boulder, CO for Couples**

January 15th & 16th

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 more intimate not only with our partner, but also with all that we are.

This group is intended for committed couples who truly want a more conscious, loving, and liberating relationship with each other, and are ready to work through whatever's in the way. 6 couples only.

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 emphasis as well as couples work, using a spontaneously structured approach that mixes psychotherapy, bodywork, dream exploration, spiritual practices, and partner exercises. Very deep, exceptionally effective work.

Tuition: \$950 per couple. 6 couples only

\*\*\*\*\*

## **PRIVATE SESSIONS/CONSULTATIONS**

Individual and couple in-person sessions/consultations with us (Diane and I work together as a team in almost every session) are opportunities to *very* efficiently and *very* effectively get to the heart of – and to work through – whatever issues or concerns you may have.

Sessions combine in-depth conversation with a dynamically intuitive blend of cutting-edge psychotherapy, Gestalt, bodywork, emotional release, spiritual deepening practices, and coaching, in an atmosphere of care and safety.

Depth is invited, but not forced. Breakthroughs, however common, are worked with in a manner that allows proper digestion and assimilation of whatever energies and insights have arisen. Also, post-session practices/homework are usually given, to help support and ground the work done.

What is needed usually becomes clear in the first session. The work that follows catalyzes and makes room for deep healing and integration. Though this is not always easy, it remains a powerfully illuminating and fulfilling process, making more than possible the living of a deeper life, a life of wholeness and integrity.

***December 1st-12th in Ashland, Oregon***  
***December 15th-31st in White Rock, BC***  
***January 6th-15th in Boulder, Colorado***

# **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.*

## **2011 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, OR. 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](mailto:info@robertmasters.com) to arrange payment.

**SCHEDULE:**

January 6-9, March 3-6, May 5-8, July 7-10, September 8-11

## **FACEBOOK FAN PAGE**

I now have a very active Facebook Fan page, on which I not only am posting most days, but am also responding to posts. To join, go to:

**<http://bit.ly/aICf9v>**

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information regarding groups and trainings with Robert and Diane, contact [info@RobertMasters.com](mailto:info@RobertMasters.com).

To check out or join the Masters Center for Transformation, go to:

<http://www.masterscenter.net>

To join Robert's Facebook fan page, go to: <http://bit.ly/aICf9v>

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](http://www.RobertMasters.com) and click on STORE.

For other payment arrangements, contact [dianeardwell@gmail.com](mailto:dianeardwell@gmail.com).

To view previous newsletters, click on the NEWSLETTER button at [www.RobertMasters.com](http://www.RobertMasters.com).

To get Robert's posts on Twitter, go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and join, and then go to [twitter.com/RobertMasters](http://twitter.com/RobertMasters) to "follow" Robert.

## **2010/2011 Schedule**

December 4: Breakthrough Group, Ashland, OR

December 18: Breakthrough Group, White Rock, BC

January 6-9: Practicum, Boulder, CO

January 15-16: Couples Group, Boulder, CO