

# THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

**Issue 47 March 2009**

Welcome to Issue 47 of my Newsletter, featuring the release of my new book, **MEETING THE DRAGON**, plus two essays.

The first one, entitled ENTERING OUR PAIN, is a chapter from my new book, and the second one, entitled NO LONGER USING SEX TO DISTRACT US FROM OUR SUFFERING, is a chapter-to-be from my current writing project, a book about spiritual bypassing (which I expect to have out before Summer).

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**MEETING THE DRAGON: ENDING OUR SUFFERING BY ENTERING OUR PAIN is my latest book, and it is now available in hardcover! You can get it from the Store page on my website, or in four or five weeks, from Amazon and bookstores.**

The frontcover features some great dragon art from my son Dama; you can check it out by going to the Books section of my website. As for what's between the covers, the title says it all. Here's what is on the backcover:

Pain and suffering are not synonymous. Pain is inevitable, suffering optional.

Where pain is consciously felt hurt, suffering is the dramatization of that hurt, casting us the role of the hurt one, stranding us from the raw reality of our pain.

## The Crucible of Awakening

Turning toward and entering our pain — our contractedness, our fear, our distress, our numbness, our unhappiness — helps put us on the road to authentic happiness.

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

The more intimate we are with our pain, the less we suffer.

To emerge from our pain, we have to enter it.

“MEETING THE DRAGON is a courageous and poetic invitation to wholeness, brilliantly conveying the inextricable link between entering our pain and embodying our ultimate expansion. Robert guides us into the dragon’s lair, artfully showing us the way through murky caverns, bringing us face to face with our own dragons. Once there, we receive the most valuable teaching of all — that the dragon’s fire is ultimately indistinguishable from the treasure it protects, that the gatekeeper is actually the gateway. Right there in the heart of our pain are the very lessons that we most need to grow. What a beautiful thing to remember! I highly recommend this wondrous book.”

— Jeff Brown, author of *SOULSHAPING*

“The language is passionate, evocative, and richly poetic. The message is wise and profound: pain is an inevitable part of human life, but suffering is optional. By entering your pain, really experiencing it, getting to know it — ceasing to resist it, avoid it, or compensate for it, Masters suggests you can discover in it the seeds of a profound shift of consciousness.”

— Terry Patten, co-author of *INTEGRAL LIFE PRACTICE*

## ENTERING OUR PAIN

Once you have turned toward your pain and are not about to be swayed from doing so, you already have, in a sense, entered your pain. You may still be in the shallow end of the pool, but you nonetheless are in it, not so far from the deep end. And the dragon's breath is now not something that you only see or hear, but something that you also directly feel.

The journey you've taken to arrive here has prepared you to go further; if you had been simply deposited here, like a tourist lowered from a luxury airplane onto Everest's peak, you would very likely not fare very well, given your lack of preparation and seasoning.

If you're going more slowly than feels natural, it may be because your suffering is loading you down, burdening you with its dramatics. If this is so, you would do best to take a bit of a break, in order to learn to look at your suffering with unsuffering eyes, realizing that letting go of our suffering is usually far from easy.

It may also be useful to remember that we tend to prefer the burdened beasts of suffering's dramatics to the monsters of the deep. Notice if you are resisting your pain in any way, and notice any investment you might have in so doing, without shaming yourself for this. Then, at whatever pace feels right, disengage from your suffering "I" and allow yourself to feel your pain without any dramatization.

Stay with this for a while, and you will notice that however much the unpleasantness of your sensations has increased, you simultaneously feel lighter; your pain is perhaps sharper, but it is more vivid and clearly defined, trimmed of any excess, any buffering, any of suffering's dark furnishing and cushioning. Once you've ceased shouldering your suffering and have decisively put it down, stand tall and move forward, even if you are just millimetering along.

## The Crucible of Awakening

Move so close to your pain that there is negligible distance between it and you — just enough to keep it in focus. As you touch your pain, feel it touching you until you are beneath its surface. Breathe a little more deeply. Make each step, each reaching forward of attention, as conscious as possible, without pressuring yourself to do it just right.

As you move into your pain, inching into its contracted and sometimes fantastical geography, you may find that you are not moving in a straight line. So be it. The ground might be far from level. So be it. Pay close attention to your pain's detailings — its directionality, texture, coloring, temperature, density, tone, shaping, intensity, mental correlates, and so on — without getting lost in them. To enter your pain is to directly feel it and its various qualities; feel your way in, breathe it in and out, noticing how it shifts as you penetrate further in.

You'll notice that your pain is not as simple as it might seem, having physical, emotional, mental, and social dimensions. At first it is usually best to focus primarily on the physical and emotional, bringing your attention to the actual sensations which constitute your pain. So you are taking note of somatic data rather than conjecture. Again, there is a difference between sensing hurt and saying, "I'm feeling sad" and "I feel that no one cares about me." Stick to the first sort of description, which is basically quite factual, and avoid the second, which is perceptual, interpretive, constructed, open to debate. Keeping to the first keeps you focused on your pain, whereas getting into the second generates and reinforces suffering, especially insofar as it animates the suffering "I."

Continue scanning your pain, staying close to it. Instead of keeping yourself removed from it, stranding yourself in a sterilized objectivity, get as intimate as possible with your pain, employing a kind of radical subjectivity in your approach to it — you are very close to it, you are immersed in it, you are openly feeling it, but you are also keeping just enough distance to be able to focus clearly on it. So you are then simultaneously connected to and separate from your pain. Intimate.

In this, you are cultivating a relationship with your pain, instead of identifying with it or trying to get away from it. You are feeling it, touching it, listening to it, and not from behind glass or from a tour bus, but directly, like a traveler immersed in a foreign yet oddly familiar culture, venturing into a fresh adventure.

The further you go into your pain, the less you suffer. You may still hurt, you may still shake with rage, you may still squirm with shame, but you are not making a binding story out of it.

The further you travel into your pain, and the more accurate your reading of what is going on, the more you are able to psychoenergetically expand, so that your pain has more space in which to unfold, throb, flow. And as your pain is given more space, more breathing room, it usually sheds some of its intensity, becoming less gripping, less commanding, less problematic, even when it still really hurts.

After a while, we will feel our pain shifting into a purity of presence that sharpens our focus even more, while at the same time easing us. It's as if we've just reached a wild river's headwaters; there's still a lot of churning and turbulence, but we can sense an immense spaciousness nearby. This is the heartland of our pain, the epicenter out of which our experience of our pain flows forth. This is a great turning point; we have gone in as far as possible — now our movement is all about emerging on the other side of pain, carrying with us the gifts and learnings of having entered our pain so deeply.

Once we are at the heart of our pain, a kind of ease arises, an ease that easily coexists with our discomfort. We then still may hurt, but we don't mind to any significant degree. We don't let our pain go to mind. We are not trying to get rid of our pain, nor to get away from it. Rather, we are simply with it, allowing its contractedness to soften.

We are inside the dragon now, feeling its pulse, its dark density, its ancient appetite. And we are refusing to be its latest meal. Instead of

it eating us, or eating at us, we are eating *it*, taking it in, digesting it, emerging through it, untrapped by its scaly bulk. We don't have to slay it, for as we enter it, passing behind its eyes and fiery front, we make its energies ours, bringing ourselves more and more alive. Then the fire of the dragon is not only heat to us, but also light.

Thus do we mine our pain.

This is the alchemy of grounded transformation, anchoring us to psychospiritual bedrock.

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## **No Longer Using Sex To Distract Us From Our Suffering**

As far away as spiritual bypassing sometimes gets from sex — as when it promotes or makes a virtue out of celibacy — it more often uses sex to get away from pain and to make itself feel better, including through so-called tantric practices.

Such practices are very much in vogue, and are typically taken to be good for us and even liberating, freeing us from the constraints of conventional sexuality, transporting us to zones where sex and spirituality juicily coexist, unburdened by the mechanics and boundaries of everyday sex — or so we are led to believe. Those espousing tantric sex generally view it as a higher form of sex, a sacred interplay, a wonderful antidote to the friction-driven dysfunctional fornicating of the masses.

Not surprisingly, more and more people claim to be practicing — or at least to believe in — tantric sex; to state that we are tantric with our sexuality confers on us the status of having outgrown or being beyond conventional sexuality, the status of being *spiritually sexy* — we used to fuck, but now we are practicing tantra! We may still have sloppy or flaccid

boundaries when it comes to our sexuality, but now we can spiritually rationalize this, reframing it not just as openness — as we might have before — but as *spiritual* openness, there but to serve the highest good of all involved.

Those espousing tantric sex usually take sex at face value — however much they might spiritualize it — not recognizing to any significant degree the *nonsexual* and *presexual* forces that may very well be driving it. Those who were sexually abused as children can easily use not only everyday sexuality (and/or pornography) to continue *literally acting out* the dynamics of their abusive past, but also tantrically-framed sexuality, bypassing their unresolved abuse issues with spiritualized erotic rituals and beliefs, unwittingly just replaying their abuse — including recreating the *excitation*, however originally negative, of it — while at the very same time finding some degree of release or pleasurable distraction from it through the feel-good capacity of sex.

And those who weren't sexually abused as children, but who were abused in other ways — physical and verbal violence, heavy shaming, serious neglect, and so on — can also easily use tantrically-framed sexuality to simultaneously act out the dynamics of their past *and* discharge some of the very tension generated by such replaying.

Thus do we — when caught in the grip of our conditioning — tend to *eroticize our wounding*, while assuming that we are simply being sexual. To leave this unexamined keeps us stuck and resultingly very attached, or even addicted, to the energetic release from the branchings — not the roots, but the branchings! — of such stuckness made possible by sex, tantrically-oriented and otherwise.

It is so easy to think that our sexual charge with a particular situation is no more than an expression of our natural sexuality, when in fact it may actually just be an eroticizing of our conditioning or of some need we have. For example, the arousal that a particular man feels with a fantasy of being longingly gazed at by a beautiful, completely available

naked woman may only be *secondarily* sexual, its primary impetus being rooted in his longtime longing to be unconditionally seen, loved, and wanted. Another example would be that of a woman who, having had an emotionally unavailable father, meets a man who is also emotionally unavailable and finds herself magnetically drawn to him — and drawn to making him want her (she could never get her father to want her, but the *charge* to bring this about stayed with her). She feels a lot of sexual chemistry with him, enough so to obscure, at least for a while, his emotional distance; she has but eroticized her charge with being with a man who is not emotionally available to her.

For at least the last forty or so years, we have been living in a pervasively sexualized culture — “sexy” as an adjective has infiltrated just about every dimension of life, to an absurd extreme — which is simultaneously underbounded (undiscerningly open) and overbounded (closed-off to truly vulnerable intimacy) when it comes to sex. There’s much more openness regarding sex than there was, say, fifty or sixty years ago, but most of that openness has more to do with breadth than depth. We have much more permission to experiment with sex and to talk graphically about it, but we nevertheless still do not tend to talk about it in real depth all that much — exploring, for example, the *nonsexual* things we may be up to during sex — for to do so would put us in a position of real vulnerability, not so able to hang on to a semblance of “having it together.” Seeing what we may *really* be doing when we’re being sexual is likely not very high on our list of priorities.

And this is the era of informed consent, centered by the myth — yes, myth — of consenting adults. Many are, in sexual circumstances, not so much consenting adults as they are *adult*-erated children, whose consent — however “informed” — is very likely not coming from a clear consideration of what is going on and is at stake, but rather from a desire to get approval, affection, connection, love, security, or just more distraction from their suffering. Saying “yes” from an unawakened place is totally different than saying “yes” from an awakened place, but if we have a hormonally-driven investment in hearing “yes,” then we

won't really care from where it comes. And if our "yes" to going ahead sexually is spiritualized, framed as something sacred, then it's probably going to be all the more tempting to proceed.

But just because we don't say "no" doesn't necessarily mean that we actually want to go ahead. I've seen many, many women in therapy who could not initially say a real "no," because when they had originally needed to say it, they had been in a situation — featuring some sort of violence, including rape — where it was far too dangerous to say "no." They had learned, for reasons of pure survival, to shut up. Would they say no to a man who was sexually interested in them? Not directly. Not even if he repulsed them. Once they had reclaimed their real voice and power, however, they could then of course readily voice and stand behind their no, making no apologies for their boundaries.

Many who have clear, healthy sexual boundaries are shamed by others for not being freer, looser, more flowing, as if such boundaries were no more than barriers to sexual freedom, mere signs of sexual repression. But those who advocate such freedom, such a "natural" exchange of sexual energy with others (whether or not such others are already in a committed intimate relationship) — including in supposedly spiritual contexts — are actually more entrapped than are their more boundaried counterparts, caught up as they are in acting out old needs to be unconstrained and to have more control over their interactions with others — there are, after all, plenty of power payoffs in being able to turn others on and to have them sexually desire us, even if all we are doing is "innocently" flirting or dancing with them.

And so through the enthused, undiscerning "openness" of spiritualized sexuality — with its fashionably fuzzy, easily-collapsed, or nonexistent boundaries — the eroticizing of unresolved issues (like craving being wanted or craving being in control) is confused with sexual freedom. The charge we have with what is unresolved in us is simply that, an *excitation* (whether positive or negative) or energetic intensity rooted in our reaction to various events from our past. When we reroute this

excitation into the pleasuring possibilities of sex, we are literally moving away from the pain that underlies such excitation, the pain that, when consciously entered and illuminated, can help awaken and liberate us.

As we awaken we realize, more than just intellectually, that what we do to another we do to ourselves; then behaving ethically is not so much a choice as a *necessity*, a sacred duty, a commitment. So long as we can sexually mess around with and manipulate others for our own ends (sex here being not much more than a matter of making ends meet), and frame the whole messed-up scene as not being messed-up, we are only fucking ourselves, regardless of the tantric robes in which we wrap the whole thing. It's no accident that one of the many meanings of "fuck" is getting exploited.

You cannot have sexual maturity without a corresponding emotional, moral, mental, psychological, and spiritual maturity. Those who are cognitively very developed, but whose hearts do not yet see, will not be sexually mature, tending to either be shut off sexually or to indulge in erotic fantasy (utilizing their minds to jack up their sexual excitation). Those who are spiritually and morally relatively advanced, but who are emotionally immature, will not be sexually mature, tending to dissociate during sex, or to burden it with tantric expectations. And so on.

Sex does not need to be — and in fact cannot be — crystallized out from the rest of our experience (as those overly focused on the mechanics of sexuality often try to do, both in conventional and tantric contexts). Rather, it needs to be seen, felt, and lived in vitally embodied, open-eyed resonance — and relationship — with everything we do and are, so that it is, as much as possible, not just an act of specialized function, nor an act bound to the chore of making us feel better or more secure, but rather an unfettered expression of already-present, already-loving, already-unstressed wholeness.

If you don't want to get fucked, you're going to have to disturb your slumber, and rub the sleep out of your "Ts" — and this is more often

than not down-in-the-trenches hard work, a true labor of love, asking much of us. It is crucial not to exclude such awakening work, such self-illuminating exploration, from your sex life — and at the same time, it is crucial not to *overestimate* or glamorize the awakening power of sex. I remember someone who was being very promiscuous (in a spiritual setting) saying that he had given up on meditation and was simply “fucking his way to God” — he rode his wave for a while before it crashed, dumping him on a shore far from the desired one, too exhausted to pull his head from the sand. This is not to say that sex cannot be spiritual — for it can be, in mind-blowing, astonishingly illuminating and ecstatic ways, without any need for tantric guidance or belief — but that fucking others is ultimately a dead-end waiting to be discovered. How long that discovery takes varies from person to person, but it awaits us all, inviting us into the ethical heartland of the Real, where personal integrity is no longer a concept, but a rock-solid given and a wonderfully sobering joy.

Sex-as-sensation has come out of the closet — both in mundane and spiritual contexts — but not sex as *radically intimate, responsible passion*, needing no manuals or maps, conventional, tantric, and otherwise. The deepest sex, sex requiring no fantasies (inner or outer) or turn-on strategies or rituals of arousal (including tantric tactics), but rather only the love, openness, safety, and integrity of awakened intimacy, cannot be significantly accessed without a corresponding depth in the rest of our relationship with our partner. Without such mutual maturity, it doesn't matter how hot or juicy or innovative or tantrically-informed our sexual life may be.

To reach such maturity, we need to face the less-than-mature ways we have employed our sexuality, almost all of which can be categorized as ways of using sex to make ourselves feel better. High up on the list is the eroticizing of our needs, which means to both sexually frame them *and* seek their fulfillment — or at least something resembling their fulfillment — through sexual activity.

Plenty of sexuality is not much more than such eroticizing. Some men, for example, may think that they are extremely sexual — wanting to have sex a number of times every day with their partner — when in fact they are not really very sexual at all, but rather are simply overloaded with anger, so much so that they find (however unknowingly) considerable energetic release of that anger through their sexuality. They have just eroticized their need to release their anger. Ejaculation is their release-valve, their fastfix depressurizer, and their partner is little more than the outhouse for this.

Another example: Some women may act very sexual — making a show of being sexually open — when in reality they are simply very insecure, and have found increased security, materially and emotionally and perhaps also with how they appear spiritually (like a sexy goddess, for example), through presenting themselves as overly available sexually, engaging in lap dances, heavy flirting (including with their friends' husbands, if such friends are “liberated enough” to be so “open” as to allow such “play”), and so on. They have just eroticized — and, in some cases, also spiritualized — their need for security, as signaled by having power over men (having likely been overpowered by their father and other males when they were little) and perhaps also other women.

We can eroticize just about anything, plugging our original excitation (whether positive or negative) regarding it into sexual channels, thereby simultaneously reliving it — however indirectly — and finding some release from it. If we, for example, were severely neglected during our childhood, we may have a “charge” with current situations which feature some kind of neglect (because we are drawn, however mechanically, to whatever mimics that which is unresolved in us).

Consider a darker example: A man frequents sadomasochistic parlors, getting the most sexual pleasure out of being whipped. In his fantasies he associates sexuality with violence, and is drawn to porn that features this association. Some might think he's just sexually kinky (and also perhaps that what he's doing is fine, so long as it's between “consenting”

adults), but what's truer is that he's deeply wounded. Take away the erotic overlay in his fantasies and practices, and what's left is violence and a gaping lack of love. It's no big surprise to find out he was severely beaten almost daily, literally whipped bloody, by his mother during his boyhood, and that that was the only touch he got from her. Eroticizing his internalized and undealt-with violence simply took the edge off it, providing a way to discharge the surfacing pain of it; but stripping it down to its roots made possible a healing that quickly eroded his interest in sadomasochistic porn and practices. Once the original pain had been openly felt and skillfully worked with, there was no longer any need to sexualize it.

One more example: A woman, clearly heterosexual, finds to her embarrassment that the most erotically vital and arousing fantasies for her involve other women. No men are present. She's had some sexual encounters with other women, but these just didn't work for her. What's going on in her fantasies is a women-only encounter — but take away the erotic dimension, and all that is actually occurring is women being closely connected to each other. This woman grew up in a home with a violent father and brothers, and found her only comfort, however minimal, in the company of her mother and aunts. Quite understandably, she has a considerable charge with being in a setting which features the safety and warmth of other women, a setting in which she can really relax and let go. The fact that she has eroticized this simply means that it represents something that has generated considerable excitation in her for a long time. (Another cause of a heterosexual woman having sexual fantasies about other women may simply be that the women she fantasizes about have the kind of body she wishes that she had, and that if they find her attractive — as demonstrated by wanting to be sexual with her — then she must be as sexy and attractive as they are. She thus *owns* that fantasy body, if only for a moment.)

What such fantasies dramatize is simply the eroticizing of our longing to be fulfilled, safe, loved, needed, seen, touched, and known, and perhaps also our longing to find release from past difficulties and trauma

through the very excitation (however unpleasant or terrifying) catalyzed by such difficulties and trauma. The intensity of the pleasure or release that they promise is a marker of the intensity of the pain which we are trying to bypass.

Some erotic fantasies may be quite complex, but their themes are not; in fact, such complexity might just reflect a need to have many things in order or under control so that the desired outcome can occur, a need that likely has its roots in many things having been out of order or control in our early years. But whatever their detailing, our eroticized needs are just that — needs. Strip them of their erotic overlay and presentation, and what remains is what is not yet healed.

Once we realize that the eroticizing of our needs and unresolved wounds is both an escape from suffering *and* a mark of it, we put ourselves in a position where we can free our sexuality from the obligation to make us feel better. In so doing, we are not only taking charge of our charge — embodying a newfound responsibility for the arising and amplification of our sexual charge — but are also no longer keeping sex in a headlock, be it pelvic or tantric. Thus do we enter sexual integrity. To de-eroticize our needs and wounds is to see them in their rawness, and to turn toward what we really need.

For those caught up in the grip of spiritual bypassing, sex — whatever its spiritual credentials — is just another way to avoid pain, preferably as pleurably as possible. But dressing up the same old erotic patterns and psychosexual history in tantric robes and ecstatic languaging is no more liberating than cosmetic surgery. Sentencing sex to slave labor in the sweatshops of our neuroses simply impoverishes us, no matter how much sexual pleasure we get out of doing so. A lovely trap is still a trap. Eroticism — which we might define as excessive interest in sexual activity, opportunity, and possibility — promises joy, but real sex *begins* with joy, with ease, with love, with uncensored intimacy, needing no spiritual trappings for its unfolding.

# MEETING THE DRAGON

## A Day of Deep Shadow-Work

**Saturday March 7th in Ashland, Oregon**

A day of exceptionally deep integral work, especially intended for those who know that if we want the treasure, we're going to have to face the dragon.

Real shadow-work — the practice of acknowledging, facing, and integrating what we have turned away from, disowned, or otherwise rejected in ourselves — does not leave us intact; it is not some neat and tidy process, but rather an inherently messy one, as vital and unpredictably alive as birth. The pain it brings up is the pain from which we've been fleeing most of our life; the psychoemotional breakdowns it catalyzes are but the precursors to hugely relevant breakthroughs. Real shadow-work breaks us open, turning frozen yesterday into fluid now.

This group is limited to 20 participants only. All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, intuitive mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. Structure will not be preset, but rather will spontaneously arise in accord with individual and group needs. Not all participants will get to directly work (due to time constraints) with us, but all will nonetheless still get to deeply participate in the group.

**LOCATION & TIME:** TBA Ashland. The group will begin Saturday March 7th at 10:00am and end at approximately 6:00pm.

**TUITION:** A special rate of only \$75. If you're also attending our March 21st-22nd Ashland group (LOVE, SEX, SPIRITUALITY), your fee for that will be reduced by \$75.

**PAYMENT:** By check, payable to Diane Bardwell, c/o Constance Dean, 809 Garden Way, Ashland, OR 97520.

# **LOVE, SEX, SPIRITUALITY**

## **2 Days of Deep Healing & Breakthrough**

### **March 21st-22nd, 2009 in Ashland, Oregon**

It is so easy to think that our sexual charge with a particular situation is no more than an expression of our natural sexuality, when in fact it may actually just be an eroticizing of our conditioning or of some *nonsexual* need we have.

Sentencing sex to slave labor in the sweatshops of our neuroses simply impoverishes us, no matter how much sexual pleasure we get out of doing so. A lovely trap is still a trap. Eroticism — which we define as excessive interest in sexual activity, opportunity, and possibility — promises joy, but real sex begins with joy, with ease, with love, with uncensored intimacy.

This group is about facing and working through whatever is obstructing our healthy sexuality, be it unresolved childhood wounds or spiritual teachings that make a virtue out of having weak or overly open boundaries.

**THIS GROUP IS LIMITED TO TWELVE PARTICIPANTS ONLY,** so that *everyone* will have time to do in-depth work.

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, intuitive mix of bodywork, psychotherapy, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. Structure will not be preset, but rather will spontaneously arise in fitting accord with individual & group needs.

**LOCATION & TIME:** Ashland TBA. 10am to approx. 6pm both days.

**TUITION:** US\$550. A nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required. Full tuition due March 3, 2009. (There will be a \$75 reduction for those doing our March 7th Ashland group.)

# ***BREAKTHROUGH***

**APRIL 4th-5th in WHITE ROCK, BC**

A weekend of deep healing and awakening.

THIS GROUP IS LIMITED TO 12 PARTICIPANTS ONLY, so that everyone will have time to do in-depth work. 3 spaces left.

**LOCATION & TIME:** 16133 9th Avenue, White Rock, BC. 10am to 6pm both days.

**TUITION:** US\$550. Nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required.

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## **MEETING THE DRAGON**

**A Weekend of Deep Shadow-Work**

**June 6th & 7th, 2009 in Boulder**

A weekend intensive of exceptionally deep integral work, especially intended for those who know that if we want the treasure, we're going to have to face the dragon.

Real shadow-work — the practice of acknowledging, facing, and integrating what we have turned away from, disowned, or otherwise rejected in ourselves — does not leave us intact; it is not some neat and tidy process, but rather an inherently messy one, as vital and unpredictably alive as birth. The pain it brings up is the pain from which we've been fleeing most of our life; the psychoemotional breakdowns it catalyzes are but the precursors to hugely relevant breakthroughs. Real shadow-work breaks us open, turning frozen yesterday into fluid now.

**Limited to 12 participants only, so that everyone will have time to do in-depth work.**

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — will be dealt with, through a dynamic, intuitive mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices. Structure will not be preset, but rather will spontaneously arise in accord with individual and group needs.

**LOCATION & TIME:** TBA Boulder. The group will go from 10:00am to approximately 6:00pm both days.

**TUITION & PAYMENT:** US\$550. A nonrefundable deposit of US\$200 is required. Payment can be made either by check (payable to Masters Center For Transformation at 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5) or by credit card online at the STORE page at [www.robertmasters.com](http://www.robertmasters.com). Full tuition is due by May 5, 2009.

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*An opportunity to directly learn from a master integral psychotherapist and groupleader (1) unique, exceptionally effective psychotherapeutic, spiritual, and bodywork/energywork skills; and (2) how to creatively and effectively integrate these in counseling work.*

# Masters Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

## 2009 USA APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The purpose of this training is to deepen the capacity of participants to effectively counsel others through a dynamic, intuitively structured approach that integrates body, mind, emotion, 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 in great depth with body, mind, emotion, and spirit. Love, integrity, and presence will be the cornerstones of our practice.

### **WE WILL ONLY BE TAKING TWELVE PARTICIPANTS.**

**NOTE: The Practicum is intended for those who want to learn *and* practice a deeply intuitive, integral, and bodywork-including approach to psychotherapy, and who at the same time *also* want to participate with kindred spirits in a year of exceptionally deep personal (and interpersonal and transpersonal) work, during which they will learn skills that will serve them in every area of their life.**

Graduates of previous practicums have not only found themselves at home with new skills (sufficient enough to begin working as an integral 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 counselor-to-be.

**LOCATION & STRUCTURE:**

The Practicum will take place over 5 four-day modules in Ashland, Oregon.

Each module will include individual and group work, plus facilitation by participants of each other's work (with fitting feedback and guidance from Robert).

After the training concludes, participants who have attended it in its entirety will receive a diploma indicating that they have completed a one-year training in Masters Integral Psychotherapy with Robert Augustus Masters.

**PREREQUISITE:** Previous work with Robert.

**TUITION:** \$7000. A nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 is required. Half of the tuition is due at the start of the first module; the rest is due by the start of the third module (unless other arrangements have been made with us). Lodging and meals will be extra. Contact [info@robertmasters.com](mailto:info@robertmasters.com) to arrange payment.

**SCHEDULE (Please note new dates):**

May 7-10, June 25-29, August 20-23, October 8-11, December 3-6.

**There is considerable interest in this our latest Practicum. If you are thinking of possibly participating, please contact Robert.**

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**Some Further Notes on the Practicum:**

The work done in the Practicum differs from the work done in our other groups in a number of ways:

- 1) Much of it occurs in the context of Practicum members doing work with each other under my supervision, pairing up and practicing what I have taught.
- 2) I oversee all of the work; Diane and I circulate among the practising pairs of Practicum participants to help guide each session in more optimal directions.

3) When I am working with an individual in front of the group, I may explain in some detail — without lowering the quality of the session — what I am doing and why, so that the session also becomes a teaching opportunity.

(4) Each participant gets to work, often very deeply, four or five times in one module, as opposed to once or (now and then) twice in a regular group.

There are five modules, each lasting four days. Between modules 2, 3, 4, and 5, participants practice what they have learned, both with each other (if they live in the same area) and with suitable others (who are not charged for such work and who are beforehand informed that they are working with a trainee). After the second module, their sessions will last about half an hour. After the third module, their skill level will have increased quite a bit, so that they can now offer longer sessions, and bring more depth to their work.

Between modules, participants are not only expected to do a certain number of sessions (which they will keep notes on), but also to work on themselves in whatever ways are needed. This will include a daily meditation practice as well as keeping track of their dreams. All will have the opportunity to have phone consultations with Diane and me to discuss questions and challenges concerning their practice.

Modules differ. The first one is an introduction, the second is mostly about working with emotions, the third mostly about working with body, the fourth mostly about working with mind and spirituality, and the final one is all about integrating what has already been learned. Spirituality is part of each module, as is dreamwork.

The Practicum quickly becomes a crucible/sanctuary for very deep work, providing a remarkable support system for personal evolution. In the final module, we all brainstorm and give input to each person, sharing our insights about what the post-Practicum work they might do could look like — not as a clone of me, but rather in the context of their unique abilities and talents, fittingly expressed through their own style, incorporating, to whatever degree, other healing modalities that they may already be practicing.

The Practicum is a prerequisite for further trainings with us, including advanced bodywork/energywork, working with couples, and leading groups.

## ONLINE COMMUNITY

**FACEBOOK** has a group for people who have worked with me and/or who are interested in my work/writings to connect and discuss my work/writing or anything related to it. Once a week I answer questions from group members, which are sent to me from the group administrator, Arthur Gillard. If you're not already a member of Facebook, it is easy to join at: **<http://www.facebook.com>**. Once you have joined, simply type "Robert Augustus Masters" in the Search box and then click to join the group.

**GAIA**, a social networking site (free to join), also has a Robert Augustus Masters discussion group, featuring the same intention and invitation (and weekly Q&A) as my Facebook group. The online culture of my Gaia group is vital and inviting (and far more active than my Facebook group), and its powerful forum software is perfectly suited for meeting, discussing, and sharing with others who are interested in authenticity, healing, transformation, and Awakening.

You don't need to be a member of Gaia to see the posts there — just go to **[http://pods.gaia.com/robert\\_augustus\\_masters](http://pods.gaia.com/robert_augustus_masters)**.

But if you would like to participate in the discussions, you can join Gaia by going to: **<http://www.gaia.com/apply>**, or email Arthur Gillard ([thinkintuit@gmail.com](mailto:thinkintuit@gmail.com)), the cultivator of the site, who will send you an invitation.

The format of my Gaia group makes it very easy to navigate through, with everything organized into eight main categories: *Introduce Yourself; Ask Robert; Announcements & Feedback; Doing the Work; Dreams & Dreamworking; Robert's Writings; Other Influences, Teachings, Lessons, & Exemplars; and Potpourri for the Soul.*

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For more information regarding groups and trainings, or to register for them, contact [info@RobertMasters.com](mailto:info@RobertMasters.com).

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

Payments for groups (plus Robert's books and Diane's CD) can also be made online at our Store page; simply go to [www.RobertMasters.com](http://www.RobertMasters.com) and click on STORE.

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

To view Robert's blog, go to [www.RobertMasters.com](http://www.RobertMasters.com) and click on the BLOG button.

## **2009 Work Schedule**

January 8-11 Integral Psychotherapy Practicum: Ashland, Oregon

January 17-18 Breakthrough: Ashland, Oregon

March 7-8 Meeting the Dragon: Ashland, Oregon

March 13-16 Integral Psychotherapy Practicum: Ashland, Oregon

March 21-22 Love, Sex, Spirituality: Ashland, Oregon

April 4-5 Breakthrough: White Rock, BC

May 28-31 Integral Psychotherapy Practicum: Boulder

June 6-7 Meeting the Dragon: Boulder