

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 34 February 2008

Welcome to Issue 34 of my newsletter, featuring two essays (*Attracting Our Beloved* and *Perfectionism & The Inner Critic*) and a message/request regarding Stephen and Ondrea Levine, plus descriptions of upcoming groups. For most of our groups away from home — which is most of our groups! — my wife Diane and I will be doing an event the night before the group, combining a short talk, plenty of Q&A, and some music with Diane.

This will happen in Seattle (February 22nd), Boston (February 29th), Phoenix (March 13th), and Boulder (April 25th). In London, we'll be doing evening events April 8th, 9th, and 10th, following our April 4th-6th group there. Each event will be mostly quite spontaneous, with the questions and energies of our audience being our primary guide.

There are two radio interviews with me now up on my homepage:

RADICAL INTIMACY AND THE SEARCH FOR A MORE INTEGRAL WHOLENESS

(interviewed by Stuart Davis for Integral Naked, April 2006)

To hear this, you'll need to subscribe to Integral Naked; the fee of \$10 per month gives you access to many features, including interviews with a great variety of very interesting people. When you're ready to listen to the interview, I suggest that you click either on MP3 Stream or MP3 Download.

<http://in.integralinstitute.org/talk.aspx?id=637>

AUTHENTIC FEMININITY & MASCULINITY, AND THE JOURNEY TOWARD AWAKENED RELATIONSHIP

(interviewed by Robin Hoffman for her Authentic Femininity Show, December 2007, as heard on Real Coaching Radio Network)

http://www.RobertMasters.com/AUDIO/ROBERT-authentic_femininity-R20.mp3

ATTRACTING OUR BELOVED

So many yearn to be in a genuinely intimate relationship — a relationship that consistently enlivens, deepens, and awakens us — and wonder why they continue to find themselves alone or in relationships that don't really work for them (but which they keep *hoping* will).

So many are having a relationship not with the other — be that other their partner or their hoped-for-beloved — but instead with the other's *potential*. (Such a romancing of tomorrow, such nostalgia for the future, is the essence of hope.)

Some think that all that they have to do to attract their beloved is to wish and intend for that one to somehow show up, but wishing and intending is not enough, no matter how ardently we may believe in our power to manifest what we want.

So how to attract our beloved?

Let's begin by looking at how *not* to attract our beloved.

First of all, let go of thinking that all you have to do is *think* about attracting that one. You may have heard that this is all you need to do, and that if you don't get the results you want, it is simply because you're not putting out the right thoughts in the right way. You may have subscribed to New Age notions about the power of thought to create your reality, especially in the context of the so-called Law of Attraction. Such notions tend to both overemphasize and oversimplify the impact that your thoughts can have, as if by just changing the content and direction of your thoughts you can have whatever you want.

At the same time, though, it is important to recognize the power and impact that our thoughts *do* have, especially when we amplify them, however unwittingly, with our attention. Perhaps what matters most

here is not what we are thinking, but what we are *doing* with what we are thinking: Are we identified with our thoughts? Are we allowing them to recruit emotional energy? Are we trying to change them? Are we listening to them uncritically? Are we letting ourselves be controlled by them? Are we aware of them, and if so, to what degree? Are we relating *from* them, or *to* them? And when we are using our thoughts to help manifest something we want, how aware are we of which us — or which level or place in us — is wanting that particular something?

Although directed thought is not all let's-manifest-it wishful thinking, we need to be aware of what is actually motivating it. Drug addicts' directed thought may be very clear and single-pointed when their craving for a fix reaches a certain intensity — there may be a very precise and unwavering focus on the desired object, so that they attract whatever (and whomever) helps fulfill their craving.

Similarly, much of what “we” want is animated and directed not by us, but by our conditioning. We may, for example, seek a partner so as to try to fulfill unmet or badly handled needs from our childhood, and we may romanticize this to such a degree (and perhaps also *eroticize* it) that we block ourselves from seeing what is *really* going on. At such times, our conditioning — which we are in all likelihood allowing to refer to itself as us — is running the show, not us.

So it's useful here to shift the focus from where we are going (or wanting to go) to *where we are coming from*. And we cannot simply think or intend our way through this; something deeper is needed, namely a journey into and through our conditioning and its roots.

In short, we don't attract our beloved through thought or intention alone.

And nor do we attract our beloved through manipulation, however tastefully dressed or spiritualized that might be. Presenting ourselves as other than we are means that the other is going to be having a

relationship not with us, but with our *self-presentation*. This may “work” for a bit, but sooner or later it wears thin, as the other sees through us, or we simply lose the energy to keep up the façade.

Putting energy into being other than ourselves is ultimately exhausting; the grief which it covers or obscures — the grief over assuming that we, as we are, are not enough — eventually must surface, including through the cracks that inevitably will appear in our self-presentation.

Of course, presenting ourselves as we are is more than just a matter of being an open book; we need to take into account others’ openness to really seeing us, as well as their capacity to do so. The entire book does not have to be revealed right away; if you give too much, others won’t be able to digest and integrate it.

Recently I saw the title of a book that went something like: *How to Seduce Your Beloved*. If you have to seduce that one, what is implied is that he or she wouldn’t otherwise be drawn to you. The power — basically power *over* — expressed through the act of seduction (which is little more than eroticized aggression) is simply a confession of an underlying sense of powerlessness; rather than get seductive or otherwise exploitively inclined regarding what we want from another, we would do better to face, explore, and work through the very powerlessness for which our seductiveness is a “solution”.

We also won’t attract our beloved if we are looking for someone to make us feel whole or better. What we will then attract is someone who has an investment in making us feel whole or better, an investment which probably has its roots in their not being loved (or feeling loved) unless they were busy making someone else, like one of their parents, feel good. Only when we liberate relationship (and everything else!) from the task of making us feel better, will we *truly* feel better.

Something more than positive thinking, intentionality, manipulation, and hope is needed — namely to face, really face, and work through

whatever it is in us that's in the way of attracting our beloved. This means not only facing our doubts and self-defeating beliefs, but also facing and working through the originating forces that underlie such doubts and beliefs.

That is, to attract our beloved, we cannot just sit back and think a certain way or do some affirmations or hold a certain intention (which is not to say that such activities are without value) — rather, we have to do some deeper work on ourselves, work that includes and integrates our physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions, so that we'll be sufficiently ready for our beloved. *Ripe*.

Full alignment with what we long for — a relationship that actually works, not later, but *now* — is necessary, and this requires that we not only clearly see our conditioning, but that we also cease letting it run us or refer to itself as us.

And we don't do this by somehow getting rid of our conditioning (such eradication being but a fantasy) or rising above it (which is just a form of dissociation), but by relating *to* it instead of *from* it.

Once we have done enough work to be able to see our conditioning for what it is, and to take full responsibility for it when it arises — waking up in the midst of our reactivity, and so on — then we can begin generating potent prayers/invitations for our beloved to come into our life. We are then ready, and we know it, right to our core. Here, thought, intentionality, raw feeling, intuition, and faith all come together to produce a fitting prayer that aligns us with our beloved.

Such prayer may look like wishful thinking, but is not. It may look like it's aimed into the future, but it's not. It may look like it's constructed of hope, but it's not. It is firmly and unshakably rooted in the now, leaving us not leaning into later, but rather deeply settled into the present moment.

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Such prayer is a kind of active meditation, conscious and empowering, a clear statement of opening and trust and patience. It is not at all the sort of prayer that is just narcissism or greed or desperation in spiritual garb, asking for stuff (as if from a cosmic catalog or shopping channel that requires only our wishes as payment for its goodies).

Let's now take an in-depth look at prayer and its levels, before continuing with the type of prayer best suited for attracting our beloved...

Yes, prayer is desire, but it is the final frontier of desire.

Although prayer may include thought, especially spiritually-oriented thought, it is not primarily an act of mind. It is much more an act of heart. *A divine personal.*

The desire highlighted and presented through mature prayer isn't greedy or desperate for fulfillment, being rooted not in the futurizing of hope, but rather in the here-and-now openness of faith (where hope promises, faith gives; where hope dreams, faith awakens).

Prayer is sacred conversation, even when it is absolutely silent.

In its beginning stages, prayer mostly asks. As it ripens, prayer may still ask, but its primary characteristic is deep, devotional receptivity. So prayer initially has a lot to say, but later on it mostly listens.

(After all, if our beloved-to-be is attempting to reach us, why not listen more closely and deeply?)

Ultimately, prayer *becomes* what it is requesting, through bringing us into such deep intimacy with What-Really-Matters that we're no longer significantly separated from the object of our prayer.

Much depends on *who* — or *what* — we assume is hearing our prayers. Let us call the ear we are trying to reach God. If we take God to be

a kind of super-parent or cosmic Santa Claus, our prayers will be like those of a child asking for favors. But if we move closer to the other end of the spectrum and take God to be Absolute Nondual Being, our prayers will mostly be communications between wakefulness and Wakefulness.

To whatever degree our attention may be object-oriented (that is, focused on thoughts, feelings, sensations, things, others) — as opposed to being oriented to its source — it still exists in the domain of awareness. When prayer consciously arises and takes shape in the continuum or field — the timeless, infinite field — of awareness, it is *already* in contact with its fruition. (And this our beloved-to-be can arguably feel, through the innate interconnectivity and inseparability of all that is, however difficult that might be to explain rationally.)

That is, what prayer seeks is recognized, at least to some degree, to be *already* found. There is actually no real gap between seeking and sought in bare awareness — it is only in time, only in the manifesting of prayer's requests, that there appears to be a such a gap.

Prayer helps to bridge the unmanifest and the manifest by creating fertile conditions for bringing potentialities to life. Prayer provides templates, sacred and otherwise, for intentionality.

As it matures, prayer's context shifts from petitioning to *gratitude*. Then prayer does not end with a thank you, but *is* a thank you.

It is in the spirit of this that our prayer for our beloved will be most effective. The more we let go of having to have something happen here, the more likely it is to happen. No desperation, no rush, just making haste slowly...

Look at what you have attracted thus far, and find out what it was in you that was the driving force behind such attraction.

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See what childhood programming may still be operative in you; see what you saw in the other; see where your charge or excitement (whether positive or negative) was, and still is, in relationship; see which needs you eroticized, and still eroticize; see through the intoxicating dramatics of romance; and *look inside your looking* until your inclination to allow your woundedness to attract your beloved fades to nothing.

When doing your prayer, be very specific and precise when describing the qualities you are looking for. Be thorough. Do the entire list each time you pray (saying each part mindfully and with full feeling), and precede doing so with enough meditation to get you centered, and follow it with enough meditation to settle and reground you.

Be thorough; if you want someone who's taller than you, put that out. If you want someone who is finished with previous relationships, put that out. If you want someone who is committed to being present, put that out. Put it *all* out.

Allow your prayer to expand, deepen, and awaken you. Let your voice, however soft, emanate from your core as much as possible. Let your whole body participate. Be bare-hearted.

Do not ask for anything which you are not prepared to give.

Open yourself to being with someone who is *already* capable of meeting you fully. Don't settle for less.

And remember to remember that your beloved is trying to find *you*. Let yourself sense your beloved's prayers to find and be with you. Let your longing for your beloved be your primary guide. Separate that longing from other longings, like wanting to feel special or needed.

And remember: You deserve to be *fully* met in relationship. You are worthy of it. Your beloved awaits you. Fill the gap between you and your beloved with love, presence, and integrity.

Feel that gap, that open space, feel your way into it, inhabit it. Feel the already-happening reality of you and your beloved, and make yourself at home in it as much as possible.

(Chapter 36 of TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INTIMACY)

PERFECTIONISM AND THE INNER CRITIC

Nothing haunts like perfectionism.

And perfectionism is not about to give up the ghost without potent intervention, which begins with seeing perfectionism through eyes other than its own.

The addiction to perfection that pollutes much of contemporary culture is perhaps most eloquently and disturbingly illustrated through the hypernegative body-imaging and anorexic behavior that possesses so many girls and young women. A flat tummy, envied by many, is not good enough for the woman hooked on somatic idealism; her tummy has to be a more concave shade of flat, and has to be closely monitored to ensure that no traces of fat somehow infiltrate her waistline. She may have a flatter-than-flat belly, and still suck it in, as if leaning toward invisibility — she aches to be seen as immaculate beauty incarnate, and also aches to disappear, knowing that she cannot ever really measure up.

No reassurances from others of how beautiful she is can make any real difference, for she has already convinced herself that she is not, and cannot be, beautiful. Perfectionism has her under its thumb, and

doesn't give a damn about her screams and suicidal urges. She is almost always in perfectionism's cold mirror, having not yet learned to hold up a mirror to her perfectionism itself.

But once she does, she is on her way out of her hell. All she has to do is keep that mirror in place, and to *name* her perfectionism when it arises. She might choose to call it something more personally fitting, like “my inner critic” — but whatever she names it, the point is to make sure that she does name it (so that it is not allowed to continue referring to itself as her, or her higher self, or her conscience, and so on). Once she has established some distance from it — through naming it and working on its underlying dynamics — she can then start developing a relationship with it. As she does so, the constituent elements of her perfectionism will become increasingly obvious; for example, she might recognize in its voice a certain tone that her parents used when they were, however inadvertently, shaming her.

To work skillfully with our perfectionism is to work with our shame. Shame is not always easy to recognize, for it often quickly mutates into other states, like withdrawal or aggression. When shame and fear hook up, guilt results, and guilt is perhaps the state most deeply employed in keeping us stuck. Guilt keeps perfectionism in business, by splitting us into a “bad” child and an overseeing, unforgivingly critical parent.

To move beyond this, we need to recognize within ourselves — and more than just intellectually! — both the childish and the parental sides of guilt, and identify with neither, being instead the space, the wakefully compassionate space, in which they arise. Not so easy to do, but do it we must, if we are to graduate from guilt's stalemated domain and the toxic perfectionism that supplies both its whips and the excuses that justify the whipping of the “bad” side of guilt by the “good” side.

Just like guilt, the Freudian superego — our inner supercritic — may successfully masquerade as conscience, but it is too much of a nagging

parent, compulsive faultfinder, and perfectionist to assume the position of conscience with any real authority. The superego — which, like ego, is actually not an entity, but rather an activity or process — is devoid of compassion, whereas conscience is inherently compassionate.

As was suggested above, it is useful to identify the indwelling voices pretending to be our conscience. If a particular voice speaks cruelly or overcritically to us, we'd do best to direct its contents to our trash bin. This means, among other things, that we must learn to relate *to* our minds, emotions, and perceptions, rather than just *from* them. To this end, non-dissociative meditative practice is essential. When we clear away the rubble — through working in-depth with our physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions — we find our conscience intact and clear. A diamond in the debris.

Keeping an eye on our inner critic not only helps prevent it from playing “P” or getting behind the driver’s wheel, but also allows us to mine it for any gems that it might contain, like intuitions or insights that we might not otherwise be able to access. But to thus mine it, we need to keep the lights on, so that we can see where we are going.

Our inner critic, especially in its perfectionistic mode, can easily tyrannize us if we let it, keeping us a captive audience to its views and certainties. Like young children who don’t question what their parents are doing, even when it’s abusive, we usually don’t question what our inner critic is doing. It plays parent, and we play child, and the play that follows is often far from playful or kind. Our inner critic finds fault with us, and if it can’t, lets us know that we had better maintain our lofty standard, or else — which, of course, generates enough pressure to help ensure that we will, sooner than later, slip. Our inner critic insists that what it is doing is for our own good, even as it immerses us in should after should. So much to should-er...

The inner critic’s grail is perfection, not just momentary excellence,

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but ongoing ultra-excellence, 100 percent grades, etcetera. It degrades us for not making the grade. We may act as if we are victims of it, but we are not; it only exists as it is because of the unwitting attention we have learned to give it. But even when we have seen it for what it is and have gotten critical of it, perhaps thinking that now we have the upper hand, we may have only given our inner critic new clothes and a “higher” seat in our headquarters. Freedom from our inner critic does not mean an end to being judgmental — for being judgmental comes with having a mind — but rather a relocation of judgmentalness to a place in us where heartfulness and wakefulness coexist.

Once we learn to relate *to* our inner critic rather than *from* it (that is, speaking to it rather than *as* it), we can become intimate with it, knowing it from the deep inside, so that when it arises, we recognize it almost immediately (through changes in our feeling tone, posture, bodily tensions, and so on). Through such recognition, we are not at its mercy, but instead can choose how to deal with it. We may withdraw our attention from it — thereby reducing its ordinarily authoritative voice to less than an echo — or we may explore it, checking out its anatomical peculiarities, sifting through its predictabilities for nuggets of insight.

In the beginning stages of dealing with our inner critic, we may entertain the fantasy of getting rid of it (which is akin to the egoic longing to eradicate ego, a favorite pursuit of more than a few spiritual paths), but later, as we realize that we just ain’t going to get rid of it, we start to change our relationship to it. Eventually, we reach such intimacy with our inner critic that we have no significant concern about its presence, any more than the sky is concerned about its clouds.

And then we recognize, right to our marrow, the perfectly imperfect way in which our life, like all lives, is unfolding.

Upcoming Groups with Robert & Diane

AN OVERVIEW

The Situation:

You've done some work on yourself and have opened and benefited (and want to maintain that openness), but find certain issues surfacing again and again — relationship difficulties, insecurities, emotional inhibitions, and so on. Now, more than ever, these are in your face — perhaps because you're now ready to fully face them — asking for your undivided attention. And, quite possibly, also for a suitable setting, featuring both highly skilled, cutting-edge guidance and the company of others who are as committed as you to healing and awakening.

The Context:

You might think that these issues are blocking your path, but in reality they are *part* of your path, and need to be treated as such. All you have to do is stop turning away from them, stop trying to rise above them, and make the journey into them, with awareness, compassion, and curiosity. This is not necessarily easy — for if it was, you probably would have already done it — but it can be done, leaving you more whole, more alive and present, more functional in every aspect of your life, allowing you to live a life that is as practical as it is liberating.

Who It's For:

Our groups are for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their well-being. Such work is especially suited for those whose longing to be truly free is stronger — or allowed to be more central — than their longing to continue distracting themselves from their suffering.

About the Work:

Our groups are small and intimate, being limited from 8 to 14 participants only (depending on the length of the group), so that there is enough

time for everyone to receive in-depth high quality attention.

The groups involve psychotherapy (in their focus on personal history), and also involve much more than psychotherapy, given their integral nature. Deep catharsis, psychodrama, and spiritual breakthroughs flow in and out of each other during the groups, in spontaneously apt ways.

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — are dealt with, through a dynamic, creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices (improvised and otherwise).

The atmosphere is one of deep trust. The groups are safe places to let go of playing it safe, providing a crucible not only for personal healing, but also for awakening from all of our entrapping dreams. Participants learn, at the optimal pace, 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 groups is not preset, but instead arises in fitting accord with both group and individual needs. Each participant has an opportunity to work, in relevant detail and in sufficient depth, with his or her particular concerns, and not necessarily just once in the group.

In every group (except for the Men's groups), my wife and spiritual partner, Diane, works alongside and in deep harmony with me; her presence, insight, and deep heart add immeasurably to each group.

“Robert is hands-down the best therapist I've ever worked with — in fact, I had given up on the “therapy game” until I read his fascinating book *Darkness Shining Wild* and was inspired to go to him for a session. Since then I've done much work with him, as have an increasing number of my friends — all of whom also give him rave reviews. In a few sessions I'd already done more substantial work on myself than in all my previous therapy combined (this is a comment I've often heard from others as well).

“Robert meets people where they are, and with a compassionate and insightful gaze finds what they need to take the next step in their

development. His work is deeply embodied and highly integral, working with all aspects of a client's being. While extremely practical and grounded in his approach, he is deeply aware of (and embodies) deeper spiritual aspects of life, and can guide people to those places in their own being if and when they are ready to do so.

“As effective and inspiring as he is in individual sessions, Robert truly shines in groupwork settings — reaching such deeply universal issues that the work of anyone in the group feels personally relevant to everyone present. The openness and love of a group of people who have just done a workshop with Robert is a joy to behold.”

— Arthur Gillard

Transformation Through Intimacy

A GROUP IN BOSTON March 1st & 2nd

A group for anyone wanting to be in a truly fulfilling relationship, whether you are longing to find a partner who meets you on every level, or longing to have your current relationship be more deeply intimate, so that it serves as both a crucible and a sanctuary for healing, awakening, and well-being.

In this group, we'll explore and work, directly and deeply, with what's in the way of us attracting our beloved or taking our current relationship to a deeper level, realizing that in order to have a great relationship with another, we need to, among other things, develop intimacy with *all* that we are.

LOGISTICS:

The group will be held in Newton, MA (close to Boston).

Tuition is \$475 US.

We are only taking **14** participants, so early registration is recommended.

**For more information, contact Linda Marks
at 617-965-7846 or at LSMHEART@aol.com**

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Transformational Intensive For Couples

February 16th-17th, in White Rock, BC

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.

This group is for couples who want a more conscious, loving, and liberating relationship with each other, and are ready to work 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.

“Working with Robert and Diane through the various relationship crises that my partner and I have gone through in the last 3 years has been a Godsend. We have moved through so much in our relationship, and would have faltered had it not been for the diligent, highly skilled, and caring work from Robert and Diane. When I sit down and actually think about all we've been through, and how much this amazing couple has been there to support us in our personal work, it's actually overwhelming. I wouldn't be the man I am today if not for this powerful work. I can only hope to be as encouraging, supportive, wise, understanding, and committed in my work as a counsellor as Robert and Diane are.”

— Gord McKay

TUITION & LOGISTICS: 10am to 6pm both days. Limited to **5** couples only. CAD\$1250 plus GST per couple. \$500 deposit required.

Breakthrough

A WEEKEND GROUP in SEATTLE

Feb. 23rd-24th

Tuition: CAD\$625. A nonrefundable deposit of \$300 is required. Full tuition due one month before group begins.

Location: Seattle TBA.

Maximum number of participants: **12.**

NOTE: There will be a free evening event with Robert & Diane February 22nd, location TBA, from 7:00pm until approx. 9:30pm. The key theme will be *Transformation Through Intimacy* — intimacy with others, and also with all that we are. The format will be mostly Q&A, with plenty of in-depth considerations, finishing with a musical presentation by Diane and a booksigning.

Breakthrough

A 3-DAY GROUP in SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

March 14th-16th

Tuition: CAD\$795. A nonrefundable deposit of \$400 is required. Full tuition due one month before group begins.

Location: Franciscan Renewal Center, located on 25 acres of secluded desert grounds in the heart of the Scottsdale/Paradise Valley resort district of Arizona. For more details, visit www.thecasa.org.

Maximum number of participants: **14.**

NOTE: There will be a free evening event with Robert & Diane March 13th, location TBA, 7:00pm until approx. 9:30pm. The key theme will be *Transformation Through Intimacy* — intimacy with others, and also with all that we are. The format will be mostly Q&A, with plenty of in-depth considerations, finishing with a musical presentation by Diane and a booksigning.

Breakthrough

A THREE DAY RESIDENTIAL GROUP

in ENGLAND, April 4-6

Tuition: CAD\$775, which is approximately £395. A nonrefundable deposit of \$400 CAD is required.

Food & Lodging: \$295 CAD (or approx. £150).

Location: Bawdsey Manor, approximately an hour and a half from London. Built in the late 1890s, Bawdsey Manor is a large and beautiful house, set in 150 acres of historic parkland overlooking the Deben Estuary in Suffolk. The location is outstanding, close to the river and the sea, surrounded by classic Suffolk scenery — boats, birdlife, reedy marshes and tranquil pebble beaches. See www.bawdseymanor.co.uk.

Maximum number of participants: **14**.

Breakthrough

A WEEKEND GROUP in BOULDER

April 26th-27th

Tuition: CAD\$495. A nonrefundable deposit of \$250 is required. Full tuition due one month before group begins.

Location: The Solstice Center, 302 Pearl Street, Boulder, Colorado.

Maximum number of participants: **12**.

NOTE: There will be an evening event with Robert & Diane April 25th, location TBA, from 7:00pm until approx. 9:30pm. The key theme will be *Working With the Difficult Stuff*. The format will be mostly Q&A, with plenty of in-depth considerations, finishing with a musical presentation by Diane and a booksigning.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

Integral Psychotherapy Practicum 2008/2009 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM in the USA (TBA)

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 May 2, 2008. Tuition is CAD\$5900 plus GST. A deposit of \$1000 is required. The training is limited to **10** participants. Previous work with Robert required.

Note: The Practicum is not just for therapists who want to learn a more intuitive, integral, and bodywork-including approach to their practice, nor just for those who are wanting to work in the counselling/psychotherapy

field, but also for those who want to participate with kindred spirits in a year of exceptionally deep personal 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 counsellor), 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 an environment, there is 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 counsellor-to-be.

Practicum Schedule

May 2-4, July 25-27, September 5-7, October 17-19, December 5-7, 2008, and February 13-15, 2009.

“Over my 10 years as a counselor, I have consistently sought out additional training. Many times, I have felt information overload (the skills felt mechanical). My experience in Robert’s Practicum was different than that. The practicum was profoundly experiential and there was support to integrate the skills. I feel much more confident as a therapist, and overall in my ability to be in contact with others. It’s not just what Robert is teaching, but his strong presence that provides the opportunity for deep personal healing. Diane’s presence adds a sense of being sweetly held, and at the same time, she persistently nudges for more authenticity. It is through this experience that I have expanded my ability to provide a healing presence for others.”

— Deanne Cousins

O BREATHE US DEEP

Composer and recording artist Diane Bardwell, along with Robert (her husband), has created O BREATHE US DEEP, featuring genre-transcending music that reveals, explores, and celebrates our deepest dimensions with passion and grace. Diane brings her remarkably rich voice to each song, singing with a full-blooded, heartfelt fluidity unburdened by sentimentality. Complementing her voice are the eloquent lyrics, based on poetry written by Robert. Some songs are devotional, some are raw; some soar, some sing and bleed; but all are presented in the spirit of awakening to who and what we truly are.

O BREATHE US DEEP is an eclectic mix of deeply spiritual (but not New Age nor conventionally religious) music that is as evocative as it is original. What connects its eight songs is not a particular style (a wide range of styles is used — from ballads to Celtic to Native American to hard-driving), but rather the poetically-articulated embracing and living of a deeper life, a life in which body, mind, emotions, and spirituality function as a natural integrated whole.

“The music in each of these beautiful songs takes my breath away. The soul and emotional depth expressed through both the lyrics and Diane’s magical voice moves me to tears. I relate to every feeling in every song. Thank you for this amazing and heartfelt gift.”

— Pamala Oslie, author of LOVE COLORS

(To hear sound clips, go to MUSIC at www.RobertMasters.com)

STEPHEN & ONDREA LEVINE

Stephen Levine has had a deep impact on many, including myself, since the 1970s, bringing to his work an extraordinarily healing presence developed through a savvy intimacy with suffering, death, and conscious living. He is a true elder.

I remember his book *A Gradual Awakening* being my sole companion during a difficult time in 1980 when I was ill in India; I remember him

The Crucible of Awakening

writing me an encouraging letter when I was in personal crisis; I also remember him being very supportive of my book *Darkness Shining Wild* when I was feeling hesitant to publish it; and I remember interviewing Stephen over the phone for *ReVision* magazine 10 years ago and enjoying his wisdom, warmth, and easy depth.

During that interview, Ondrea sat beside him, in obvious support and love. He and Ondrea did a book together in 1995 called *Embracing the Beloved*, describing (from their experience with each other) how intimate relationship could be a profoundly beneficial path of awakening; this book, more than any other, inspired me to choose such a path for myself. I very much honor Stephen and Ondrea and their deeply shared bond, and feel immense gratitude for them and the example they have set.

Ondrea now has leukemia, Stephen is not in good enough health to work or travel, and they no longer have the finances to continue paying for Ondrea's treatment.

They have contributed enormously to the well-being of many, many others, teaching the art of both conscious living and conscious dying, and now it is time to extend/gift some energy to them, and the form in which this is most needed is financial.

Click on the link below, which is a letter from Jack Kornfield, Ram Dass, and Sharon Salzberg regarding Stephen and Ondrea's situation, and how you can, if you are so moved, help them financially.

Thank you for considering this.

<http://www.spiritrock.org/display.asp?catid=13&pageid=566>

For more information regarding groups and trainings, or to register for them, contact info@RobertMasters.com.

All cheques, deposit and otherwise, should be mailed to Robert Masters, 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

Payments for groups (and my books and Diane's new CD) can also be made by credit card online at our new Store; simply go to www.RobertMasters.com and click on STORE.

To view previous newsletters, click on the NEWSLETTER button at www.RobertMasters.com.

To view Robert's blog, go to www.RobertMasters.com and click on the BLOG button.

2008 WORK SCHEDULE

February 16-17	Couples Workshop: White Rock, BC
February 22	Evening event in Seattle
February 23-24	Breakthrough: Seattle
February 29	Evening event in Boston
March 1-2	Transformation Through Intimacy: Boston
March 13	Evening event in Phoenix
March 14-16	Breakthrough: Phoenix
March 29-30	Breakthrough: Ojai/Santa Barbara
April 4-6	Breakthrough: England
April 8, 9, 10	Evening events in London
April 25	Evening event in Boulder
April 26-27	Breakthrough: Boulder, Colorado
May 2-4	2008/2009 Integral Psych. Practicum: USA TBA