

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 39 July 2008

A NEW/DEEPER DIRECTION FOR MY WORK

Diane and I are just back from a month of working in Ashland (Oregon) and Boston, and are feeling the need to settle and stay in one or two places, rather than continuing to travel so much. This year we've been away a lot; our work has been very successful, and we've met many wonderful people, but our traveling has taken quite a toll on us healthwise.

Perhaps one of the biggest gifts of our work travels this year has been to bring into compelling focus our longing not only to spend more time at home, but also to find/build a place where we can not only live, but also where our group participants and trainees can stay. Our vision of being and working in such a place, such a deeply healing crucible/sanctuary, is quickly growing stronger. And so we have begun to look for a suitable property, letting our sense of it sink more and more deeply into us.

Having this kind of retreat center feels less like a dream now, and more like a necessity. I'm now 60 and realize, though I still have plenty of energy, that the next few years is the time to really consolidate all that I know about the art of healing, awakening, and transformation, in both individual and group contexts. And not just consolidate it, but pass it on, teach and transmit it, train others to know it from the deep inside.

And what better place to do this than in a setting where everyone can work and live together for chunks of time without outside intrusion? Over the last few decades I have learned that I can work just about

anywhere and under almost any conditions, but I know that being in our own retreat setting would bring us an increased health and ease, allowing us to sustain and deepen our work in ways not otherwise possible.

Thus far I have passed on what I know, in a mostly introductory sense, through my one-year Practicum/Apprenticeship programs, but there is something more substantial to do, something that includes such programs but takes them much further, in part by generating, supporting, and reinforcing a vital, in-depth sense of authentic community among their graduates. (For more on the topic of authentic community, see my October 2007 Newsletter.) This would be an intimate network of practitioners who have in common not a standardized or merely replicable therapeutic or psychospiritual protocol, but rather a way of working — and being! — that's as intuitive as it's integral, as full-blooded as it is finely tuned, and as effective as it is personally unique to each practitioner.

Such a community, however loose-knit, would constitute a deeply interacting post-tribal family of individuals in whom autonomy and the capacity for genuine intimacy would naturally coexist. Each would receive ongoing training and support from me, not in isolation but in the context of genuine connection with the rest of the community; that is, individual work uniquely tailored for each person would still continue, but the benefits of that work would, in a very real sense, touch — and be intended to touch — everyone in the community.

And I would not, thank God, be running the show! Instead, I would be serving as a kind of facilitator-in-chief and resource for individual and group work, without extending my leadership in those particular areas into the rest of the community dynamics. The gifts of each member would be fully brought forth, resulting in, among other things, a healthily shared leadership. As idealistic as this may sound, I know it can be done, so long as personal autonomy and intimate interconnectedness are allowed to work together synergistically (I envision part of my job description as making this more than possible).

Through this ongoingly cultivated interconnectedness, and through their work, members would be furthered in their capacity to effectively guide others, knowing that nearby (whether across town or on the other side of the planet) are mature, being-centered allies/friends/colleagues. I see myself working relatively regularly with this meta-group, helping to keep it (and myself!) evolving and deepening.

If you have any interest in any of this, let me know. I am very interested in hearing anything you might want to say about it! Thanks for listening. And thanks for being part of my newsletter; I very much appreciate your readership and comments.

Facing the Dragon

ENDING OUR SUFFERING BY ENTERING OUR PAIN

Turning *toward* our pain — our contractedness, our fear, our distress, our numbness, our unhappiness — puts us on the road to authentic happiness.

Turning toward our pain? Isn't the point to eliminate pain, or at least to get away from it? Isn't pain already unpleasant enough? Why make it worse by moving closer to it?

Such questions are entirely understandable, especially given the commonplace aversion to pain, be it physical, mental, or emotional. The very notion of turning toward our pain may seem counterintuitive, foolhardy, naive, misguided, even masochistic.

The Crucible of Awakening

Such a movement, however, does not increase pain, but in fact decreases it. The closer we get to our pain, the greater are the odds that we will be able to relate *to* it rather than *from* it. And when we thus relate to our pain, we free ourselves from the pain of avoiding our pain.

Not many of us have a healthy relationship with our pain, but without cultivating such a relationship, we will remain stranded from real happiness, regardless of our “up” times and various gratifications.

And why? When we turn away from our pain, seeking an escape from it — thereby *avoiding relating to it* — we only entrap ourselves in our apparent solutions to our pain, getting overly attached or addicted to whatever most pleasurably or reliably removes us from it, which only generates more pain, regardless of our feel-good times.

The good news about this is that its inherent dissatisfaction sooner or later points us, however roughly, in more life-giving directions.

Real happiness arises when we stop turning our pain into suffering.

Suffering, in brief, is what happens when we identify with our pain, dramatizing it to the point of overpersonalizing it. Suffering is something that we are *doing* with our pain, something that makes our pain worse, something that keeps us removed from any significant exploration and illumination of our pain.

Real happiness does not require an absence of pain, but rather that we face and enter our pain, and enter it not headfirst, but heartfirst, employing our awareness like a miner’s lamp. Put another way, when we compassionately approach our pain and allow it to awaken us from our usual dreams, we find ourselves settling into a sobering happiness, a happiness that does not disappear just because we’re having a bad day.

Just as embracing our insecurity secures us, embracing our unhappiness (or any other painful state or condition) brings us into the realm of authentic happiness.

Pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional.

Pain does not necessarily obstruct happiness, but suffering does.

Turning toward our pain reduces our suffering. Entering our pain further reduces our suffering. Moving through our pain ends our suffering, even if our pain remains.

Suffering keeps us from developing intimacy with our pain.

Intimacy with our pain? As strange or unappealing as this may sound, it is actually a very practical undertaking. The more deeply and thoroughly we know our pain from the inside, the more likely it is that we'll be able to use our pain to deepen our lives. As unpleasant as pain may be, it has the capacity to awaken us from our everyday trances and ruts, if only through jolting us out of our numbness, complacency, apathy, and mechanicalness.

Pain is not the problem! What really matters is what we do with our pain. Do we turn it into suffering? Do we recoil from it? Do we demonize it? Do we frame it as a mere drag, bad karma, crappy luck, an obstacle to having the life we really want? Or do we use it more wisely? Do we make our way into the heart of our pain, finding therein a healing that radically realigns us with What-Really-Matters?

The point is not to romanticize the awakening power of pain, any more than it is to bewail the presence of pain. Real freedom does not mean the absence of pain, but rather adopting, fully adopting, a nonproblematic orientation toward pain.

The Crucible of Awakening

And this means, in part, facing the dragons which are guarding the treasure that we seek. And what are dragons, but the archetypal presence and dramatization of what appears to most scarily oppose us, densely endarkened and hardened not outside but *within* us? The dragons of aggression, the dragons of fear, the dragons of depression, the dragons of greed, the dragons of resentment — all formidable, challenging, abundantly fanged, and ready to be directly and consciously met.

To reach the treasure we must face and fully encounter the dragons guarding it. This is not just a fairy tale, nor mere metaphor, but a living reality. In the beginning we may view the dragons — whatever shape they take — as obstacles, hindrances, problems, inconveniences, lower-brain roadblocks, but later on we will come to view them not as obstructions on the path, but rather as an essential part of the path. The path to what? To what we most deeply long for.

The primary role of dragons is to make sure that we are truly capable of appreciating and making wise use of what they are guarding.

And to be capable of this, we have to let go of our suffering, until there's nothing between us and our pain. This journey, this radical shift, this life-giving movement, is ours to take, not just for our sake, but for *everyone's*. No more turning away.

May you face your dragons and find through your encounters with them the healing and freedom that is your birthright. This is the adventure we were born to take, the adventure that, asking everything of us, gives us everything we need.

A DEEPER LIFE

A ONE-WEEK GROUP IN THAILAND

January 16th to 23rd, 2009

Deep, efficient, highly effective breakthrough work for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties, and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation, in a setting of exceptional beauty.

Everything can serve our healing and awakening. Especially the difficult stuff. Going toward, into, and through whatever is troubling us, rather than just rising above or otherwise avoiding it, is a profoundly liberating journey. Along the way we learn, firsthand, to be intimate with all that we are: high and low, dark and light, dying and undying.

This group will be both a catalyst and sanctuary for such deeply transformative work, providing a safe place to let go of playing it safe. The work will be not be prestructured, but rather structured in fitting accord with group and individual needs and energies.

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, dreamwork, and group practices.

We will have plenty of time — seven days! — for very deep work, plus time for spiritual deepening, and activities like staying in a treehouse one evening or night, while below us wild elephants roam.

And the group will be small, being limited to **18** participants only, so that there will be enough time for everyone to receive in-depth attention.

LOCATION: Phuiyara Resort in Western Thailand. For pictures and more information, see **www.phuiyararesort.com**. An exceptionally beautiful wilderness setting, adjacent to a national reserve forest. Nearby are hot springs, bat caves, wild elephants, waterfalls, and much more.

TUITION, ACCOMMODATION, AND MEALS: CAD\$2600. A deposit of CAD\$500 is required, nonrefundable after September 1, 2008. The fee of \$2600 also includes transportation from Bangkok to Phuiyara Resort, plus an evening in a wild elephant elevated watching house.

We will be eating very well.

PAYMENT: In Canadian funds either by bank draft (payable to Robert Masters at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5) or by credit card online through the STORE page at www.robertmasters.com. Full payment is due by November 1, 2008.

RECOMMENDED READING: Robert's latest books, DIVINE DYNAMITE (revised edition) and TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INTIMACY.

We're only taking 18 participants, so early registration is recommended.

BREAKTHROUGH

DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

AUGUST 15th-17th, in ASHLAND, OREGON

Deep, efficient, highly effective breakthrough work for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties, and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation.

LOCATION: 408 E. Hersey Street, Ashland.

TUITION & LOGISTICS: A special reduced rate of \$495. A nonrefundable deposit of \$200 is required. The group goes from 3pm to 6:30pm Friday, 10am to 6pm Saturday & Sunday. Limited to **14 participants only**.

NOTE: Private sessions will be available August 19th, 20th, & 21st. Both Robert and Diane will be present at each session. To schedule sessions, contact info@robertmasters.com.

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Transformational Intensive For Couples

AUGUST 23rd-24th in ASHLAND, OREGON

or

SEPTEMBER 13th-14th in BOULDER

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 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.

LOCATION: ASHLAND: Dolphin House, 9820 Wagner Creek Road.
BOULDER: TBA

TUITION & LOGISTICS: 10am to 6pm both days. Limited to **6** couples only. A special reduced rate of \$475 per person (or \$950 per couple). A nonrefundable deposit of \$300 is required from each couple.

HEALING & INTEGRATION

A THREE-DAY GROUP IN ENGLAND

October 3rd-5th, 2008

Deep, efficient, highly effective breakthrough work for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties, and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their liberation.

Everything can serve our healing and awakening. Especially the difficult stuff. Going toward, into, and through whatever is troubling us, rather than just rising above or otherwise avoiding it, is a deeply liberating journey. Along the way we learn, firsthand, to be intimate with all that we are: high and low, dark and light, dying and undying.

This group will be both a catalyst and sanctuary for such deeply transformative work, providing a safe place to let go of playing it safe. The work will be not be prestructured, but rather structured in fitting accord with group and individual needs and energies.

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, dreamwork, and group practices.

And the group will be small, being limited to **14** participants only, so that there will be enough time for everyone to receive in-depth attention.

LOCATION: Integral College, 2 Wilbury Crescent, Brighton, UK BN3 6FL

TUITION: CAD \$750 (or approx. £380). A deposit of CAD \$375 is required, nonrefundable after August 1, 2008. Accommodation and meals are not included. (The group is now half full.)

PAYMENT: In Canadian funds either by bank draft (payable to Robert Masters at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5) or by credit card online through the STORE page at <http://www.robertmasters.com>. Full payment is due August 15, 2008.

Man Unbound

A GROUP FOR MEN IN ENGLAND

OCTOBER 11th-12th, 2008

Man Unbound 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 our depths.

Tuition: CAD \$450 (or approx. £225). A deposit of CAD \$200 (or approx. £100) is required, nonrefundable after August 8, 2008. Accommodation and meals are not included.

LOCATION: Brighton, TBA

Maximum number of participants: **12**

“I have facilitated hundreds of groups for men, for professionals, for youth, for parents, and for couples over the last dozen years. I have attended dozens of workshops, learning about working with anger and many other aspects of counselling/therapy. I have never attended anything that moved me in the manner that Robert's groups have. Each and every man in the three groups that I attended gained profound insights into their lives. Men from all over the U.S. and B.C. and Alberta attended. We all deeply gained from each other and Robert's skillful facilitation. For those who want to face their fear and gain from their experience, this is the way to go.”

— Alistair Moes

Masters Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

2008/2009 UNITED STATES APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

5 Four-Day Modules, to be held in Boulder and/or Ashland, Oregon

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 5 four-day weekends. Tuition CAD\$6800.

A nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 is required. The training is limited to **12** 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 (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 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 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 counsellor-to-be.

Practicum Schedule

To be determined once 12 participants have registered.

There is considerable interest in the Practicum. We are hoping to begin early in 2009. If you are interested, please contact me.

Masters Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

2009 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM in England

The training will take place over 4 five-day modules. Tuition £4000. A nonrefundable deposit of £500 is required. The training is limited to **12** participants. Previous work with Robert required.

The training will begin as soon as there are 12 registered participants. We are hoping to begin by May 2009.

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

July 11	Evening event in Sacramento
July 12-13	Breakthrough: Sacramento
August 15-17	Breakthrough: Ashland, OR
August 23-24	Freedom Through Intimacy: Ashland, OR
September 12-14	Freedom Through Intimacy: Boulder, CO
September 20-21	Breakthrough: Boulder, CO
October 3-5	Healing & Integration: Brighton, UK
October 11-12	Man Unbound: Brighton, UK
October 25-26	Women's Intensive: White Rock, BC
November 26-30	Bodywork/Energywork Practicum: White Rock