

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 30 October 2007

CREATING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

The world desperately needs authentic community, not just as an appealing concept or occasional gathering of kindred spirits, but as a living reality that is firmly grounded in post-tribal, cult-transcending integrity, intimacy, and practicality.

There is of course considerable personal and cultural resistance to this (but not necessarily to its surrogates!), resistance that must be thoroughly explored and understood before trying to establish such community. This resistance is rooted not only in the struggle between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group, but also in the often spectacular failures of so many so-called communities over the past 40 or so years. Later I'll say more about these failures, but for now let's look more deeply at individual versus group needs, beginning with the necessity of having a clearly and strongly established sense of personal autonomy.

If we don't have enough autonomy, we'll too easily be pulled by our craving to belong into any group that provides us with a sufficiently strong sense of belonging — and if we have too much autonomy (which manifests as an exaggerated independence) or are overly invested in it, we'll keep ourselves cut off from community, including the kind that could truly be beneficial for us. What this basically means is that we cannot be a healthily functioning part of a group if we have not done enough self-work so as to possess a firm yet adaptable autonomy. Put another way, we need to have developed a sense of self that cannot be seduced and that at the same time is capable of flexibility and even surrender under the right conditions. We must be able to give ourselves without giving ourselves away.

And more than healthy autonomy is necessary: We also need to possess a capacity for deep connection, communion, intimacy. This is not arrived at by merely joining another or an organization, as many do by collapsing or abandoning their personal boundaries (in order to “be in relationship” or “fit in”). To go beyond codependency (however we-centered it might be), we must have developed the capacity to *expand* our boundaries so as to include the other; this means that we simultaneously maintain the integrity of our self and bring the other into relatively intimate communion with us.

Strong boundaries don’t have to be rigid or impermeable. Without such boundaries, such a capacity to protect and honor our integrity of being, we will confuse connection with fusion, integrity with allegiance, surrender with submission, and intimacy with romance. Again, deep work on oneself is essential. Enthusiasm is not enough. The surrender that is part of genuine communion does not mean bypassing or casting aside our autonomy (which would be a sign not of surrender, but of *submission*), but rather not losing touch with it even as we, consciously and discerningly, open our borders.

A capacity for *interpersonal* (or relational) intimacy is essential if we are to effectively function in a community. We must recognize that how close we can actually get to another depends upon more than the degree of inclusion; indiscriminately throwing open our borders invites not intimacy, but rather exploitation, delusion, and regret. A certain separation from the other may be needed, if only to bring that one into clearer focus.

Without such separation, intimacy becomes little more than fusion, exaggerated cohesion, a cult of two, a “we” estranged both from “I” and the collective “us” of humanity. In genuine intimacy, togetherness and apartness coexist, each honoring, illuminating, and embracing the other, as if in acknowledgment of the fact that they actually are fundamentally inseparable — we cannot separate unless we are already connected, and we cannot connect unless we are already separated.

And the capacity for *intrapersonal* (or occurring within the individual) intimacy is also essential if we are to effectively function in a community. In becoming intimate with all that we are — and therefore, to whatever degree, with all that is — we more and more deeply recognize who and what we really are. Instead of trying to get rid of what we don't like about ourselves, we instead relate to it, and relate to it in such a way that it no longer obstructs our well-being.

That is, we choose relationship with our every quality — and I mean “our” in both a singular and collective sense — rather than separation. Intimacy then becomes more our passion than does transcendence, and relationship becomes not something to outgrow, but rather something to fully embody and live, especially as we realize, right to our core, that everything — *everything!* — exists through relationship.

There is, of course, much more to be said about intimacy in the context of community, but let's now move on to looking, albeit briefly, at what actually happened to so many intentional communities since the 1960s. Most began with an inspiring vision, coupled with charismatic leadership and a devoted following. Principles of the highest sort were held aloft. A sense of creating (or being on the leading edge of creating) a truly viable alternative to conventional culture and the nuclear family gave community leaders and members a kind of pioneering high, often in conjunction with an aura of being special and an us-versus-them mentality with regard to the surrounding culture. Abusive behavior often ran rampant, typically rationalized by community members as a “teaching” or “device” or “test” of some sort.

The more cultic such communities became (and therefore the more resistant to inside dissension and outside critical feedback), the less likely they were to see themselves thus. The shift from community to cult happened over and over again, even when the leaders of such communities preached against cultism. The trouble was, very few community leaders bothered to explore or even consider their own investment in having their community be a cult. It was far easier to

rail against outsiders who called their community a cult, outsiders who of course could not possibly really get what was going on in such communities. So all the good happening in the community and all the good that the community was doing would be trotted out, conveniently obscuring or minimizing what was not working.

Hence a major consideration in the formation of authentic community is that of cultism. Yes, some degree of cultism is all but inevitable in even the most mature of groups, but it is less than a minor factor in such settings. It is crucial that those wanting to form an authentic community all have sufficient intimacy with their own cultic tendencies so as not to be seducible by them (this means, in part, doing some deep psychotherapy regarding their conditioning, in conjunction with fitting practices). The essay following this one, entitled “Found in the Toolkit for Operating a Cult,” describes in detail some of the key strategies that help keep cults in place; I recommend that you read it after you finish this essay.

Intentional communities in general are not conventional, at least in contemporary Western culture. Usually, they are obviously nonconventional, and this poses a perspectival problem — because for many people “nonconventional” simply means something regressive. Adding fuel to this bias is the fact that more than a few such communities were indeed regressive, self-consciously tribal, overembracing and romanticizing various Eastern or indigenous cultures, making moral real estate out of cultivating a “oneness” with all things while at the same time reinforcing an us-versus-them mentality with regard to the community-at-large that surrounded them. But “nonconventional” can also mean *beyond* the conventional. Lumping together all nonconventional community-creating as something regressive, misguided, or immature is an unfortunate but commonplace error. A postconventional community is not regressive, but progressive; it is not tribal, but trans-tribal; and it is not cultic.

Cultism *overseparates*. It is a tightly encapsulated, self-obsessed us, with

the rest of existence a rather distant *them*. Whatever caring exists within cultism — and it, however misguided, can be a very deep caring — is eventually impoverished by its isolation from the rest of Life. Initially, cults at best protect what is inside their walls, but sooner or later they become *guards rather than guardians*. Thus does the community-as-tribe become the community-as-cult.

Cults are also overly exclusive (through, for example, the teachings or beliefs to which members must adhere). Such exclusivity commonly plagues groups which have an excessively strong investment in staying and growing together. Absorption or infiltration by the community-at-large is usually avoided or resisted by such groups — social homogenization (with its compensatory designer individuality) being understandably less than popular — but often at the price of a tenaciously guarded impermeability or “justified” lack of responsiveness to “outsiders” who are clearly not sympathetic to the group’s ways. Thus do cults arise.

If the alienation, the painful sense of separateness or estrangement that so often drives us to seek membership *somewhere*, is not properly addressed, so that our yearning for togetherness is not just an escape from our sense of separateness or strandedness, then we’ll remain highly susceptible to the pull of various “parental” or “grounding” or “we have the answer” institutions and movements, including so-called communities.

It is easy to become overattached to whatever appears to provide for us. However, in becoming part of its “us,” we enter into an allegiance (to it) that actually reinforces the very separateness that first propelled us toward our particular “support” system. But what exactly is it that is being supported? Does the hand that feeds us expect us to convert to its faith or guidelines? Are we more likely to keep getting fed if we do? Is there an ulterior motive, and if so, do we see it, or do we even *want* to see it? Whatever is doing the giving needs to be exposed and illuminated.

The Crucible of Awakening

How many organizations (including spiritual/growth communities) include — or even want to include — within themselves an *uninterfered-with* self-investigative branch, one that has consistently unimpeded access to resources *outside* the organization (such as persons who might bring the kind of criticism to that organization which could necessitate its dismantling or radical reorganization)?

What happens when the shelter that once gave us so much needed support becomes too tight or poor a fit? Do we then make ourselves wrong, assuming that there's something we are doing that's generating our restlessness or sense of crampedness, or do we instead challenge the very structuring and foundational assumptions of such a shelter, no matter how convincingly our protests might be summarized as “resistance” or “our problem” or mere adolescent reactivity? Even the most supportive of groups can easily become stickily confining webs, entangling us in their expectations and morality.

Organizations usually tend to create and propagandize for whatever helps ensure their continuation — and if this is not clearly seen, cultism is all but inevitable.

I have gone on at some length about cultism, for if it is significantly present, authentic community simply won't happen. Let's return now to the tribalism (a tightly bound “we” over against the rest of humankind) that was (and often still is) common to so many intentional communities, “alternative” and otherwise. If it is simply taken as a given — which isn't difficult to do, for there are many attractive qualities to tribalism — the community will remain easy prey for cultic ambitions and practices. What is needed is not an extinguishing of tribalism, but rather a perspective and way of being that can include tribalism — or at least the best qualities of tribalism — without being reduced to it. Hence *post-tribal*.

There are things about tribalism (like the communal sharing of meals, work, schooling, and play) that can serve an authentic community. Tribalism emphasizes the group at the expense of the individual, but a

post-tribal community does not, making sure that the balance between individual and group needs is an ongoing consideration, even when the balance necessarily has to swing to one side or the other. Tribalism takes us from being me-centered to we-centered, but it is a narrow, rigidly enclosed we.

The next step is far more inclusive, featuring a we-centeredness in which “we” arises in the fully collective sense, embracing all of humankind, without any ethnocentrism. This is the beginning of authentic community. As the shift occurs from we-centered (even at its best) to being-centered, authentic community takes real root and flourishes. (Note: It’s important to realize that being-centeredness does not mean the extinguishing of we-centeredness, but rather *includes* we-centeredness without, however, being confined to its operational level.)

And now on to community leadership: Just as ships need captains, so too do communities need leaders. Unfortunately, many of the leaders of “alternative” communities did far more than captain their crew, assuming an excessive authority. This is not the place to revisit their failures and blindness to their own motives, since this has been lavishly exposed and commented upon by many sources, including the mainstream media. So many gurus with fallen haloes and pants, so many spiritual teachers with the most far-fetched of excuses, spiritually rationalizing behavior that by almost any standard is aberrant. It’s a long list, with debates still raging between those who won’t criticize particular teachers and those who will. It’s not really a stalemate, but might as well be, given the ongoing lack of resolution in such arguments.

What qualities might characterize the leaders of authentic communities? Here’s a partial list, in no particular order: (1) Zero interest in (and zero support of) cultism and its payoffs; (2) No ambition to be the leader; (3) A deep and abiding capacity for being-centered relatedness, as shown by consistently demonstrated integrity and compassion, along with an ability to get to the heart of the matter efficiently and effectively; (4) Exceptionally effective in working with groups, without in any way

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marginalizing or otherwise shortchanging individual work; (5) Willing and able to see their own flaws; (6) Deep receptivity to inside dissension and outside critical feedback, coupled with a willingness to make good use of such information as soon as possible; (6) An ongoing exposure and uprooting of any cultism, in conjunction with supporting fitting personal work, psychotherapeutic and otherwise, for any members stuck in cultism or other life-negating patterns; (7) No grandiosity, no self-aggrandizement, no exaggerated promises, no arrogance, no bypassing of responsibility, no bullshit; (8) Either in a deeply committed being-centered relationship (as epitomized by mature monogamy) or fully capable of being in such a relationship; (9) Squeaky clean sexual energy, unpolluted by any pornographic or exploitive or otherwise immature erotic tendencies; (10) Fully and obviously committed to their own healing and awakening; and (11) Openness to their community evolving, even if it means their position becomes obsolete or that the community disintegrates.

Authentic community is more than just a good idea. It asks for much more than mere idealism. A group of individuals enthused about authentic community cannot form it just because the notion of it appeals to them; to truly form it, they would have to already be deeply engaged in self-work, to the point where they had become incapable of cultic behavior. Authentic community is not a haven for cultism. It is simultaneously a crucible and a sanctuary for deep work (both inner, relational, and cultural) and transformation, providing optimal conditions for awakening from our entrapping dreams.

In such a community, members would not allow each other to get away with neurotic behavior (including that which characterizes the inner workings of cults), but would instead challenge each other to more fully enter and embody the deeper life for which they yearned. There would be plenty of compassion, a compassion quite capable of fierceness when necessary. Everyone would support everyone else's healing and awakening and transition into a deeper life, generating a sense of "us" that didn't exclude those not living in such a setting. This stage of "us"

makes possible an even more clearly articulated, embodied, and fully functional individuality. However, as wonderful as this all might sound, it is — especially in its beginning stages — not an easy undertaking, existing far beyond the romanticizing of community to which many still fall prey.

In authentic community, we do not so much find liberation from limitation, as we do *through* limitation. This begins with us becoming *intimate* with all of our various aspects, so that the *inner* community that they constitute works as an optimally functioning whole. Without such integration, we'll go into *outer* community expecting it to make us whole. Many of us have lived in intentional communities (whether as leaders or members), but without sufficient maturity to make them really work. A group of individuals who are *already* whole — and who therefore are already operating from an integrally-informed consciousness — and who strongly desire to awaken further and be of genuine service through an ongoingly intimate association with kindred spirits, is the necessary prelude to authentic community.

May we open ourselves as fully as we can to the possibility of authentic community. It is time.

FOUND IN THE TOOLKIT FOR OPERATING A CULT

In what follows, I do not necessarily mean “cult” in the automatically pejorative, sensationalistic manner of the mainstream media — which are themselves often quite cultic in their exclusion of anything that seriously challenges them — but rather in the more general sense of a self-enclosed entity that’s both overattached to its core beliefs and all but impermeable, except perhaps superficially, to outside feedback and inside dissension. (And in what follows, I also speak from personal experience, on both sides of the fence.)

The Crucible of Awakening

Cults can be relatively benign, and they can also be exceedingly destructive. The range is enormous. Ego is a cult of one, plenty of couples are cults of two, and many religious and political movements are cults of many. My primary focus in this blog is on cult leaders (especially of religious/spiritual/personal growth communities) and their operational strategies, such strategies of course being not employed just by them alone, as many of those in relational hotwater can testify!

ALTITUDE INDICATOR: Wear this in a suitably prominent place, within 18 inches or so of your halo or wise-teacher aura, while ensuring that you don't inadvertently wire it to your ego. To activate it, simply make sure that your students not only realize that you're on a higher level than them, but also that their questioning of or resistance to you simply reflects their current level. That is, they're just not developed enough to really see and understand you, and your job is to help them recognize this.

Of course, you can ease the impact of this by being friendly or somewhat self-revealing to them, perhaps even assuring them that you too are human and have flaws, without, however, bringing any real heat to yourself. If you can manage to do this with some show of humility, it will likely be even more effective. You might also consider setting up an "inner circle," favoring those who are most strongly aligned with you, while dangling such craved-for status before the rest of your students, so as to further their own growth, if only by inspiring them to more fully embrace your teachings. Letting your students know that hierarchy is not necessarily a bad thing also helps. And last but not least, keep your altitude indicator turned on and visible, just in case some of your students forget that you're established at a higher stage than they are.

FOCUS-REVERSAL GIZMO: To turn this on, simply make sure that your students believe, and consistently believe, that whatever they may feel critical of regarding you is in fact exactly what they feel critical of in themselves. So if you're saying or doing something that bothers them, their job is to see what that tells them about themselves, rather

than to distract themselves by bringing any focus to you. And, if you wish, you can take this a step further, and recommend that they, for their own sake and spiritual deepening, do some sort of gratitude practice for having had their own work thus pointed out to them.

If you've triggered anger or judgment or shadow-elements in them, this should be an occasion for appreciating rather than criticizing you. In short, make sure that they realize that whatever they don't like about you is simply a projection of their own shortcomings onto you. If things get sticky, as with students who are trying to hold you accountable (instead of dealing with their own issues), find fault with their delivery (e.g., does it lack compassion or higher stage cognition?); it shouldn't then take long to shift the focus back to them.

IT'S-FOR-YOUR-OWN-GOOD ENTREE: This can be served at various times, ideally right after the It's-Such-A-Gift-To-Be-Here appetizers. What's important is that it gets swallowed; digestion doesn't really matter, so long as things stay down. All you have to do is remind your students that whatever you're doing to them, however outrageous or heavy-handed, is for their own good. It may look like abuse, but it's not, because you say so, and you of course know more, since you are, as your altitude indicator makes so obvious, operating and speaking from a higher or deeper level. Even when you are clearly and undeniably sloppy or heartless, you can tell your students that their job, their duty, their dharma, is take this as a teaching and opportunity to look at their own shadow; if they are thus spurred into a positive direction by all this, you can then make spiritual real estate out of the fact that your sloppiness or heartlessness served them, especially if you can convey this with a show of humility.

SELF-WORTH PILLS: These analgesic/euphoric wonders can be given out, sparingly of course, to reward good behavior, namely that of serving you and your work. There are a few side-effects, like moral numbness and a suspension of critical faculties, but the sweetly narcotic power of these little mindbombs more than makes up for that, all but

ensuring that you'll stay authoritatively enthroned, with your students scrambling to be close to you. Yes, your students may get addicted to these pills, but it is for a good cause, and sacrifices do need to be made if one is to truly progress. And why shouldn't you reward and reinforce good behavior?

ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL BLINDERS: The latest models are included here, with many variations from which to choose. Who says that those in cults don't have a choice? Serving-the-Dharma blinders are especially popular, for these allow your students to really feel that they are making a difference by being with you (no matter what you do), especially when they have learned to associate being in your company or in your community with living in truth. There are also other popular blinders, including the We-Are-Not-A-Cult blinders, which frame any and all critics of you and your community or organization as deluded or misinformed.

RESISTANCE-BUSTING CATTLE PRODS: These are, out of compassion, set to a lower voltage than those actually used for bovines, but they still pack a helluva wallop, for the good of your students and their but's. Students need to learn that when they resist you or your teachings, they are operating from a lower stage and are simply resisting truth, life, and love, and so need a strong reminder to get back on track. Whatever catalyzes awakening. After all, you're here to help awaken your students, aren't you?

Yes, your students may yell or scream or curl up in a ball when you zap them, but something's got to awaken them, and you'd be derelict in your duty if you were not to use your God-given tools. And you can always follow a good hard prodding with an It's-For-Your-Own-Good Entrée. Some may say that you are not looking after your students, and are only making excuses for your bad behavior, but they don't have a clue as to what's really going on. As many a parent has said as the hand or belt is swung down hard, "This hurts me more than it hurts you."

UPCOMING GROUPS

AN OVERVIEW

The Situation:

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

The Context:

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

Who It's For:

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

About the Work:

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

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

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

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

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

The structuring of the groups is not preset, but instead arises in fitting accord with both group and individual needs. Each participant has an opportunity to work, in relevant detail and in sufficient depth, with his or her particular concerns, and not necessarily just once in the group.

In every group (except for the Men's groups), I am assisted by my wife and spiritual partner, Diane, whose presence, insight, and deep heart add immeasurably to each group.

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

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

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

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

— Arthur Gillard

Breakthrough

A WEEKEND in BOULDER, OCTOBER 20th-21st DEVOTED TO DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

Tuition: US\$680. A nonrefundable deposit of \$340 is required. Full tuition due one month before group begins.

Location: The Heart Fire Healing Center, in downtown Boulder.

Maximum number of participants: **13**.

“Aware of the plethora of skilled psychotherapists in the Boulder area (and having worked with Robert before moving to Boulder), it is with pleasure that I highly recommend his upcoming Boulder group. I have found Robert's work to be extremely transformational — both as a group participant and in individual sessions.

“In my experience, Robert brings to his work astute presence, fierce compassion, and an extremely rich and skillful repertoire for working with our experiences of our energetic, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions.”

— Brenda Isherwood

Woman Unbound

A WEEKEND INTENSIVE FOR WOMEN

NOVEMBER 3rd-4th, 2007 in White Rock, BC

with Diane & Robert

An increase in power does *not* have to mean a decrease in femininity.

Being fully alive — passionately and deeply embodied — is every woman's birthright. Such aliveness requires embodying real power, so that what needs to be done and said gets done with maximum effectiveness.

But many women, however loving they may be, don't have full access to their true power and voice, and as a result have not sufficiently represented themselves, attracting situations and relationships that have only reinforced their inability to truly speak up and stand up for themselves.

This group is about taking back the power that originally was given away in order to survive difficult conditions, and taking it back not just mentally, but also physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

Doing so involves expressing, fully expressing, what's been held back because of fear, insecurity, and social pressures. Sometimes this is gentle and flowing, and other times it is necessarily fierce — whatever helps the passion flow.

Part of what is needed is a reclaiming 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 will involve deep letting go and opening, through a creative mix of psychotherapy, bodywork, sound-healing, group exercises, and spiritual deepening practices. The maximum number of participants will be 10.

Tuition: CDN\$630.

“I’m not exactly sure what I expected when I arrived for our *Women Unbound* weekend, but I know that results were more than I could have hoped for. Robert and Diane’s skill and guidance were breathtaking; the loving, caring, space that they created allowed us to feel safe, even as they pushed us to difficult places. The women I met, listened to, and cried with, gave me strength and inspired me to do things that I might not have been able to do otherwise. Though we entered the room as strangers, we left as sisters.”

— Jennifer Skiendzielewski

Man Unbound

A THREE-DAY GROUP FOR MEN

November 16th-18th, 2007, in Scottsdale, AZ

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

Location: Franciscan Renewal Center, located on 25 acres of secluded

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desert grounds in the heart of the Scottsdale/Paradise Valley resort district of Arizona. For more details, visit www.thecasa.org.

Maximum number of participants: **14**.

“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 practiced yoga and many types of meditation over the years, but 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

A Deeper Life

A FIVE DAY RETREAT

DEVOTED TO DEEP HEALING & AWAKENING

January 25th-29th, 2008, in Hawaii

Location:

Yoga Oasis, a beautiful, secluded retreat center on the eastern tip of the Big Island of Hawaii, 5 miles from the village of Pahoa and 2 miles from the ocean. Located on 26 acres in lush rainforest, Yoga Oasis is a short drive to surfing, geo-thermal warm springs, tide pools, snorkeling, kayaking, natural underground saunas, and a black sand beach. For more information, visit **www.YogaOasis.org** (check out the video showing the retreat). The Big Island itself, which you’ll likely want to spend some time on after the group, is a marvelous place to explore and relax, with its otherworldly volcanic park and astonishingly varied terrain.

Tuition, Lodging, & Meals: US\$1895, or CDN\$2195 (includes GST).

Rooms will be assigned according to the date of registration; the earlier you register, the more room choices you'll have. We are only taking **14** participants. A deposit (nonrefundable after September 1st, 2007) of \$400 is required. Full payment is required by November 1, 2007. There are 5 spaces left.

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Transformational Intensive For Couples

September 15th-16th, 2007 in Seattle

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.

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.

“Working with Robert and Diane through the various relationship crises that my partner and I have gone through in the last 3 years has been a Godsend. We have moved through so much in our relationship, and would have faltered had it not been for the diligent, highly skilled, and caring

work from Robert and Diane. When I sit down and actually think about all we've been through, and how much this amazing couple has been there to support us in our personal work, it's actually overwhelming. I wouldn't be the man I am today if not for this powerful work. I can only hope to be as encouraging, supportive, wise, understanding, and committed in my work as a counsellor as Robert and Diane are."

— Gord McKay

TUITION & LOGISTICS: 10am to 6pm both days. Limited to **6** couples only. US\$1200 per couple. \$500 deposit required.

Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

2008 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM FOR COUPLES

in SEATTLE

AN OPPORTUNITY to learn (1) unique and exceptionally effective psychotherapeutic, spiritual, and bodywork skills; and (2) how to combine these in counselling work.

PLUS at the same time an opportunity not only to do very deep work both on yourself and as a couple, but also to do this in the company of other couples as committed as you to making their relationship be all that it can be.

The purpose of this training (beyond providing an optimal environment for doing highly effective individual *and* couples work) is to deepen the capacity of participants to effectively counsel others through a dynamic, intuitively structured approach that creatively and effectively 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 practiced will be held, as much as possible, in a perspective that transcends them.

You'll learn not to rely upon nor necessarily impose structure, but rather to let it naturally arise from your relationship and interaction with those whom you're counseling. Working this way weans us from the security — the eventually deadening security — of operating from behind a preset methodology or structure, 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 our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Love, integrity, and presence will be the cornerstones of our practice, providing an ongoing crucible/sanctuary for deeply embodied and highly effective integral work for couples who (1) want a more conscious, loving, and liberating relationship with each other, and (2) are ready to work through whatever's in the way.

The training will take place over six 3-day weekends in 2008 in Seattle. The dates are: January 4-6, March 7-9, May 2-4, June 27-29, September 5-7, and November 7-9.

Tuition is US\$5900 per person. A nonrefundable deposit of \$1000 is required. Payment can be made either by check or by credit card online by going to the STORE page at <http://www.RobertMasters.com>.

As the training is limited to 5 couples only, early registration is highly recommended.

“Over my 10 years as a counselor, I have consistently sought out additional training. Many times, I have felt information overload (the skills felt mechanical). My experience in Robert's Practicum was different than that. The practicum was profoundly experiential and there was support to

integrate the skills. I feel much more confident as a therapist, and overall in my ability to be in contact with others. It's not just what Robert is teaching, but his strong presence that provides the opportunity for deep personal healing. Diane's presence adds a sense of being sweetly held, and at the same time, she persistently nudges for more authenticity. It is through this experience that I have expanded my ability to provide a healing presence for others."

— Deanne Cousins

Note: My Practicums aren't just for therapists who want to learn a more intuitive, integral, and bodywork-including approach to their practice, nor just for those who are wanting to work in the counselling/psychotherapy field, but also for those who want to participate with kindred spirits in a year of exceptionally deep personal work, during which they will learn skills that will serve them in every area of their life.

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

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

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.

Robert's Remaining 2007 Work Schedule

September 29-30 Embodying the Deep Masculine: White Rock, BC
October 5-7 2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC
October 13-16 Bodywork-in-Psychotherapy Practicum: White Rock, BC
October 20-21 Breakthrough: Boulder, Colorado
November 3 Woman Unbound: White Rock, BC
November 10-11 Freedom Through Intimacy: Seattle
November 16-18 Man Unbound: Scottsdale, Arizona
Nov. 30-Dec. 2 Practicum Graduates Group: TBA
December 7-9 2007 Practicum: White Rock, BC

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