

THE CRUCIBLE OF AWAKENING

Issue 29 September 2007

“WHERE’S THE JUICE?”

“Where’s the juice?” This is a simple but far from irrelevant question that often surfaces, however mutely, when overdone intellectualizing or emotional flatness have assumed center stage. It is especially applicable in the context of relational intimacy:

She: “I’m tired of you not getting it.”

He: “I’m trying my best, and it’s never enough.”

She: “So why am I always the one who brings this up?”

He: “What do you mean ‘always?’”

She: “That’s it — pick apart what I’m saying.”

He: “I’m trying to communicate, and I just get shot down.”

She: “I’m so sick of you feeling sorry for yourself.”

He: (*Long tense silence*)

She: “I don’t have much left.”

He: “So why don’t you just leave?”

She: (*Starts to cry*)

He: “I’m sorry...”

She: “No you’re not.”

He: (*Rolling eyes up*) “Okay, okay, you’re right.”

She: “You just don’t get it.” (*Looks down and away*)

He: “Don’t get what?”

A couple sits before me facing each other, drained and defeated-looking, too tired to face and explore what is not working in their relationship. Another couple sits in the same place, complaining about each other,

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but not taking any real stands, other than that of not taking a stand. And yet another couple, plunked down in the same spot, are putting all their energy into staying nice, reasonable, superficial. So we have the cases of no juice, me-against-you quibbling juice (a mean trickle), and let's-keep-it-nice juice (a stagnant trickle). In all three cases, things feel flat, uninspired, boring; there's not much excitement or passion. At the same time, though, there's an unspoken commitment on the part of both members of the couple not to rock the boat beyond a certain point.

To investigate this commitment, this mutually deadening pact, is to encounter the core fears of each other. Some may not speak up because they are afraid that doing so might make their partner abandon them, through actually leaving or at least withdrawing or shutting down for an indeterminate period. Others may speak up more, but don't take it as far as is needed, because they'd rather have the familiarity of being with their partner — however unappealing that might be — than the potentially scarier reality of possibly having to leave their partner for unknown territory. The craving for security, especially if we've had a far from stable history, can run very deep, keeping us hanging on in — or overtolerating — situations that we would seriously challenge or turn away from if we felt more secure.

The bottom line here is: If we are not secure in ourselves, not stably connected to and grounded in our core of being, and are therefore dependent upon what's outside us — for example, a partner — for providing us with a reassuring sense of security, then we will not be capable of being in a truly liberating relationship. We'll instead be in a relationship primarily because it seems to secure or anchor us, not really seeing that what we have entered is more prison than sanctuary. Thus do we do our relational time, until freedom and truth and love become more central to us than being secure — and what irony there is in this, given that the embodying of freedom and truth and love actually secures us far more deeply than do security-centered relationships.

Being secure does not mean that we don't get insecure, but that our

insecurity is not permitted to sit behind the driver's wheel. When we really explore the nature of security, we realize right to our marrow that Life is inherently insecure; but if we stop short in that exploration, we will likely retreat into whatever most convincingly seems to secure us, including being in a relationship that, whatever its lack of juice, is nice and solid, or at least appears that way to enough of a degree to snare us.

If we, however, take our exploration of insecurity further, we will eventually find ourselves in the position of not minding our insecurity all that much, perhaps even finding some security in embracing our insecurity. There is great freedom in recognizing and openly feeling the innate insecurity and ever-changing nature of what is. Unguardedly facing insecurity secures us, rooting us not in some bastion of immunity, but in love, truth, integrity, lucid awareness, happiness, passion, being.

Intimate relationship can be a remarkable sanctuary for embracing the inherent insecurity of Life, plugging us into the raw reality of our fundamental nature. In the very heart of Life's perpetual perishing, we are none other than that for which we most deeply yearn; and the realization of this, when sufficiently embodied, secures us, rooting us in the boundless vastitude of the Supreme Unknown and the Love that pervades It. With even some of this ultimate sense of belonging at the center of our relationship, we cannot help but find freedom through intimacy. Moving toward this, and continuing to do so, is enough. It is more secure than security.

Then whatever happens in our relationship is basically just grist for the mill of Awakening — and the more juice, the more energy, the more passion — and I mean full-blooded passion — we bring to this, the more fully it happens, the more powerfully the wheels turn and grind, the more spacious and open we become, simultaneously anchored in the Boundless and in the particular, letting our relationship with our beloved deepen our relationship with all that is.

OUR EVERY CONSTRUCTION

Our every construction
Houses its own destruction
And still we continue to build
As if through that we'll be fulfilled
We try to keep the fall out of mind
Somewhere reassuringly undefined
But in remembering the fall
With more than just mental recall
We are less hooked by the rise
Seeing the fall amidst all the highs

Death sweetens Life
If we don't get bitter about it
Just because nothing lasts
Doesn't mean it is nothing

See Eternity playing peekaboo
With its creations and realizations
Dragging us from our slumber
Until only the Real remains
And then? There's no then then
But let's not get too Zen
Whatever's guiding this pen
As I think, and think outloud
In the midst of this imaginary crowd
Is doing all the rest of it
Including providing an audience
Without which there'd be no show
And no house to bring down

NEUROSES OUT GETTING A TAN

The city shines like wobbling tinsel
Across the softly blazing bay
Its canyons flimsy as barbequed thoughts
But who cares now that summer's here
Lawnmowers loudly leading the way
Beachchatter willowing over the sand
Cosily embedded in a vast narcotic buzz
Neuroses out getting a tan
Unzipped days long and drunk with light
Beauty slaloms through beached flesh
Later streets streaming with casual longings
But who cares now that summer's here
Let profundity wait for a chillier spell
The days blur into shades of an eternal weekend
Thought I'd something deeper to say
But my fingertips keep sticking to the keys
My voice surfing away upon the lazy blue air
As I forget what I was going to share

What we are is never out of season
Even when we act without reason
But who gives a damn now that summer's here
Birds embroider the cloudless sky
Children bicycle the street away
Out the door we go beachward bound
Armed with towels and breezy dreams
Our eyes circling the baking brown
Looking for a place to lay down
Beneath the noonday sun
And cook until we're done

RELATIONSHIP-INFECTING DELUSIONS

(Excerpted from Chapter 15 of my new book on relational intimacy)

1. I won't confront you because I don't want to hurt you.

This and related statements — like “I didn't tell you because I didn't want to disturb you” — may sound good on the surface, perhaps even nobly intentioned, but are no more than denial in caring's clothing, whether consciously or unconsciously animated. They are not really intended to spare our partner pain, but rather to keep us as far as possible from *our* own pain, including that of facing — that is, confronting — what we are actually doing.

How ironic it is that our supposed effort — so nicely dressed — not to hurt our partner actually hurts them, sooner or later, *more* than direct disclosure. In our stated intention not to confront them because we don't want to hurt them, we sound — or at least *want* to sound — as if we *are* there for them and are being considerate, but in reality we are not.

Instead of being straightforward in front of our partner — *upfront* — we are elsewhere, desperately trying not to rock the boat, facing not our partner, but something less challenging (like being resolutely nice).

If we are afraid to confront our intimate other — assuming of course that it is not dangerous to do so — then we need to confront that fear, through our own efforts, or in caring conjunction with our partner, or through professional help. Relationships devoid of confrontation are relationships that are flat, relationships that are more about surviving than thriving, addicted to a numbing by niceness, a deadening that rejects the depths and invests far too much in the shallows.

Just as avoiding death deadens us, so too does avoiding confrontation. Confrontation does not have to be hell! It can be life-enhancing challenge, healthy combat, intimacy-deepening fieriness, as vulnerable as it is intense. Bypassing it only deepens and reinforces our suffering.

6. I'm doing the best I can.

This is perhaps the most popular excuse of all, making a mockery of accountability. Most who believe it also believe it of everyone. The notion that we are doing the best we can lets everyone off the hook, including us — for then, we don't have to ruffle any feathers, raise any hackles, kick up a storm, make a fuss, or otherwise confront anybody. Such a belief robs us of autonomy and accountability, implying as it does that we don't really have a choice as to what we do.

If we view others just as products of their conditioning, then how can we hold them responsible for what they did? After all, they couldn't help it — or could they? There's also a fear of actually recognizing that they *did* make a choice when they hurt us, for if we do see this, then what are we going to do? Can we then remain passive children in adult bodies? To move beyond such adult-erated stances, we have to stop hiding behind facile phrases like “I'm doing the best I can” or “Everyone makes mistakes” or “I'm just human.” Such alibis set the bar *very* low.

When you are being unkind to your partner, and know that you are doing so, are you really doing your best? And what about when “doing our best” is simply not good enough? For example, if doing my best means that I'm remaining a drug addict and am refusing to get any treatment, then what? “I'm doing the best I can” strands us in the domain of blind compassion (neurotically tolerant, confrontation-phobic, indiscriminating “caring”), framing us as victims and enabling us to stay that way. Blind compassion diminishes and disempowers us, whereas real compassion empowers us to take the necessary action, however painful that might be.

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.

**For more information, or to register,
contact info@RobertMasters.com**

Woman Unbound

A RESIDENTIAL GROUP FOR WOMEN

SEPTEMBER 21-23, 2007 in OJAI, CALIFORNIA

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 14, so there is plenty of time for each woman to receive in-depth high quality attention.

Tuition: US\$795. A nonrefundable deposit of \$400 is required.

Lodging & Meals: US\$250. The group will be held near Ojai on a private hot springs property on the shores of the pristine Matilija River.

Breakthrough

A TWO DAY GROUP

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

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**.

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

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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 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**.

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 Pahoia 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. The group is now half full.

Embodying the Deep Masculine

A TWO-DAY GROUP FOR MEN

September 29th-30th, 2007, in White Rock, BC.

TUITION: US\$550 or CDN\$595 plus GST. Limited to **10** men only.

FREEDOM THROUGH INTIMACY

A Transformational Intensive For Couples

**September 15th-16th, 2007,
in White Rock, BC**

Intimate relationship has immense transformational possibility, especially when we approach its difficulties as opportunities instead of as problems. Opportunities for what? To know ourselves more deeply, to love and live more fully, to become intimate with *all* that we are — in short, to be freed from our suffering.

In the liberating bondage of committed intimacy, we enter the One through the two, finding the Beloved in both depth and surface, so that the very details of daily life become a potent awakening path. Freedom through intimacy.

This group is for couples who want a more conscious, loving, and liberating relationship with each other, and are ready to cut through whatever's in the way.

Even if you already have a good relationship, consider coming, and taking

your relationship from good to great to what it *really* can be.

Individual work will be given as much emphasis as couples work, using a spontaneously structured approach that creatively mixes psychotherapy, bodywork, dream exploration, spiritual practices, and dyadic deepenings.

TUITION & LOGISTICS: 10am to 6pm both days. Limited to **5** couples only. US\$1200 or CDN\$1250 plus GST per couple. \$300 deposit required.

Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

2007/2008 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

in White Rock, BC

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

The purpose of this training is to deepen the capacity of participants to effectively counsel others through a dynamic, intuitively structured approach that integrates body, mind, emotion, and spirit.

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

You'll learn to not rely upon nor necessarily impose structure, but rather to let it naturally arise from your relationship and interaction with those you're counselling. Working this way weans us from the security — the eventually deadening security — of operating from behind a preset structure or methodology, leaving us in a position that requires an appropriately creative response from us. Such creativity keeps us fresh, open, and alert.

Throughout the training we will be working with body, mind, emotion, and spirit. Love, integrity, and presence will be the cornerstones of our practice.

The training will take place over 6 three-day weekends, beginning November 2nd, 2007. Tuition is CDN\$5900 plus GST. A deposit of \$750 is required. The training is limited to **10** participants. Previous work with Robert required.

Note: The Practicum is not just for therapists who want to learn a more intuitive, integral, and bodywork-including approach to their practice, nor just for those who are wanting to work in the counselling/psychotherapy field, but also for those who want to participate with kindred spirits in a year of exceptionally deep personal 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.

This will be the fifth such Practicum that I've done; I expect that there will be many more. It is a prerequisite for further trainings with me, such as the advanced bodywork/energy-work modules (integrating bodywork, energy-work, and psychotherapy) in the Summer and Fall of 2007, as well as not-yet scheduled modules in Gestalt, Couples Work, Sexuality, and Leading Groups.

Practicum Schedule

Nov. 2-4, 2007; Jan. 11-13, Mar. 14-16, May 9-11, July 11-13, and Sept. 12-14, 2008

Integral Psychotherapy Practicum

2008 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

in Seattle, for Couples

Dates: Jan. 4-6, March 7-9, May 2-4, June 27-29, Sept. 5-7, Nov. 7-9.

Tuition US\$5900 per person. Deposit of \$1000 required.

We're only taking 5 couples, so early registration is recommended.

**(This is our first practicum in Seattle, and also our first
practicum with couples only as trainees)**

***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.***

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

***To check out Robert's blog, click on the Blog button at
www.RobertMasters.com.***

Robert's 2007 Work Schedule

September 15-16 Freedom Through Intimacy: White Rock, BC
September 21-23 Woman Unbound: Ojai, California
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: Langley, BC
October 20-21 Breakthrough: Boulder, Colorado
October 27 Woman Unbound: White Rock, BC
November 3 2007/2008 Practicum: 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**