

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 21 January 2007

Welcome to the first issue of 2007, featuring three essays. The first one, which explores emotional literacy (particularly in the context of intimate relationship), is excerpted from my upcoming book, tentatively entitled *Toward Mature Monogamy: Accessing the Liberating Intimacy of Awakened Relationship*). The second is a review of *The Fountain*. After writing it, I started thinking about the meaning of “cool” and the role of “cool” not only in the realm of film criticism, but also in contemporary culture in general – hence the final essay, entitled *The Death of Cool*.

TOWARD EMOTIONAL LITERACY

We’re born feeling. We live feeling, and we die feeling. Even when we might assess ourselves as feeling nothing, there nevertheless is some kind of feeling (including numbness) going on, however much it might be in the background. An emotion, and another emotion, and another, layer upon layer, suffusing our flesh, minds, psyches. But how well do we know our emotions? How much at home are we with them? Do we have difficulty controlling or expressing certain emotions? When fear, anger, shame, or sadness arise, what do we do? We may know our IQ, but do we know our EQ (emotional intelligence)?

Emotional illiteracy – or a lack of emotional sensitivity, understanding, and savvy – is largely rooted in the historical (and still commonplace) devaluing of emotion relative to cognition. It is still quite common to view emotions as being lower or more primitive than reason, doing little more than clouding the skies of rational thought or muddying objectivity.

Thinking clearly is thus often associated with dispassion, or a muting of our emotions; moral decisions are allegedly best made when passion and feeling are either “safely” out of the picture, or kept functionally peripheral to the decision-making process, much like children excluded or kept at a distance from parental discussions.

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Implicit in this attitude is the common identification of emotion with subjectivity – in the sense that subjectivity is a failure to be objective – an identification that may be justifiable if and when emotion is irrational or egocentric, but not when it is rationally informed.

We *can* be objective and emotional at the same time, as when a releasing of tears washes away an ossified or neurotically dug-in stance, leaving us not in a particular position, but rather aware *of* possible positions. As research shows, the openly felt, unrepressed presence of emotion can significantly contribute to mental and social skills.

The practice of distancing or dissociating ourselves from our emotions, including our apparently darker or more uncomfortable emotions, can seriously disrupt our ability to think clearly and act morally. Research indicates that an impairment in emotional capacity (as perhaps caused by damage to brain regions essential for emotional processing) can actually retard our ability to make sound decisions. Feelings are needed for making truly rational decisions. Without emotional intelligence, intellectual intelligence means little.

Are ethical decisions best conducted in the absence of emotions? Not necessarily! If emotions are ways of dealing with and evaluating our world, then they are *already* deeply implicated in ethics, whether at the level where emotion is little more than a sense of liking or disliking, or at the level where emotion is a complex, somatically rooted yet cognitively sophisticated (and perhaps even rational) “reading” of a given situation.

To view emotions as lower (or less reliable) than reason also has serious gender implications, femaleness being commonly associated with “getting emotional,” and maleness with being rational. This is roughly paralleled by those views that claim that the neocortex, associated with rational thought, is “higher” than the phylogenetically older zones of the brain that supposedly “house” and deal with emotions – which implies that men, being supposedly more rational, are therefore more developed than women. “You’re being emotional!” remains much more of a putdown than “You’re being rational!”

Many factors must be taken into account in examining a particular emotion, not the least of which is the interrelatedness of the various emotions. Anger may be a defense against sadness, or sadness may be a defense against anger. Rage at its peak may suddenly metamorphose into joy. Surfacing sadness or anger may trigger shame, and shame may lead to more sadness or anger.

Guilt may not be so much a feeling, as a suppression of feeling, within which anger, hurt, fear, and shame together writhe. When anger and disgust mingle, contempt arises. And so on.

To become emotionally literate, we have to become *intimate* with our emotions, knowing them from the inside, as well as knowing our repressive and expressive tendencies regarding our emotions. As obvious as it sounds, we need to know what we're feeling when we're feeling it. On the way, we learn to find the balance between containment – as when our anger is about to mutate into aggression – and expression – as when held-in anger needs to be given emphatic voice. Healthy restraint and healthy uninhibitedness. We need to learn how to regulate our emotions, how to directly express them, how to infuse such expression with awareness and compassion, how to ride, guide, and ultimately just *be* with them.

Emotional illiteracy still infects many intimate relationships, no matter how cleverly it is covered – or compensated for – by rationality. Despite the more-than-obvious presence of emotion in every one of us, as well as the equally plain-to-see emotional difficulties many of us have, emotional education has yet to take its place in the public school system. It simply is not a priority for those in charge of educational – or, better, schooling – policy. Intellectual intelligence gets the lion's share of attention, with moral and emotional intelligence getting less than minimal focus.

During couples' work when I ask men what they are feeling, many do something other than state what they are actually feeling: They may say, for example, that they *feel* that their partner is not understanding them, or that they *feel* that they are not getting enough sex, and so on (which are statements about what they are *thinking*, not feeling); or they may look away, and then say something that they are thinking about, trying to keep the conversation from getting "emotional" or vulnerable; or they may wait in silence for a more than pregnant pause, trying to figure out what to say, until I probe further, at which point they often will say that they are feeling nothing, or that they don't know what they are feeling. And so on. The very question "What are you feeling?" thus becomes an occasion for saying anything but what is actually being felt.

By contrast, when I ask women during couples' work what they are feeling, most are quick to directly, and usually quite expressively, articulate their emotional state. Of course, what they may actually do with their emotions is another story, but the very fact that they generally know what they are feeling

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and can usually get that across with obvious accuracy puts them far ahead of their partners when it comes to sharing what's going on emotionally.

Some men, having realized their partner's superior emotional literacy, honor her for it and are inspired by her example to develop the same capacity in themselves. Other men, feeling less positive about their partner's superior emotional literacy, invest their energy in finding fault with her delivery, trying to turn the focus back on her, as the conversation is corralled into a more "civilized" or "reasonable" discussion, headlined by disembodied rationality (which is actually an irrational rationality) and the "safety" it provides for his egoity.

It's no accident that the accusation "You're getting emotional!" is not paralleled by the accusation "You're getting rational!" (Although "You're in your head!" is becoming more commonplace.) So long as we equate being emotional with being female, and being rational with being male, we are not available for true intimacy. We need to divest emotionality and rationality of any fixed gender associations, and realize, right to our marrow, that emotion and rationality work best when they work together.

In intimate relationship it's essential that we, male or female, can clearly state what we are feeling as we are feeling it. What we are then conveying is data, rather than opinion ("I'm feeling angry" or "I feel sad" are not opinions, but facts, whereas "I feel you're not there for me" or "I feel like you don't have a clue" are not facts, or even feelings, but opinions). Couples stuck in dead-end arguments and power struggles usually go back and forth with emotionally-charged opinions, sparring over who's right or who's to blame or who's the screwed-up one (or the more screwed-up one). What is actually being felt is not being simply and directly shared, but is instead used to amplify or arm a particular position.

The first step is to identify what you are feeling. If you're feeling sad, simply notice that, without getting caught up in the details. If you're feeling a mix of emotions, and it's not clear what's in the mix, simply notice the mix. If you are not sure what you are feeling, ask yourself, as simply as possible: Am I feeling sad? Am I feeling angry? Am I feeling happy? Am I feeling unhappy? Am I feeling disgust? Am I feeling excited? Am I feeling afraid? Am I feeling uncomfortable? And so on. The odds are that you'll get some kind of instant response to each question, usually in the form of a yes, no, or maybe.

If after this, you still are not sure what you're feeling, look a bit deeper, and simply notice your general feeling tone, even if it is numbness. If you are convinced that you don't know what you are feeling, start by simply noticing your most obvious bodily sensations, such as tightness in your shoulders, tension in your belly, or whatever breathing pattern is occurring, and so on, and note that you are indeed experiencing these. All you have to do is place your attention on whatever it is that you are feeling; often what this means is withdrawing your attention from your thinking processes. There's nothing to figure out here, no need to ask your mind what you are feeling (as many men tend to do when they look away and take a long time to answer the question of what it is that they are feeling).

The second step is to directly say what you are feeling. At first, you may feel disconnected from what you are saying, as when announcing in a flat tone that you feel angry, but sooner or later, you'll be able to say what you're feeling in a way that conveys, at least to some degree, the felt experience of such feeling. Your facial muscles, tone, posture, and verbal emphases will make it clear that you are feeling angry as you state that you are indeed angry.

The third step is to make sure that your partner is really hearing what you are saying. This means not only that they are registering the facticity of what you are saying, but also feeling it (which means, among other things, experiencing it from the neck down). Most couples don't take the time to do this, relegating the cultivation of empathy to a very peripheral position in the dynamics of their interchanges. Yet without some empathetic attunement, the dialogue of a couple quickly degenerates into an energy-draining argument or a deadening withdrawal. So say what you are feeling, and if you're on the receiving end, let it in, until you can really feel it (whether or not you agree with all of the content), as if you are in your partner's skin and shoes. This may not always feel good, but it keeps us from remaining holed up in our egoic strongholds.

The fourth step is to get into the details, without losing touch. The key here is to make continuing to feel (or experientially resonate with) the other more important than whether you disagree with their content or not. Make your connection with each other primary, and the working out of relevant details secondary. This is far more efficient than trying to deal with such details when you are not sufficiently connected with each other. This also is when it's very easy to get righteously reactive. If things get sticky, go back to steps one and two, and stay with them for a while. One minute of sharing what's going on emotionally, without bringing in the corresponding details, prevents

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overwhelm (or emotional flooding), and can significantly shift the energetics of what's happening.

If you are getting really worked up, resist the temptation to get up on a soapbox or to turn the exchange into a courtroom drama, and instead stay with what you are feeling. If it's too intense for you, or for your partner, you might, with your partner's permission, have a clearly-boundaried rant for a few minutes, or take a break, or stop talking altogether and go more deeply into your core feeling. It's very useful, of course, to have prior agreements regarding this.

Notice which emotion or emotions you are least comfortable with, and start moving *toward* them (with your attention), even though your aversion to them will be pulling at you to move in the opposite direction. Study them, get intimate with them, to the point where their arising is no longer a concern for you, nor a threat to your relationship, but rather simply one more opportunity to deepen both your self-knowledge and your relationship. Your darker emotions are *not* the problem; your aversion to them is.

Notice when an emotion is secondary to another emotion; for example, anger often kicks in when sadness is starting to surface, especially in men. When you are telling your partner what you are feeling, you may begin by stating the obvious – i.e. “I’m angry” – but while doing this, pay attention to how open you are. If you're tight or closed-off, the odds are high that you're feeling another emotion and that you are reluctant to share it. You might begin here by saying that you're having a hard time saying what's going on, besides your anger. Maybe there's some sadness, some hurt, some shame. Many of us, especially us males, have a hard time being vulnerable and nondefensive during difficult exchanges with our partner.

For all four of the steps described above, being vulnerable – being transparent and open, even to our lack of openness – is immensely helpful, if only because it keeps an emotionally honest resonance going between the partners. About being open: This doesn't mean that we're necessarily happy and open-hearted, but that we remain aware of and receptive to what's occurring. An honest sharing of one's fear, devoid of any self-protection, can bring a couple very close. In fact, the more we openly share the emotional states (and their historical roots) that we are most afraid to share, the deeper our connection will be.

Emotional literacy is central to emotional intelligence (a mix of emotional awareness, empathy, expressive competency, interpersonal savvy, adaptability,

and other related feeling-centered or feeling-including qualities that influence our ability to succeed in dealing with the demands and pressures of life). Without it, we overrely on other kinds of intelligence, especially the intellectual.

Just as we can raise our IQ, so too can we raise our EQ (emotional intelligence). And how? Through various practices that address the weaker areas of our emotional life. If we score low in empathy, we are not necessarily sentenced to remain there. A little study of empathy, combined with empathy-generating practices (repeatedly visualizing ourselves in another's position, learning to listen wholeheartedly to another, meditative practices like *metta* or *tonglen*, and so on), will deepen our capacity for empathy.

If we have trouble reading the emotional weather of our relationship, practising what was described earlier in this chapter (the four steps to emotional literacy) will help us develop a keener sense of what's going on emotionally. This, by the way, requires no lowering of IQ, no intellectual slumming, no shunning of rationality, no triumphant summations of "You're in your head!" In fact, as our EQ goes up (and there are tests for this, but probably none as accurate as that of our partner's overview of us), our IQ may also go up, if only because we're now bringing more of us to whatever's before us.

An increased IQ may not mean an increased MQ (moral intelligence), but an increased EQ may well mean an increased MQ, simply because the more in touch we are with the emotional terrain of our intimate other – including having increased empathy for them – the more likely we are to want to treat them better. And as we take this further, extending our empathy and feeling for others to more and more beings, the more we start to understand, in a very visceral sense, that what we do to another we do to ourselves.

It takes a certain cognitive ability to even consider getting into someone else's skin (the capacity for empathy is present right after birth, but it is not a *chosen* empathy), as well as recognizing that we are doing so (without such recognition, empathy can become a negative force, swamping or overwhelming us with another's emotional state), but beyond that it's primarily an emotional undertaking. If I get lost in your emotional state, I'm going to be of no more use to you than if I remain cut off from your emotional state. So the art during difficult dialogue is to get close enough to you to directly feel your state – and to separate that from my state – but to keep enough distance for focusing purposes.

Another factor to consider here is boundaries. Robert Frost famously said that good fences make good neighbours; in the same spirit, we could say that good boundaries make good connections, and furthermore, keep the integrity of the relationship alive and well. Dissolving our boundaries so as to include the other is not the same as expanding our boundaries to include the other.

In openly sharing our emotional states with our partner – which means not only talking about and fittingly expressing them, but also being upfront about our operational context for such expression – we create, and in a sense are also created by, a richly fluxing psychoemotional intersubjectivity, an impossible-to-map relational field that is nonetheless far from inaccessible. Through such multileveled communion, such passionately participatory interselfing, such transparent mutuality, such deeply shared aliveness, we only deepen and enrich our intimacy.

MOVIE REVIEW: THE FOUNTAIN

I don't think I've ever disagreed so strongly with so many movie critics over a film. Their distaste for and dismissal of Darren Aronofsky's latest work, *The Fountain*, was not really all that surprising, given that it's a film that cannot be truly appreciated, let alone sufficiently resonated with, unless one has already spent some quality time in spiritual bootcamp investigating – and not just intellectually – core issues like the nature of identity, love, being, and death, not to mention the means through which these can best be explored.

My guess is that if most of the critics who trashed *The Fountain* were to be presented, in all sincerity and minimal superficiality, with the question: “Who are you?” (a warmup for “*What* are you?”), their answer would probably be to supply their name and perhaps occupation. If pressed further, the result would likely be not more in-depth or mind-transcending responses, but rather only a turning away from or ridiculing of the question, as if it were just some sort of sophomoric navel-gazing exercise. Yet the very immaturity that they might attribute to such an enterprise simply exposes their immaturity and adult-erated take on topics that *really* matter.

Those who have not significantly explored their own depths – psychological, spiritual, emotional, and otherwise – are probably going to toss *The Fountain* into the same bin as *What The Bleep Do We Know*, *What Dreams May Come*, and

other such movies (whether they liked them or not), confusing the regressively unitive and otherwise prerational elements of such films with the transrational (and transegoic) elements of *The Fountain*.

There is an ecstatic dimension – sometimes shatteringly, heartbreakingly beautiful – that emerges throughout *The Fountain* which is very different than conventional spiritual upliftment. My heart felt ripped open and raw watching much of it, while deep grief and an equally deep joy coursed through me, as if in fully embodied recognition of what we truly are. Instead of just providing some fascinating information (data-fodder, mystical and otherwise, for the mind) or a tasty bit of spiritualized entertainment, *The Fountain* provides us with a potentially transformative opportunity, through our unguarded participation in its multidimensional poetics, as well as its often epiphanous intimacy with the inherent paradoxes of Life.

Like good poetry, *The Fountain* doesn't explain, but *reveals*. It raises profound questions, and offers something more real than answers. This may be an irritant to film critics who are busy doing time in their *headquarters*, but is a sublime balm, Life-affirming and succulently transcendent, to those who have begun to awaken to their true nature.

In *The Fountain* an edge is played that most other “spiritual” films don't go near or even acknowledge, an edge that doesn't console or provide spiritual robes for the conventional self, but that instead shakes it to the core before blasting it far beyond what can be imagined. This edge, lined with reality-unlocking implications, is touched, at least in its darker dimensions, by a few other films, such as *Mulholland Drive*, but *The Fountain* dares to bring deep relational love into it, without slipping into romanticism, spiritual and otherwise. The agony of love when death comes nearer than is wanted is honored as much as the bliss of love when everything lines up, even as a deeper love, a death-transcending love, is allowed to arise slowly but surely from the debris of all this, in eloquently nuanced detail and flow.

Film critics who viewed most of the offerings of so-called spiritual cinema would probably be turned off by the terminally sweet tone, simplistic patter, shadow bypassing, and one-dimensional acting that pervades many of these. But to toss such lightweight, spiritually sentimental films into the same bin as *The Fountain* simply indicates an inability to distinguish pop spirituality from a deeper spirituality.

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And what is that deeper spirituality? First of all, it cannot be known through merely rational means, however much the rational mind presumes to know it. Film critics who are identified with or holed up in their thinking minds, unquestioningly believing themselves to be who they think they are and confusing cleverness with intelligence, can only see prerational spirituality (that is, intellectually childish, superstitious, overly ritualistic spirituality), and so lump all spirituality into the same prerational basket, much as Freud famously did with religion, labeling it with facile ease as “New Age” or as some kind of metaphysical mush or babble.

The love in *The Fountain* is an ever-intensifying mix of everyday love, big love, and supreme love, unburdened by the solemnly clichéd pronouncements (i.e., “we’re all one” or “we’re all connected”) and sugary excesses that often pollute spiritual cinema. The agony and the ecstasy are both very much present – and heart-rippingly easy to feel – along with a sense of tacit revelation that I found incredibly moving.

And threading through all of it is the presence of death, on many levels. Death that is fought, death that is the opposite of Life, death that is the enemy, death that is a disease, death that is but a doorway, death that serves and deepens Life, death that makes possible a deeper Life, death that enriches love and Love. There is so, so much that the protagonist (masterfully played by Hugh Jackman) is dying to see, and through him, through his struggle, his trio of apparent lifetimes, we become more intimate with what we are dying to see. And dying to be.

The Fountain invites us to die into a deeper Life – not through some kind of teaching or transmission of information, but through wholeheartedly participating in the journey of the protagonist and his wife (beautifully played by Rachel Weisz). We are then less spectators watching a movie, and more initiates in a temple of revelation. And why not? Why can’t cinema serve our awakening?

To really get into this, we have to get naked, showing up in (and as) undressed Being, allowing ourselves a second innocence, an awakened innocence that strips us of our knowledge and automated certainties and deposits us in the Open Secret of the hyperbole-transcending Mystery of our existence. If our mouth drops open, so be it; if our buttoned-up case of mistaken identity starts to give up the ghost, so be it; if we’re brought to our knees, and prayer becomes not something we do but are, so be it.

Yes, *The Fountain* is just a movie, but it is also that rarest of creatures, a movie that has the power to transport us not just into the mystical but *through* the mystical, taking us into what we never really left, but only dreamt we did. Use it as a catalyst for touching what matters most of all; I can assure you that it is clean, free of harmful additives, non-addictive, and worth revisiting.

THE DEATH OF COOL

It's getting decreasingly cool to be cool.

This doesn't, however, mean that it's cool to be uncool. The evaluative framing that is central to cool is slowly but surely coming unglued, leaving cool out in the cold, dying to chill, to somehow avoid being just more cultural roadkill.

Cool has been around for a long time, occasionally shoved into the background by upstart (and usually quickly dated) variations and offshoots – like awesome, neat, hip, sweet, and bitchin' – but is being put out of business not by any of these, however cool they may be, but rather by its own operational core.

What this means is that the stylized detachment, emotional invulnerability, fashionable dissociation, engaging disengagement, and contrived appearance of immunity – that in various combinations underlie and animate cool – are now more signs of dysfunction than of having it together.

How cool is that? No more cool than wanting to be cool, but with one difference: Cool itself is losing its privileged status (“If the neighbors are doing it, it can't be cool”), and is coming undone. The sense that cool ever really was where it's at is fast unraveling. Cool is losing its cool, losing its composure, suffering a long overdue exposure.

Cool is run by shame, and not just run, but *driven*.

Of course, cool doesn't look like it has anything to do with shame, other than perhaps to make others feel shame when they are in the presence of someone apparently cooler than them. But cool is shame that's run about as far as you can get from shame. If we didn't *already* feel shame – which is the nastily gripping, self-shrinking sense of being seriously flawed in the eyes of

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a convincingly critical audience, outer or inner – we wouldn't have so much investment in being or acting cool. There are other tracks that shame can take, as when it is converted into aggression (both self-directed and other-directed) or withdrawal, but cool looks a lot better than these.

Cool doesn't – *mustn't* – look ruffled, not because it is courageous or knows how to get centered when there's a crisis, but because it's pathologically attached to looking good, and ruffled just doesn't look so good. Cool does not, does not, does *not* want to lose face – and what is shame, but a painful loss of face?

Cool kicked in during the 1950s (getting overassociated with jazz), picked up steam in the 1960s (far out!) and 1970s, and really got rolling in the 1980s and 1990s, especially when it shackled up with postmodern thought and its self-fertilizing cleverness (and relegation of truth to a term only the ignorant used). Cool had come a long way since its early hipster pretensions, gradually infusing the mainstream, with *The Simpsons*' "insider" cultural asides at the nicer end of the spectrum, and *Pulp Fiction*'s glamorous, ultra-hip violence at the other, and the smartly cutting, almost gleefully cynical patter of "serious" comedians like David Letterman somewhere in between, with the whiter, more fashionable shades of rap pervading it all. In an era of unprecedented collective psychic numbing, cool helped keep the numbness alive and dressed to kill.

Cool is autocannibalizing itself. The less cool it is to be cool – so that it becomes cool not to be cool – the more that cool will fade. When cool really sees itself, it doesn't see cool, but shame in I've-got-it-together drag. Behind its shades, cool is losing its cool. The lid is coming off, as it must.

Perhaps cool's biggest shortcoming is its lack of vulnerability (and its tacit pride in such lack). Cool doesn't wear its feelings on its face, or anywhere else. It instead simultaneously buries them and projects them onto the uncool. Getting emotional is a sign of failure for cool; blowing our cool is a fundamental no-no. When cool is in the presence of real love, it gets very uncomfortable, for such love could, like shame, cause it to lose face or control.

Cool is overdressed restraint and emotional removal, a style-driven standing apart that has no heart. As such, it is but the shortest of steps away from cynicism. But strip cool of its outward appearance – after all, it's all about exteriors – and what is left? All the debris of its unexamined interiority, constellated around shame, shakiness, insecurity – that is, an abundance of vulnerability.

To enter such states with openness and awakened attention requires that we let go of being cool, and start reembracing our bare humanity, our woundedness and shamed selfhood, so that it gets not just a token nod or some pharmaceutical help or the latest shades, but rather a depth of healing that puts us back on our feet and in our hearts, unseducible by the siren call of cool.

RADICAL OPENING

THREE DAYS OF GROUPWORK DEVOTED TO DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

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.

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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.

RADICAL OPENING

TWO DAYS OF GROUPWORK DEVOTED TO DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

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.

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 8 women 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. Her website is: www.dianebardwell.com.

Letting Go

A DAY OF DEEP HEALING

January 13th, 2007, in White Rock, BC

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 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 concerns, 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 8 participants only. 3 spaces left.

Embodying the Deep Masculine

A ONE-DAY GROUP FOR MEN

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 8 men only.

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Weekend Intensive For Couples

April 21st & 22nd, 2007, 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.

Freedom Doesn't Mind Its Chains

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 5 couples only. US\$1200 or CDN\$1250 plus GST per couple. \$300 deposit required, payable to Robert Masters, at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

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**.

There are 3 spaces left.

Practicum Schedule

Feb. 2-4, April 6-8, May 25-27, July 27-29, Oct. 5-7, and Dec. 7-9, 2007

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

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

To go to Robert's blog, click on the Blog button at www.RobertMasters.com. Comments on the blogs are welcome; send them to info@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
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

ROBERT AUGUSTUS MASTERS

- 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 additional information,
visit www.RobertMasters.com**