

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 55 November 2009

(featuring essays on sex and the feeling of Being)

An Overview of Groupwork with Robert & Diane

The Situation:

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

The Context:

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

About the Work:

Our groups are small and intimate, being limited from 8 to 14 participants only (depending on the length of the group), so that there is enough time for everyone to receive in-depth high quality attention.

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

All kinds of issues and concerns — from the deepest trauma to the seemingly trivial — are dealt with, through a dynamic, creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, spiritual disciplines, dreamwork, and group practices (improvised and otherwise). The structuring of the groups is not preset, but instead arises in fitting accord with both group and individual needs.

The atmosphere is one of deep trust. The groups are safe places to let go of playing it safe, providing a crucible not only for personal healing, but also for awakening from all of our entrapping dreams. Participants learn, at the optimal pace, to become more intimate with *all* that they are — dark and light, high and low, shallow and deep, neurotic and transcendent, dying and undying.

BREAKTHROUGH

A 5-DAY GROUP IN MEXICO

DEVOTED TO DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

February 10th-14th, 2010

Deeply effective, integrative work for those who want to make wise use of their difficulties, and who are ready to work through whatever is obstructing their well-being, in a beautiful setting on the Pacific coast of Mexico.

Everything can serve our healing and awakening. Especially the difficult stuff. Going t into and through whatever is troubling us, rather than just rising above

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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'll have plenty of time — 5 days! — for very deep work, plus time for spiritual deepening practices (as well as time to enjoy the warmth and sun and beaches).

And the group will be small, being limited to 16 participants only, so that there will be enough time for everyone to receive in-depth attention.

LOCATION: Mexico (Pacific coast) TBA

TUITION: US\$1200. A special fee of US\$975 is available for those who pay in full before December 1, 2009. A nonrefundable deposit of US\$400 is required. All payments can be made online at www.robertmasters.com on the Store page.

FOOD & LODGING: US\$TBA for accommodation and all meals. Special dietary needs will be taken care of. Meals will basically be delicious vegetarian plus fish options.

PAYMENT: Pay online through the STORE page at www.robertmasters.com. Full payment is due January 1, 2010.

REQUIRED READING: Robert's latest book, *MEETING THE DRAGON: ENDING OUR SUFFERING BY ENTERING OUR PAIN*.

For more information, contact info@RobertMasters.com. We're only taking 16 participants, so early registration is recommended.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR SEX IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

1. Open Your Eyes

Be conscious before sex, during sex, and after sex. Open your eyes to whatever is going on during sex *besides* the erotic; do not pull away to thus see, but let your looking be as intimate as it is focused. Stay present, stay vital, and stay committed to being fully engaged with each other.

If you see or feel yourself and/or your partner getting mechanical, step in, interrupt, and redirect the energetic flow, making your connection with each other more important than any sexual payoff.

Have enough light in the room — a single candle may be enough — to be able to see each other's eyes. For at least some of the time, keep eye contact with each other, letting your gaze be open, relaxed, and present. Sometimes during orgasm, keep full eye-contact, allowing yourself total vulnerability and freedom of expression. At times when you gaze into each other's eyes, you will see only personality; other times, you will see far more; and sometimes you will see everything. Let it be.

When sex becomes an ecstatically intimate, wide-awake loving, we will find ourselves in a depth at once familiar and beyond all description, a depth inviting us to walk through it hand in hand, hearts as one, minds but pure space, our flesh but energy fluctuating between electrifying joy and unshakable peace. Open eyes.

2. Stop Making Orgasm So Important

Orgasm tends to be as overrated as it is misunderstood.

First of all, orgasm is not necessarily equivalent to ecstasy. It is often not anything more than the pleasurable rupturing and dissolution of erotic buildup, having more to do with a craved maximizing of erotic sensation than with genuine sexual intimacy. When orgasm follows sex that was primarily engaged in for the purpose of making us feel better, then it is mostly just pleasurable release, however intense it might be.

Orgasm is ecstatic when sex is ecstatic, and sex is only ecstatic when we come to it *already* loose and happy, *already* open and unpressured, *already* unburdened by any craving to have something special occur. (By ecstasy, I mean an intensification and expansion of happiness, not situational happiness — or the kind of happiness that depends on something in particular occurring, like winning a load of money — but the happiness that is inherent to Being.)

We cannot stimulate ourselves into ecstasy, even through the most intensely arousing sexual rituals or practices. The very peak of sexual excitation positions us for the release for which we've been aching, the thrilling discharge of whatever tension that we may have sexually generated. Orgasm, the promised payoff, the eruption of the peak, the Big Moment, the little death, the all-too-brief break from mental chatter, the sleeping pill par excellence, and so on — but with whatever we might associate it, orgasm is not necessarily ecstasy. If what precedes orgasm is less than ecstatic, then orgasm is at best but a bolt or flood of intense pleasure, a few waves of delicious thrill, very soon to be but a cul-de-sac of quickly spent excitation.

Ecstasy is not addictive. Only when we have turned away from ecstasy do we get addictive, creating dependency-relationships with whatever promises to deliver to us some relatively convincing semblance of ecstasy. In the absence of ecstasy, eroticism holds immense appeal, with orgasm being its star attraction.

When sex is ecstatically loving, orgasm is not discontinuous with what precedes it, but rather is an explosively felt intensification of full-bodied

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mutual happiness, an overwhelmingly blissful explosion throughout our entire being, streaming, rushing, and expanding with delicious force and abandon as if from our very core, pouring and flooding up through our heart (sometimes even *beginning* there), both enveloping and expanding our body from the inside out, until we are but sentient energy in profoundly loving, indescribably intimate communion with our partner. Orgasm as such is inherently rejuvenating.

Typical orgasm, however, is very different. In men, it does not rejuvenate, but rather only drains (and here I'm talking about orgasm which includes ejaculation), regardless of its intensity. Orgasm for men is often no more than a discharge of excess or built-up energy, an emptying of tension, a pleasure-spasm soon followed by enervation and a dulling drowsiness. Orgasm cannot enliven us if love is not present, and nor can it fill the whole body if there is any holding back, physical or emotional or otherwise, anywhere in us. Even at the moment of ejaculation, many men (especially in me-centered relationships) tend to control themselves, repressing their vulnerability, merely emptying themselves of their desire, no longer pumping any energy into a display of apparent intimacy. By not remaining heart-open and emotionally naked, they force the energy of orgasm to dissipate itself in their legs, pelvis, and head, thereby sedating their system.

Typical orgasm drains women in a different way. Its soporific or stress-discharging effect may still be present, but is usually not so strong or central as is an underlying dissatisfaction, a suddenly naked sense of emotional and perhaps also spiritual loneliness, which may lead to a longing for either more distraction (sexual and otherwise), or for some real intimacy. The pleasure and relief of orgasm may mask this, but usually not for long.

Don't try for bigger or better orgasms. Rather, do the necessary work to go into sex *already* loving, vital, and vulnerable. *Make connection with your partner priority.* Get naked and stay naked. Allow your sexual times with your partner to be not orgasm-aimed, but rather *orgasmic*, moment-

to-moment sensually and sexually lovingly alive. Don't go for orgasms; let them come to you, and when they do, give yourself wholly over to them, even as you invite your partner into the heart of your joy.

3. Let the Whole Relationship Be Foreplay

In me-centered relationships, foreplay is a job, a preliminary, a warmup, a preparatory ritual, more often than not mechanical. In we-centered relationships, foreplay is still mostly a job, but is delivered with more care, being more of a mutually connected undertaking.

In being-centered relationships, by contrast, foreplay ceases to be a separate or preliminary practice. The whole relationship is foreplay. Each conversation, each touch, each greeting, each challenge, in some way keeps the juices flowing. There is no effort to be erotic, no turn-on strategies, no manipulation — but there *is* great passion, effortless and often instantaneous arousal, and a deep capacity for mutual ecstasy, unburdened by any pressure to get sexual.

The relationship during sex is the very same relationship outside of sex, lit by the same deep recognition of each other. Such profoundly loving recognition is the foundation for the deepest sex of all.

4. Be Emotionally Naked

Take off more than your clothes. Don't just settle for bare flesh meeting bare flesh. Get wet, and not just physically. The more open you and your partner are emotionally, the deeper and more life-giving the sex. Be emotionally naked, and show it. Don't just say "I love you" dutifully or mechanically — say it (assuming that it is natural to say it at the time) from your core, sensing and expressing the essential significance of each word.

Get vulnerable and stay vulnerable. This is especially important for us men; if we do not allow ourselves to be vulnerable, then only part of us — mostly cranial and penile — will be participating. If we truly want depth, then we need to leave the shallow end of the pool, without necessarily knowing what we'll encounter as we venture forth.

Get your heart into being fully vulnerable; there is not a more powerful aphrodisiac than mutual full-blooded and totally unguarded love. When your heart is open and your belly is loose and your voice unrestricted, the energy that has built up in your genitals can flood upward through your belly into your heart, throat, skull, and beyond. The more emotionally open you are, the deeper your sexual experience will be.

Feeling and expressing an unqualified, emotionally naked yes! for your partner, along with a simultaneously arising gratitude and wild yet love-centered lust, enlivens the whole body and more, so that when sex gets going, its palette is our entire self.

5. Increase the Polarity

Assuming that there's already a deeply shared intimacy, the more male he is, the more female she will be, and vice versa. It is easy (and not uncommon!) to get more androgynous as we journey more fully into our spirituality; this may be fine when we're doing solitary practice or are in professional mode at work, but not so fine when it comes to our intimate relationship.

For men, it is crucial that they contact and fully embody their core adult masculinity, reclaiming their balls without losing touch with their heart, so that they are simultaneously capable of great erotic presence and equally great tenderness. As he becomes more fully present, more strongly anchored in love, integrity, and his essential masculinity, he becomes not only more trustworthy to his partner, but also more attractive, so that she can open more fully to him, with the result that

their lovemaking becomes much, much more than just a mechanical ritual or exercise.

As women contact and embody their core adult femininity, bringing a deeply centered power to their heartfulness, they become more capable of opening fully; and at the same time, their inner radar will be so clear that any shift in their partner will be immediately obvious to them. If he, for example, loses some presence or gets a bit mechanical or goal-oriented during sex, she will call this to his attention without hesitation, giving him the gift of her compassion, however strongly she might deliver it.

There can be great polarity between immature lovers, but it is mostly just a polarity of *sensation* (as well as being poorly grounded). Upping the stimulation can produce enough erotic tension to set off some powerful orgasms — but so what? A juicy fire — lots of heat, but usually not much light or genuine closeness. Intense sensation, however pleasurable, is not really all that satisfying, for it leaves out too much of us.

The polarity between being-centered partners can be mind-blowingly great, since it hypervividly highlights (and simultaneously celebrates) the differences between male and female in every dimension — which only increases the longing, the enormously rich longing, for the two to meet as deeply as they possibly can.

There's an indescribably sweet aching in this, for both lovers are keenly aware of how short their time is together, and the more intensely vivid the polarity between them, the more powerful and satisfying and illuminating their encounter.

6. Don't Separate Sex from the Rest of Your Relationship

What we do sexually may seem very different from what we do in the

rest of our relationship, but it is in fact simply a reflection, however energetically magnified, of our overall relationship. *What is not working in our relationship will show up in our sex life, no matter how much our sex life may seem to be a “solution” to or escape from the rest of our relationship.* Once we stop trying to isolate our sexual relationship from the rest of our relationship — and deal skillfully with whatever’s not working there — we become more conscious during sex, so that it becomes not only a time of deeply felt connection, erotic and otherwise, but also a time of discovering, uncovering, and recovering.

7. Connect Before, During, and After Sex

Instead of trying to find connection through sex with your partner, come to sex *already connected* — that is, already feeling intimate — with your partner. If you don’t feel close to your partner, don’t then go for sex, but rather mutually face and work through whatever’s obstructing your closeness with each other.

If you start to lose connection during sex — as can happen when we slip into fantasy or try to make things go a certain way — interrupt whatever you’re doing sexually, and let your partner know what is going on with you, and stay with it until you are both reconnected, even if this means not resuming your lovemaking. This is not about shaming or blaming, but about simply changing gears.

Staying connected after sex does not mean dutifully trying to be close, but rather making your connection with each other such a priority that you are held in the circle of each other’s loving embrace, even when that circle expands infinitely.

THE FEELING OF BEING

Each emotion has its own terrain, its own hallmark sensations, its own facial and somatic peculiarities, regardless of the necessarily fuzzy boundaries between it and other emotions. Even so, at the heart of every emotion is a single *meta-emotion*, a primordial feeling at once palpable and self-illuminating.

This feeling — the feeling of Being — never leaves us. But we leave it, drift from it, forget it.

Away wanders our attention, fastening itself to an enormous array of objects, both inner and outer. Fasten-ation. Attention velcro'ed to objects is attention that is inattentive to us.

And still the feeling of Being persists. It doesn't begin here and end there, being bound neither in space nor by time. It is, however, still a feeling — not a feeling of anything in particular, but still a feeling. Being may appear to be its object, at least linguistically, but in fact is neither its object nor its subject.

That is, the feeling of Being is all but inseparable from Being. To directly feel Being is to, however slightly, recognize oneself *as* Being. Such recognition, such primal intuition, comes into focus as we develop more intimacy with our feeling dimensions, cultivating emotional literacy...

The feeling of Being is rooted in a seamless blend of bare awareness and self-transcending Love, Love that includes all, Love that is at once supremely indifferent and immeasurably compassionate.

None of this is a paradox to Being. Paradox is just the mind's reaction to — and translation of — the inherent Mystery of Being.

Cultivating intimacy with that Mystery leaves us in the position of

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knowing nothing and recognizing everything. And pervading all of this is the feeling of Being, whatever state we are in.

Silence speaks most eloquently through the feeling of Being. Everything is said without anything necessarily needed to be said.

Silence is the answer that dissolves every query, the answer that literally makes light of even the deepest question. Universes come and go; Silence remains.

And so too does the feeling of Being.

Even now, no matter what your condition, emotional and otherwise, the feeling of Being runs through it and all of its permutations, like the string of a necklace through its beads. Sacred connection in the raw.

Get friendlier, much friendlier, with whatever emotional state you are now in, divesting it of its egoic agendas and riding it into the feeling of Being — and soon something more real than answers will seize our attention by the heart, rendering us all but incapable of distraction.

When we invite our suffering onto the dancefloor, we are taking the hand, however leprous or clammy or shy, of our feeling self. If we won't dance with that one, if we won't touch and care for that one, we'll simply reduce the feeling of Being to a concept, a goal, a mere abstraction on which to hook our spiritual ambition.

Dance with anger, and you might have to go a few rounds with rage, but eventually that rage may, if stripped of its aggression without robbing it of its vitality, mutate into joy, the joy of being nakedly alive.

Dance with grief, and you may have to curl up in an agony of sorrow for a while, but sooner or later your very rawness of heart will both ground you and give you a sky vaster than you can imagine, connecting you to all that is.

Dance with fear, and you may have to spend some time with terror and maddening expectation, but keeping that dreaded one close to your heart will eventually bring about a miraculous transformation: the monster will fade, leaving a quality of loving acceptance that is but the human face of a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Dance with shame, and you might well have to take a spin in guilt's sleazier hangouts, but staying there, befriending both the parental and childish sides of guilt, will divest it of its fear, until it is but shame unplugged, and then not even shame, but only forgiveness in its merciful purity.

Dancing with it all, we make our way Home.

MASTERS INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY PRACTICUM

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

2010 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, energetics, and spirit.

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To this end, the training will blend exceptionally deep work on oneself and equally deep work with others, in personal, social, and spiritual contexts. Healing will be the primary intention and activity. Approaches that are taught and practised will be held, as much as possible, in a perspective that transcends them.

WE WILL ONLY BE TAKING TWELVE PARTICIPANTS.

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

Graduates of previous practicums have not only found themselves at home with new skills (sufficient enough to begin working as an integral counselor), but have also done work of such depth — and not just a few times, but *many* times — during the practicum that they invariably emerge more grounded, open, intuitive, and confident about both themselves and their ability to effectively guide others.

Much of the depth and quality of the work done has to do with being with a group of individuals who are all deeply committed to their own healing and awakening. In such a setting, there's not only more than enough safety and trust, but also a rare intimacy, generated by sharing such deep work both as a participant and as a counselor-to-be.

LOCATION & STRUCTURE:

The Practicum will take place over 5 four-day modules in 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 and Diane).

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

PREREQUISITE: Previous work with Robert and Diane.

TUITION: US\$7000. Nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 required. Lodging and meals will be extra. Contact info@robertmasters.com to arrange payment.

SCHEDULE:

2010: March 4-7, May 6-9, July 8-11, September 9-12, November 11-14

For more information regarding groups and trainings with Robert and Diane, contact info@RobertMasters.com.

All checks (deposit & otherwise) should be mailed to Robert Masters, 16133 9th Avenue, Surrey, BC V4A 1A5.

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

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2010 Schedule

February 10-14: Breakthrough in Mexico