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This personal account of a true life story is offered as support and inspiration for your own healing journey. It is not presented as a definitive method of healing, or seen as encouragement to pursue a particular path

JH: When did you, in your journey of exploring what healing is all about, first become aware that you were engaged in the process of inner healing?

DB: It's been a whole-life interest, I think. Given my birth into a Christian Science family, healing has always been an issue. It fascinated me: How does it work? What is it really? What's the process? What's the aim?

I think originally, my focus was on outer healing and then the more I went along, the more it shifted to inner healing, as it was clear that that's what has to happen for anything to change. I think in relationships, in my marriage especially, the shift to the inner was most pronounced. Relationships pushed me to do my inner work.

In college, though, I had a call for inner healing that came from my own struggles with growing and adjusting. I had something like a nervous breakdown. It wasn't clinically treated, but my mind wasn't working in the ways I needed it to. I underwent a shift way back then that's stayed with me. I realized I couldn't entirely rely on my mind. I felt I had to open to a source of knowing and healing beyond me. Now I realize that what I was feeling is similar to what's expressed in AA's second and third steps, that I needed to turn to something beyond me to help me find my sanity and therefore that I had to entrust my will and life, my health and well-being to something higher than my own thinking. So I underwent an inner shift, one that's affected how I've approached things ever since.

JH: The college experience - was that one of the most concrete experiences that brought healing to your awareness?

DB: It was one. The first year of college was a shock. It wasn't a right situation for me-guys in the shower stalls next to me, drugs everywhere. It wasn't where I was. I left after the first year and transferred elsewhere.

Later in my marriage, because Chris had issues around raging, I had to look inward in very concrete ways; we both did to deal with family-of-origin issues. The period of working with Chris on recovery was another concrete time of doing inner work.

JH: So, the events that may have led to that awareness were more of the circumstances, for instance, of your marriage?

DB: Yes, events pushed me. I was always, as I said, generally drawn to issues of healing, but in terms of bringing that process home to me in personal change, my relationship with Chris provided the spur and impetus. We were, after all, married nearly 24 years. A lot of stuff comes up in that time.

JH: So, it may not have seemed blurry and vague to you, since you were oriented to healing. When it shifted to another level of your awareness in your marriage, what was your definition of, or your understanding of healing at that time?

DB: It used to be that, when I was first confronted with a need for healing, I'd look for healing in simple, preset ways. I'd want something changed, healed, restored, corrected, whatever, so I'd pray and try to somehow get straight inwardly, hoping that that would do the trick. Sometimes it worked, but often it didn't. I'd pray, for instance, that Chris and I could operate from one higher mind, so that we wouldn't find ourselves in these awful emotional traumas.

In a way, it's a magical model of thinking: "If I think rightly, everything will turn around and be okay." I don't think it's all wrong, not at all. I do believe that we live in a connected consciousness field, so our getting inwardly aligned to our own truth or to something higher makes a huge difference. It's a power we as a culture are just learning to respect and tap. But I don't think it's the whole story on healing. There's more to it than that.

As I've gone along, I've learned that there are expanding processes involved with healing, processes that engage many levels of who I am, who others are, and what's being worked out in situations, even what's being worked out collectively, of which we're all an integral part. These processes have to be worked, and the way I work them sends out ripples to people and situations I don't know. If I exist in webs of connectedness that reach out way beyond me, then these webs surpass my ability to see what's needed or even what's truly happening.

In Chris's and my relationship, for example, we actually were operating from one higher mind-source, I think, and this precipitated the healing process. It brought to the surface to be healed tons of original pain from his emotionally and physically abusive upbringing. It's because we were as aligned as we were that healing became possible. So it wouldn't do any good for me to pray for the symptoms of this process-the rages-to go away. I needed to pray for real healing to happen, for healing the soul loss and inner pain that was the core of the problem. Thinking that if I prayed hard enough, he'd stop raging-without doing any of this other work-missed the mark. And yet that's how I thought: "If only these episodes of rage would stop..." The symptom of rage was so "in my face" that I couldn't see beyond it, and then when he wasn't raging-the episodes were by no means every day or even every week-I was so relieved I didn't want to think about it. I thought they'd "gone away."

I learned from this that I have to find out what healing really calls for. What's at the root that needs to be healed? Asking for symptoms to go away, that's not smart prayer, because it's not aligned with the healing process. It doesn't invite healing at the levels it needs to happen. Real healing was much more ambitious than I was. I wanted not to have to deal with the anger episodes, whereas the healing process wanted to restore Chris's soul, to heal 30-, 40-, and 50-year-old wounds.

So, if my perspective on healing is too narrow, at least part of the healing process involves birthing a wider perspective, some broader self-awareness and way of being that allows the healing process the space it needs to do its thing. Healing involves going beyond where I am, letting go of narrow, limiting perspectives. I want to feel integrated in a bigger way, engaged in larger processes than what I thought was going on, some kind of process that's good and brings out good that I wasn't thinking about or even imagining. That's how it strikes me.

JH: That's what resonates for you.

DB: Yes. That doesn't mean I don't want outer situations to be healed too, obviously, whether they're physical or psychological or interpersonal. Writing in the fields of philosophy and spirituality, a lot of my work is about the seen and the unseen, so it isn't all seen, and it's not all unseen. It's both of them, somehow converging to tell a story of growth and transformation that takes everyone to a new place, me too. Then healing feels rich. And it creates intimacy, closeness.

Chaos theory supports this view. Self-organizing systems often seem chaotic as they do their thing, defying neat solutions, and yet through what seems like their chaotic complexity emerges something beautiful and amazing beyond what could be predicted from viewing any part or from one perspective. Aligning ourselves to this chaotic life-process, letting it happen, trusting that something good is going on, or opening ourselves to allow this creative chaos to create its own new order-that's what I get as the general healing ballpark. It's easier to talk about than to do, of course.

JH: You were talking about addiction and raging and that those were the issues that you found yourself faced with and that provided a real catalyzing force, getting you going in a process of healing. Did you feel that there were some obstacles to face in healing those?

DB: Well, for one, they weren't my own personal issues. They were the issues of my husband. But, I had issues too, issues of workaholism and self-esteem, codependence. So, I was going into recovery dealing with my original issues.

DB: If you're in a relationship, part of what you have to deal with is your stuff and part of it is not your stuff and so naturally, an obstacle is that you have to sort out the two. You have to deal with the fact that you're not in control of all the stuff that's going on. I'm never really sure which stuff is mine and which isn't, who's projecting what on whom. Sorting out what's mine and what isn't, figuring out how to best deal with my own stuff, not to mention figuring out what to do if I'm being impacted by stuff that's not mine, that's one set of obstacles. Or maybe those are just the basic challenges for healing-what gets the ball rolling.

Not knowing how to engage in healing raises another set of obstacles: not knowing what the healing process is for myself or anyone else. How do we heal from all this junk we carry around? We can talk about our junk til the cows come home, but how do we heal from it? How do we get whole again? Or is that asking too much? Maybe we get whole by self-knowledge-knowing our issues, knowing they're there, learning how not to be triggered by them, using the inner places of soreness and pain to keep us growing. How much can we actually ask of healing?

I think that's why this project is so important. What is the healing process? If I don't know it, how do I know how to go about it? It's new territory, really. So the biggest obstacle is not knowing how to go forward.

I think we could have sought more help than we did. Chris and I mostly did bibliotherapy and talking, being a support group to each other, but we didn't get professional therapy or go to support groups, which we could have done. I think that therapy itself has evolved considerably in the years since the early 80's. At the time, we resisted having someone impose their agenda on us—a therapist's "expert" assumptions about what was wrong and what we should do. Good therapists don't operate in heavy-handed ways, but at the time, it seemed that the field of therapy could be pretty dogmatic, and that put us off.

I think a further obstacle is being able to identify adequate resources to know how to go about healing. What would really help? I felt we were on our own trying to figure this out. Being self-employed, we didn't have the money to get help—no health insurance. Even if we had, I don't know what we would have done because we didn't know where to go or what to do. So that's a big obstacle.

JH: Very big obstacle. So, when you did have a sense of what to do, what were the first steps that you consciously started taking? Some of it was bibliotherapy, talking with each other. There was a point at which you two said, "We are in a healing process." And how did you know that? What were the steps that you took to engage with that?

DB: Acknowledging to ourselves that we were engaged in a healing process was a huge step and hugely positive, because then we realized that what was causing pain in our relationship wasn't personal to either of us. We realized that we were each carrying pain from way back and that it was spilling over into our marriage, so it was a breakthrough to say, "That's the problem, and let's start finding out how to heal it. It's not that you're being a jerk or I'm a jerk; it's that there's a need for healing, and we can do that together."

How did we know that, and what steps took us to the point of engaging in that? Those are good questions. For me, I think it was the fact that Chris acted so differently when he would go into the anger-rage mode. It wasn't him. He acted like a person I didn't know. The person I knew was loving and kind and would never hurt me, and yet a raw emotional cruelty would come out in those rages that shocked me. That wasn't the person I married. It didn't sound like him. The words and emotions that came out sounded like someone else, someone I'd never met. I said, "Whatever this is, it's not you or who you want to be, so we have to find out what's going on. This rage isn't you. It's coming from something else." Having seen so clearly in him the difference between his nature and this other reaction, I figured the same must be true for me when my pain came out, and I wanted to be me, not this old stuff. So that called for healing. Something was very wrong, and we had to engage in healing.

Another area that I wanted to talk about keeps coming to mind, namely, healing my life, my career: what am I here to do? That's been an on-going issue for me. I was always butting up against things in my life work-wise. I've felt what I was doing wasn't quite right, or it wasn't clicking, and I didn't know why or what to do instead. Again, being self-employed, we were on our own. What are my talents, and how can they be expressed? How can whoever I am work best within the culture? So these two parallel lines have been the focus for my healing work—healing my relationships, and healing my life: What do I do with my life? How do I express whatever I came here to do? These are hard questions when I don't know what I came here to do. I have a general idea of this, that, or the other, but...

JH: Does knowing what to do feel like that's a part of the healing?

DB: Yes. I think they go together. If you're connected with who you are and what you're here to do, chances are you're going to be better able to relate in healthy ways. You're going to feel better connected to life, to your life's expression, to yourself, hence to others.

JH: In terms of your life and career what were the events which led to being engaged in a healing process?

DB: With respect to my life, the significant events were, well, one was going to graduate school and then not being happy there, getting ulcers and feeling I was completely on the wrong track but being afraid to act on that intuition because of how the culture views education. I came to a crisis because everybody said, "You're in an ideal position." It was Yale, and I was on full tuition scholarship. Chris had a job at a girl's school, so it was doable. And yet, it didn't feel right at all. People said, "You're crazy to leave a Ph.D. program under those circumstances." The graduate school counselor told me right out that I must be mentally or emotionally disturbed, never questioning the health of the school system, which I now know was very unhealthy—less about real learning and more about externals, conforming to whatever authorities expected. I wasn't the basket case in that scenario. In the end, I was healthy enough to recognize what wasn't right for me, largely because Chris completely supported me in that decision. In fact, he saw long before I did that this was not the right place for either of us. Chris's support was a huge help, combined with the fact that my body went into rebellion every time I drove into classes. I could feel in my body that this was very wrong for me.

So that was a big event—that this life wasn't just going to unfold in some normal, socially applauded or acceptable way. It had to be crafted to suit me, and that was not going to be easy because I wasn't following a pattern. I had to fly in the face of conventional wisdom and expectations. I didn't want to go the normal route, or more accurately, it became clear that the normal route wasn't going to work for me. I didn't want to just get a job to make a lot of money to have kids or have my husband do that and me just have kids. I knew from the beginning that this had to be a journey that was my own journey and that was clear from the get-go. Naturally, that's tricky, because social systems reward those who fit and conform, and I didn't. Chris didn't either.

JH: What did you understand healing to be for you in terms of making that choice?

DB: So, healing would be choosing a meaningful life, and exploring how to use my talents in a meaningful way. Healing means evolving a life that fits me and feels right. I had to figure out how to connect what was meaningful to me with something that paid the bills—that created an energy exchange that was balanced. This baffled me, and still frankly does.

JH: And what did you feel were obstacles to dealing with them— to living a meaningful life?

DB: Well, there were tons of obstacles. First of all, not being clear myself. Trying to discover for myself what's mine to do. I didn't know. I wanted a life in philosophy and spirituality, but not in traditional academic or religious institutions. I wasn't keen on being a public speaker, either. I loved to write, but how I wrote was not in a popular mode. It didn't make money.

So that raised financial obstacles. Because we weren't moving with the mainstream norm, the normal channels weren't there to support us. I just couldn't find a norm that I fit in with. If you

don't fit a niche that's already established for making money, you're not going to make money until you create an alternative. So you have to be creative and work that out, which means you have to make some hard decisions, a leap into the void. We tried to live on as little as possible so we could live a life as free as possible, free to do what we wanted, which was to study and write about philosophy and spirituality. We chose not to have children, because we figured we couldn't do both.

First I had to leave Yale. Then over a decade later we had to leave a nonprofit group dealing with spiritual issues (a loose international study group of excommunicated Christian Scientists) that proved to be quite dysfunctional. And then in the 90's we had to leave our college teaching. We'd been working at the University teaching philosophy and comparative religions for twenty years, not full time though. We didn't want to be part of the institution, which we experienced as deadening. But we got to the point where we felt that the teaching didn't fit us either because of the structure of the school system. So we had to leave there as well.

So it seemed like healing our lives meant constantly leaving systems that didn't fit us. We'd feel so free and exhilarated when we finally made one of these decisions, but then we faced the void of what to do next. There weren't clear alternatives that seemed to fit us. We had to be constantly reinventing ourselves from the ground up. I always loved writing books, but that didn't pay the bills. So we felt like the Fool in the Tarot: you just step off the cliff, not knowing where you're going to land.

JH: But you still left. Would you say that those points of leaving were conscious steps of moving towards healing?

DB: Yes. At Yale, as I said, I was miserable and developing ulcers. With the nonprofit and the University, we were increasingly depressed. They were making us crazy, or too effective at bringing out our own craziness. Everything within us rebelled. And our dis-ease spilled over into our relationship. We'd grate on each other more, when really we both were unhappy about the same things. We wanted to find the lives that we felt called to live, and we didn't know how to do it.

JH: Right. And when you did step off, not knowing where you were going in your search for wholeness, where did that lead you?

DB: To a lot of floundering around. The books evolved, and that was a huge healing process for me, because there was a lot of pain around not finding a place for the writing. The struggle to place the books would go on for decades. Several manuscripts bit the dust. And better that they're gone, because they're not where I am now. I had to come out of both academia and my metaphysical background to find my own voice and perspective. That was and is a process, because my voice changes.

JH: If you were to look at that quest for healing that you're talking about in terms of life healing, would you say that there are some analogies, or metaphors or images that come to mind?

DB: The one that comes to mind is of a plant I once had, and it spoke to me about the patience I've needed in all this, patience I've never been good at. It also said I can't tell from outside appearances what's really going on. The little plant grew in two stalks with leaves on them. I got the hang of how to take care of that plant and what it liked. And then it just stopped growing, or so it seemed.

It didn't do anything. It didn't die and it didn't grow. After what seemed like a very long time, each stalk branched out into two. So it went from two stalks to four stalks. That struck me, because for ages it didn't seem as if anything was going on, and then suddenly it jumped a level. I think healing requires a lot of quiet cooking time, resting so you can go into the creative chaos from which new things are born.

JH: What was around your noticing, how did that happen? Just one day you noticed that two stalks had turned into four stalks?

DB: Right. I noticed that it looked as if nothing was happening, and I was worried. What suddenly changed for the plant that it stopped growing up as it had been doing? Why did it go into suspended animation? Was it dying? What should I do? It wasn't a big plant. I just wanted it to keep growing-linearly. And it didn't. If I'd been smarter I would have repotted the poor thing. I was just a college student at the time. It said to me that there's an inner logos or wise force for growth and hence for healing that I don't see and don't have access to knowing.

JH: But you kept watering it anyway?

DB: Yes. And so it just said to me that there are rhythms of growth. That for a long time it may look as if nothing is happening but that a system is gathering energy for jumping a level. And, so I need to trust the times when it doesn't look as if there's anything happening. It doesn't mean nothing's changing. There's something going on within the inner growth process that I can't see but it's going to lead to something entirely different—a whole new direction.

JH: In your healing process, if you were to pick a significant phase, or period, that really feels outstanding for you in terms of the healing process, which one would particularly stand out?

DB: I think there were three times. One time was at the end of college, 1976, and the beginning of graduate school when Chris and I met and married and then went to Yale and had to choose to leave. That was a very intense, transformational time, when there was so much going on. Then another time was in the mid-80's when so many of his addiction and raging issues came up. So we had to plunge into recovery. Then, naturally, the third time is the current time of going through divorce and selling the house and relocating a thousand miles from where I've lived all my life and trying to build a new life and relationship, which is fraught with challenges. So those have been the three most noticeable times which affected both my life and my relationship. The themes—relationship and life—got mixed up together. I worked with Chris in partnership. When one came apart, the other did too.

JH: When you reflect back, were there points in your process when you felt you had fully healed particular issues?

DB: Fully healed? Definitely not, which is why I wasn't comfortable with doing this interview. I wouldn't say that I've ever felt completely healed on an issue, though I do experience breakthroughs. We were giving a talk somewhere, I think it was at a Unitarian church, and we were discussing problems in raising children. One woman said, "I don't think we ever solved any of our children's problems. They just outgrew them." I don't know if my issues ever got completely resolved or if instead the resolution came by my just continuing to grow, and whatever was bothering me wasn't an issue anymore, probably because I had a whole new set of issues to deal with. I don't know. I do get clarity about this or that, I do have breakthroughs and insights.

But that woman's comment stuck in my mind. Maybe healing isn't about solving specific problems but about ongoing growth. All these issues we face present the circumstances which spur our growth and keep us moving. The issues aren't the issue; inner evolution is, and the issues that come up simply serve that. They keep us moving. Whether they themselves get resolved or not may be secondary to the primary process of growth.

JH: When you realized that something wasn't an issue for you anymore what was different for you?

DB: For instance now I feel I'm at a different place or that I'm operating from a different awareness. I can't believe who I was just months ago, or a year ago. I feel that in general, but sometimes I feel it more intensely than other times. Looking back, I'm more aware of it than when I'm just focusing on the day by day activities.

JH: Looking back, did you ever feel that there were wrong turns that you took?

DB: Wrong turns. I'm sure there were tons of wrong turns. But, I didn't tend to think about them that way. You could say going to Yale was a wrong turn, and yet I think it was really good that I, or we, did that. So, I tend to view stuff that happened, whichever way it went, as all part of the process, which means I don't really have a category of wrong turns. Here my marriage to Chris has ended. Was marrying him a wrong turn? I would never say that. If I had it to do again, I would do it again, given everything the way it was then and now too. I don't think it was a wrong turn not to take a job that paid well, even though this has been a challenge financially to do writing in the ways I've chosen to do it. It depends on your values about what's wrong or right. If your values are growth and development and trying to live a life of meaning, even if you don't get there, you're still working on it. So, I guess I haven't lived with the category of wrong turns. Thank God, because if I had, I think I would have given up long since, because everything could have seemed like a wrong turn.

It helps me to think about the experiences of people everyone admires, because so often these "great people" saw themselves as lost and a failure much of their lives. You could say all they did was make wrong turns. Take George Washington or Abraham Lincoln, for example. Most of their early lives--and for Lincoln, virtually his entire life--could be viewed as filled with failures and wrong turns. Washington's military record was primarily one of defeats and retreats. As to Lincoln, it seemed like nothing went right for him. What kept him going, I don't know. It certainly couldn't have been a belief in his success measured in external terms, because he didn't have that, not until the last few months of his life. It really helps me to think about this, because it drives home the point that my life is about engaging in processes, not about getting it right.

JH: Would you say that overall, in terms of your healing process, that there were more difficult periods for you? What was it about those periods?

DB: Raw, emotional pain certainly made the intense healing periods difficult. Confusion. Complete uncertainty. Losing my bearings. Despair. Feeling I'm too confused to make a decision or to be clear about anything. Fear about the future. Inner paralysis. Now people talk about it in terms of the creative chaos essential to self-organizing systems. But when you're in the middle of it, it's emotional hell.



JH: How did you know that that sheer, raw emotional pain was emotional? Were there other components too-psychological, spiritual? What were all the dimensions of that pain for you?

DB: There were many dimensions to it, as you say. That's absolutely true. In my most recent experience of divorce, the emotional pain came from finding out that Chris didn't think he was the love of my life or that I was the love of his. That hit me as direct emotional pain like I'd never had before. Then, in the ensuing time, given that half the marriages in the country end in divorce, I asked myself, how does anybody ever survive this? All I could do is breathe. I couldn't figure out what else to do to get through that pain. I thought it must have been easier to be thrust out of the womb than to be thrust out of my marriage.

But, naturally as I went along, I started to notice how the experience raised original family issues and how it challenged my sense of who I was, my identity. So that gets into the psychological. One grief opened the gates for all kinds of past griefs to come through. I could get lost in them, or at least feel as if I was lost. I lost all sense of control in how my life was going.

Because Chris and I worked together, my identity got totally bound up with his in our working relationship. In losing him and the way of life I had with him, I felt like I was losing everything. I realized how much I defined myself in relation to him and in terms of being related as a couple. We worked as a team, a unit, and I was losing that. We'd been together all day every day for 24 years. Given how much time most couples have to spend together, especially if children are involved, that'd be like being married 200 years. Suddenly I was going to have to experience my identity apart from him and on my own. I know now that that was necessary and healthy, and part of me knew that even then, but it felt like cutting my lifeline.

The spiritual was involved too. We'd been working, writing, and teaching about the world's religions, and I'd spent many years with that group exploring metaphysical and spiritual ideas. And yet, it got dry. It didn't have the living fire for me. It became too intellectual, too much something that went on in my head or in an emotional inspiration that allowed me to escape my issues rather than deal with them, face them. My sense of spirituality wasn't sufficiently lived or made my own, and this huge upheaval in my life brought that need to a crisis. So I had a spiritual pain that came with having to go through such a painful experience without being able to rely on a hot spiritual flame in me. I felt zapped on all levels.

And yet, on the other hand, there was something in me that knew that there had to be something good going on, some order and purpose at work. The experience proved to be a kind of second birth for me, and some part of me knew that. Whatever was happening, I thought, had to be serving the highest good of everyone, even if it took some doing to get there. I was working on [The Mystic Heart of Justice](#) at the time, and the book is all about each of us being who we are and doing what's ours to do—that justice emerges as we're each true to ourselves. So I felt that Chris was doing what was his to do, and if that was so, then I was being called to do the same, even if it booted me out of all sense of comfort, security, and predictability, all my mental and emotional habits. The gap between theory and practice, ideas and life was being bridged, albeit through this incredibly painful experience, and it was painful for Chris too, as he never wanted to hurt me. That just isn't his make-up. He was being true to who he was, even if it cost him his whole life with me. It was hard all around.

DB: So the healing process was going on at many levels at once, and I was aware of that, and it was overwhelming. It also hit me on a physical level, as it inevitably would. I couldn't eat and lost

weight and had trouble sleeping, as most people do going through this kind of thing. Frankly, I just wanted to check out, to die.

What kept me going was believing that I had some purpose here and that these events had some good, healing purpose, though naturally, a lot of times I gave up on that, which is when despair set in. A deep part of me believed in a sense of purpose to things and in the value of the process I was going through, thank God, but an everyday part of me got lost in despair regularly, a lot of crying, horrible crying like I'd never done before.

JH: You give up on believing that there is a purpose here?

DB: Of course, who doesn't have those times? I don't know how deeply I give up, whether I really do to the bone. But I often feel, well, who I am just doesn't fit here, so why don't I go to some other dimension where I fit better? If there were a shuttle service to take me there, I'd have gone in a flash. Over years, Chris and I worked out a way of life that suited my life's expression, and then suddenly that was gone. Where was I to go? Where would I find a place in life that fit me now? It's real scary stuff. I've had to start all over, as everyone does who goes through this.

But the despair times don't tend to predominate, thank God. Sooner or later I come back to the gut feeling that if I'm here I must be here for some reason, and if that's true, then there must be some place for me, so I have to just hang in there and keep working at it. And then in the whole divorce experience, I had a sense that I was dealing with the truth and the reality of everyone involved and that there was something good going on, something right about it, something that needed to happen. I hadn't been entirely honest with myself about what didn't work in our relationship. I didn't want to think about it or acknowledge it for fear of the consequences. I figured that what we had was the best I could have, and what didn't work didn't matter, so why think about it? Being forced to a more open and honest view of our relationship was good, and I knew it, terrifying as it was. So that gave me a sense that there was something bigger than me unfolding, some order at work that purposes my highest good, even if I didn't know it and couldn't see it. Of course, I lose sight of that all the time. Often I don't feel it.

JH: But you're able to keep going back to that?

DB: Mostly. Those are the good days, the easier ones. But I guess the other days have their purpose too in the process. You go deeper. You go into pain and realize it won't kill you, that you can come out the other side, and that something has lifted a little, some step has been taken. It's back and forth. The pain and the sense of purpose come in waves-they have a rhythm.

JH: You lose sight, but you always return.

DB: I have so far anyway. Sometimes I'm on a vacation from it longer than others.

JH: With the end of the marriage when the pain was so unbearable, besides the pain, what were you experiencing within yourself?

DB: Numbness. Shock. At the time I was getting over a cold, and a cough came along so violently that I couldn't speak. I couldn't physically get words out without coughing. So I couldn't talk to anybody about what was happening, because I couldn't physically talk. It's like I'd been muzzled. I

simply could not talk at all, either emotionally or physically. It was weird. At the time, I felt that meant I had to go through that alone.

JH: What did you need most then? What were you reaching for?

DB: I don't think I knew what I needed. From where I am now, I needed to know that everything would be okay, that in fact what was happening would turn out to be a great blessing to me and to Chris too, that this was a natural and right next step in the evolution of our relationship, that we had gotten too comfortable, too stagnant, that we both needed to be booted out of the nest, our self-created womb, to grow. That the way would unfold for me.

At the time, though, I didn't see any of that. At first, I thought I needed this whole horrible thing to go away, but obviously it wasn't going to do that. And obviously it wasn't what I needed, so I truly didn't know what I needed. What I needed at that time, I think, was to just sit and stare and not do anything, to just let the process unfold as it would, to take its course. I needed to trust the logic of events and the wisdom of this process, inner and outer, mine and his, the works.

Fortunately, my life as a freelancer was such that I could get away with going into 24-hour meditation mode. I felt that my psyche was processing on overtime, more than I'd ever experienced before. It was doing its own processing, and all I could do was let it. Again, thank God I was able to do that. So I just sat there and zoned out. It was all I could do.

And it felt good to do it, even though I couldn't keep track consciously of what my psyche was doing. I would look forward to going up to the third floor where I sat and stared out the window. I felt that my psyche would know how to deal with this, and that most of the shifting was going on beneath my conscious awareness. If this situation came to me, I figured, then on some level I must be ready for it and my psyche would know how to deal with it. And it would access the good that was operating in the situation.

I didn't want other people involved, because I couldn't deal with their views about what was going on. It was enough of a challenge to deal with my own emotions. And I didn't want others to get polarized or bounce off my fears. I didn't want judgments or opinions. I just wanted to process what was going on for myself, and I didn't feel I could handle how other people would react on top of that. This period went on for about a month, and then I came out of it, though I've periodically revisited the raw emotional places all during this past year of transition. The waves seem to get farther apart as I go along, and they don't knock me flat as much. And there have since been many other reasons for feeling despair, reasons that pertain to the challenges of building a new life.

JH: The next question is what resources and tools were most useful for you and in what ways? It sounds like a crucial one was your going apart--going apart and being with?

DB: Yes. When animals are in pain, they curl up somewhere alone and let their systems heal themselves. It's a strategy of trusting your own innate healing powers. That was my reaction. I just wanted to go off alone somewhere and let my system do its thing.

From the start, a lot of credit goes to Chris, because we would talk endlessly and try to stay focused on the process of constructive change and not get sidetracked by emotional reactions that weren't true to what was actually going on, not true to our current realities. He had a vision of this transition being a mutual blessing and preserving the good we had, and it was a good vision, one

worth working for. To that end, he was hot on our not getting caught in polarizing "mind traps" and instead staying focused on who we all were as individuals working out our lives, not to label what was going on in conventional terms with all the highly charged emotions that those labels elicit. So even though he had fallen in love with "another woman," he helped me get past that label to deal with the situation more rationally, compassionately, and authentically, and frankly, practically, since getting carried away in emotional upset isn't all that practical. It makes a hard situation worse. Some things he did didn't help, you know, it's not like it was perfect help. We had some very hard and traumatic times over the last year. But he initiated this process with a perspective that held hope for the good of both of us. He handled this whole shift as honorably, honestly, supportively, and lovingly as he could.

He was tough, though, about not falling into mind traps. And he was right about that. It's so easy to slip into emotional reactions-soap opera stuff, cultural images and roles of the wounded wife-that don't do anyone any good. He'd have none of that, and it made me rise to my potential of staying real, staying with what was actually happening, staying focused on the realities of what did and didn't work in our relationship. He was unrelenting about facing truth, namely, that our relationship worked well on a professional level and also on a personal level of everyday affection and compatibility but not as a romantic or ecstatic relationship. We loved each other in very safe, predictable ways, and we'd built a comfortable, secure life together, a really wonderful life.

But that was no longer enough for him, and once I got to the other side of the worst pain and began to feel the power of a new relationship, which was utterly unexpected for me, I realized Chris was right about ending our marriage. It wasn't enough for me either, no matter how idyllic the life had been. Mind you, I never would have initiated a change, and yet when it happened, something in me knew it was right-all the more so when I began to feel for another man a quality of love that hadn't happened for me with Chris.

I was so blessed that another relationship was right there in potential-granted, full of obstacles that even now a year later remain unresolved and keep us apart-but also full of hope and promise in showing me that I could experience a completely different quality of love and relationship. I thought that what I had with Chris was all I could have, the best anyone could have. I didn't believe in more, and I certainly had no idea I could be so in love with someone, so in sync from the inside. I'd absolutely shut out of my consciousness any emotion toward this person, whom I'd worked with long-distance for five years, because I was married to Chris. He'd done the same, having not the slightest notion of any romantic feelings for me. But our feelings for each other were powerfully there beneath the surface, totally unrecognized by either of us. Once I opened myself to the possibility, I was bowled over-truly amazed.

From the beginning of this process, Chris also helped by taking journeys for me. He did shamanic journeying to connect with guides and angels, and this gave me a completely different view of who I am and what I'm here to do. These experiences were very powerful and transforming for me. It's as if they took me out of time, space, and circumstances to consider my life in a larger process of spiritual evolution, spanning many past-life experiences and other dimensional realities. It helped me enormously to connect with a sense of my meaning and purpose beyond my current and changing life with Chris. So, that was a spiritual practice that Chris engaged me in. It made me see beyond the phenomena right in front of my face, namely, that my marriage and my whole life were falling apart. The journeys gave me some vision of good coming out of all the chaos, that I was more than who I was in that relationship, and that it was time for me to explore this "more" of who I am.

Chris also saw many lifetimes that I had had with this other man and that he had had with Sara. When he first raised these past lives, the cynic in me said, "My, how convenient," and I resisted what he told me. It annoyed me. I thought he was just trying to fix me up with this guy so he wouldn't feel bad about his falling in love-put a good face on things, you know.

But when I finally opened my heart to this other person and allowed myself to acknowledge what was there, I felt in my bones that he was actually right. Given the force of how I felt-and have continued to feel over a year of this new relationship remaining on hold, because of long-standing difficult circumstances-I MUST have had some pretty profound experiences with him. I don't know how or when the new relationship will work out, though I believe it will sometime, but the past-life perspective gave me a sense of meaning unfolding beyond what any of us knew or imagined. It made me feel there's an order and rightness to all of this, and if that's so, then it will continue to unfold in a way that's a blessing to everyone involved.

The subject of the book I was working on, *The Mystic Heart of Justice*, also helped me enormously. It was saying, "we each have to be who we are and do what's ours to do. That's real, soul-honoring justice." So if this new relationship with Sara was Chris's to do, then I had to trust that it would also be mine to let my relationship with Chris restructure, that his process would coordinate with mine. I've come to know Sara, and I must say Chris is happy with her in ways he couldn't be with me. He comes alive with her in ways he didn't with me, nor I with him, frankly. Sara is a beautiful, good, wise, loving, and wonderful woman. She felt very bad and even traumatized about precipitating the end of our marriage. But, given that the shift feels right, true to who we each are, it had to happen. If it's really true that we're all connected in one ultimate reality and therefore that what blesses one blesses all, which I do believe is true, then our processes must blend and complement each other at the deepest levels. The trick was seeing this as I worked my way through the surface of events, which often seemed like the opposite.

So even though one sense of spirituality failed me, another sense got me through. I remember thinking, I don't know how people could survive this if they didn't either live in philosophy or have someone doing journeys for them to give them a bigger sense of their life's meaning beyond the immediacies of events. Shamanism is the oldest spiritual practice, and it cuts across cultures. Philosophy is pretty old too. I can see why. Shamanism presents a deep, core understanding of human life as a spiritual process that moves in and out of time and space. Combined with philosophy and the inner quest it inspires, Chris's journeys gave me the perspective I needed to keep me moving in my process. These two perspectives kept me from getting stuck obsessing over who did what or said what to whom. I was able to move forward to a relationship that is truly amazing to me, a miracle in itself, and that holds the hope of being far more fulfilling and challenging than if Chris and I had plugged on in our safe status quo for another two, three, or four decades.

But back to the question of who guided me through this whole period, a monumental source of help came from my mother, Mary Joy, and my sister, Jeannine. They've played huge roles in helping me work toward a new life, and without their help, I don't know where I'd be. Jeannine herself has gone through several major transitions in relationships, including a cross-country relocation, so her experiences and the wisdom she gained from them, as well as the empathy she could have for the depths of despair that I'd go to, made her an incredible support for me. For several months I lived with her and her family, and it was powerfully healing for me to do that through some of the worst times. A lot of crying into her arms. A lot of solid, practical wisdom from her, compassion

too. And being with her family helped. The joy and aliveness of her young children was infectious. They got me out of myself. Sitting rocking her baby girl for hours when she was sick or playing with her kids and animals was so therapeutic for me.

Now I live with Mary Joy, an arrangement which is working out to be a great blessing for both of us. Her companionship sustained me through the relocation and the agonies of trying to build a new life with a powerful new relationship on indefinite hold, not knowing whether it would ever work out, no contact with him for endlessly long periods. She's an extraordinary woman, and we have a great relationship. She'd never seen me such a mess, but she's been there to help get me through this on all levels, from emotional support to providing a place to live to helping me eat well, which was so hard with the constant nausea and sleeplessness that went on for months after I arrived. I have no idea how I'd have made it this far without Jeannine and Mary Joy. Well, I wouldn't have.

Friends came forward too, one at a time, just when I needed them, old friends and new ones I've made out here as well. I think the intensity and length of this experience exceeded what any one friend could bear, so a group of friends has functioned as an invisibly self-organizing tag team. Somehow whoever was most adapted to guiding me through some particular phase would be there with precisely the kind of support I needed. He or she would call me out of the blue. It was uncanny. Out here, new friends, Richard and Loretta, have seen me through some seriously grim, dark stretches-hardly what I'd want to put new friends through. Their friendship has been hugely healing for me in so many ways, helping me turn a corner in giving me a sense of actually being able to build a new life, step by step.

And above all, the love I have with the new man has sustained me, giving me hope for what our future can be. True, it's been a source of great pain, because we can't be together yet, and that's been excruciating. And yet I would rather have gone through this time with his love, albeit at a distance, than without it. No matter what, on a deep level, I knew that his love was there, powerfully so. He never wavered, and whenever we could communicate, he would convey his feelings and intent with few words but the right words. I can't imagine my life without him now. He's with me all the time inwardly. Whenever we do get together, assuming we will, we'll know we have a love that's been put through the fire and come out gold.

Apparently in many of our previous lifetimes together, one or the other of us has been killed prematurely, when our relationship was young. We both have found ourselves flooded with grief over memories of the death of the other. For example, Mary Joy had a dream about this man and me living on a farm with teams of horses and he having to leave, presumably for military service. When she told me the dream, though I was in a good mood that morning, I suddenly was overcome with a tsunami of grief that wouldn't leave me for more than a week. I just couldn't stop sobbing over this-an inexplicable reaction disproportionate to a dream. So given how hard it's been to launch our relationship this lifetime, we say we're putting all our pain-from-separation up front and getting it over with now, purging ourselves of our past griefs by releasing them during our current situation of being apart. Hard as it's been, though, his love has made all the difference. It's been a beacon for me, a feeling of coming home and having a taste of what home can be-that a home can exist for my heart that I never knew was possible.

JH: Were there beliefs that you'd held that were challenged during this time?

DB: Yes, absolutely. Up until the divorce, my relationship with Chris was the most sacred thing in the world and I believed that nothing would ever violate it or break it up. Our marriage was an absolute rock to me, a forever fact in my life, and I thought it always would be there just the way it was. I'd say, "I don't care if God comes along; I'm not budging."

JH: And how was that reconstructed--that belief?

DB: Well, I had to let it go and think deeper. For one thing, I still do have a positive relationship with Chris. We're great friends to each other, and we respect and support the good of the other, just like we always did. We've been through some really tough, unhappy times in the transition, but we've come through them. Naturally, I don't have the relationship I had with him. We're not married, not a couple. We're living over a thousand miles away from each other now. We chat on the phone regularly. He wants my good, and I his.

JH: So what happened to the belief that there is a sacredness to relationships?

DB: Well, it's been reconstructed in a larger and, I think, truer sense. Now, a year later, I still very much believe in the sacredness of relationships and therefore, that I'll be brought into the right relationship with the right person at the right time in the right way, because of the order of things. I think it came time for Chris and me to graduate from our relationship. The relationship was and is sacred, but that no longer means to me keeping it fixed in one form. The relationship has its own life, and it needed to take a new form. Our relationship left home and went off to ... wherever we're each going.

Again, no matter how much I didn't want to face it, the truth was that our relationship was winding down, and we were stagnating, personally and professionally. It's as if our relationship had its own life cycle, and we'd slipped into its sunset years. Neither of us was being challenged by the relationship or fed by it the way we used to experience each other in the beginning. I didn't know it, but I was no longer growing as I needed to. I was stagnating, which means in a way I was dying. The relationship had to restructure for my highest good, his too. I just didn't see it at the time, or even if I did, I was scared to death of the process and the future. I didn't have the guts to change.

So, in a way, our relationship coming apart when it ceased to serve its purpose for us as individuals proves the sacredness of the relationship, that it was and is soul based, spirit guided. What's sacred isn't about keeping outer forms fixed and static, forever the same. It's about life and growth, and that requires that forms change to keep pace with the inner, spiritual mandate. That's really sacred, even if it's painful and calls us to change. So the sacredness of our relationship lay in its aliveness, its connectedness to our souls, so that when our souls called for a change in our relationship, it happened. I can take no credit for this happening, except that I was somehow able to hear the truth of what Chris was saying. I wanted to keep the form fixed as much as anyone does.

Yet a year later, I can see that being rigid, static, in a rut, afraid to change, bound to forms--none of that counts as sacred. Sacred means being alive, and that means changing forms, dying to the old so we can be reborn to the new, allowing death so there can be resurrection, new life. Only things that have no life don't change. Sacred is what's alive, therefore what has the capacity to change, to totally restructure. That's what happened. Our relationship was so sacredly alive that it did

totally restructure, and experiencing that has revolutionized my concept of what's sacred in relationships.

JH: So another option became available?

DB: Yes. That was one option, namely, to see sacredness in the ability of my primary relationship to change and restructure—to reflect the growth of the two of us no matter what.

Another expanded sense of the sacredness of relationships is that there are many more relationships that are sacred besides the marital one. It's not sacred to have everything turn around one relationship or one fixed form. It's not sacred because it's too narrow, too bound by forms, as if one form of relationship is sacred and all the rest aren't. Such a view denies or at least ignores the sacredness of the super-connected universe, in which all connections have a sacred quality within the whole.

As I look back, I see that my excessive attention to our relationship as the central sacred focus of my life made our relationship function more and more like a closed system, which is of course entropic. It gradually shut out the channels for renewal and growth. My marriage to Chris became cocoon-ish, more so as time went on. It served as a cocoon for both of us—Chris and me against the world, snug in our relationship. That's not all bad, I suppose. It's a stage of development. I think it was what we both needed for the time we needed it. We both had healing and growth to do. But the cocoon model has its limits. When we started outgrowing the cocoon, it wasn't healthy for us anymore, and we needed to burst open with a form of relationship that could accommodate our emergence as butterflies.

Coming out of the exclusivity of my relation to Chris, I've come to honor that there is more than one sacred model of relationship. It's tempting to think that all sorts of relationships are nice but that the real sacredness will start when I get into a love relationship. I do feel that my new relationship is utterly sacred and that it will unfold as it has to in a very genuine way that's based on growth and development and the rightness of things all around. But one relationship doesn't exhaust the possibilities of experiencing sacredness in all sorts of other relationships.

JH: Were there moments or events or times when you had particular epiphanies?

DB: Yes, the journeys often brought epiphanies. There were epiphanies all along the way, a lot of them, big ones and small ones. From spiritual ones about a sense of order and purpose and mutual blessing being worked out in all this to very basic epiphanies that I have to own my own needs and not expect others to fulfill my needs. Or that it's okay to take the time I need to process whatever it is I'm processing. Or that I can have patience and compassion for myself—simple, basic stuff that I got in the habit of forgetting.

JH: How were those epiphanies for you?

DB: It's what kept me going. One of the epiphanies was about pain: that I don't need to be afraid of pain the way I had been. Our entire culture is organized around trying to avoid pain. All the pain I was experiencing made me realize very experientially what the Buddha said, namely, that you can't go through life without pain, but again, that it doesn't kill you. Naturally, if pain gets to be more than I can handle, then I'm grateful that I can get help in dealing with it, medications. So



far, though, I haven't had to seek that help. Pain has generally served to unrut me and move me to a new place that I needed to go.

So a major epiphany through all this is a different sense of pain. It hasn't done me in. I'm not so afraid of pain, nor so desperate to avoid it. I'm learning to allow it to do its purpose, to take me into a chaos where I can self-organize into new forms of order, not by controlling pain but by allowing it, trusting that it's got its own logos, its way of healing. Allowing pain makes me get in touch with parts of me that I haven't felt. It engages me in healing and growth processes I otherwise wouldn't have experienced. Allowing it precipitates restructuring within me.

I think a lot of the pain that I felt originally with the divorce was being afraid of whether I could make it through this, because there was so much pain and uncertainty involved. It isn't just the person but the entire way of life you've constructed together over decades that changes. It all goes. Now I feel much more liberated. I don't welcome pain-I'm no masochist. When I'm there I see no way out and give up in despair and hopelessness. I go there, I still do sometimes, but slowly I'm getting the hang of it that going there doesn't mean I'm always going to be there or that I'm not going to come out of it or that the experience has no purpose or that what I'm feeling reflects some objective truth.

JH: In retrospect, would there be any part of your healing process that you would change?

DB: I really don't know whether or not I needed to go through it alone. I felt so shaky on trying to maintain my sense of what was going on, the vision of it as something positive. Chris and I were trying to do this differently, amicably, avoiding the harsh feelings that go with "divorce." We filed for divorce ourselves, not with lawyers, and when we walked to Family Court for our official filing and hearing, we held hands almost all the way. We wanted to preserve the good we had, the genuine love we've felt for each other, which now has a brother-sister/friend quality of love.

So, I wasn't clear on when or how to seek help, and I wish I could have been clearer. Once Chris and I did go to a therapist, and it was very helpful. Just one session, and that was long after the divorce. We were working on processing the grief around the loss of our relationship and of our life together. I guess what I was feeling was so overwhelming to me that I didn't know how I could convey that totality to somebody else, and I thought if I can't do that, how is that person going to help me? Fortunately, the therapist we went to see was a dear friend of ours, and we all cried together. She had the whole picture without many words. I could have sought much more help than I did. I could have trusted that other people could have appreciated what I was going through. I didn't have to be quite as alone as I was.

But there were pitfalls, because sometimes when I did reach out, I got a response that made things harder for me. People heard things through their own categories, or they heard my pain coming through, and it caused troubles between Chris and me. It made things much harder, as their views which got passed around interjected further disconnects between us. We didn't need that.

Chris and I had served a role in a community, and people often idealized our marriage as a wonderful partnership, which in many ways it was, but they didn't know the hard stuff, and they weren't clued in to the development piece-how could they be? No one really knows what's going on in a relationship but the people involved-I've found that out. Many of our friends in the community definitely didn't want their hope for what relationships could be taken away from them. Some people thought, "If Chris and Denise can't make it, then no one can make it." Now, "making

it" isn't the goal, the ideal, the aim for me anymore. Being alive is, and letting my relationships be alive, which means letting them move in their own life-cycles without judging how that works. Sometimes they take one form, other times another. Maybe they go into long hibernation. Whatever, I have to set my relationships free to be alive, to change, and to take their course.

But I didn't see that before, and neither did many of our friends. Something made me want to keep things "as is," no matter what. It's as if we held the hope for a happy relationship for a lot of people, and it was devastating to them to see us come apart. I knew there would be this response. At first, I had it too. I didn't know how to deal with it.

That's why I withdrew. Many people were dear to us, and we to them, and this would be a shock, as it turned out to be. They had their grief over this to deal with, and I was swimming in my own. I couldn't see my way clear to take on more. Also, I didn't want to risk having people react in conventional ways, not really understanding what we were trying to do. In hindsight, I wish I could have been more open with others in processing all this, both for myself and for them. But I couldn't at the time.

The community piece of divorce is huge for everyone, though, and in our case particularly so since we were so public. A therapist friend told us that divorce has three pieces, the emotional piece, the legal and financial piece, and the community piece, and of the three, the community piece-families, colleagues, and friends-can be the most difficult. That resonated with both of us. So I was afraid to bring in the community, especially before we had the slightest clue of how this was all going to work out.

JH: On one hand, the community was a support, or could have been a support, but it was also a challenge.

DB: Yes, it was an obstacle, a challenge. The community piece was definitely the hardest-all the opinions, judgments, conclusions drawn on partial or false information. Dealing with all the people we knew proved to be much harder than working it out personally between Chris and me.

JH: As you look back, do you feel that the experience of healing had identifiable stages? You're still in a process that's really unfolding that.

DB: Well, I can correlate a sevenfold order that crops up all over the world's spiritual teachings with what I've experienced.

\* First, I got the information that initiated the healing process, that told me that I needed healing or was involved in a process before I knew it.

\* Second, the call to healing turned me upside down. All of a sudden I was in a huge reordering of everything, of all my concepts, all my expectations and assumptions-all out the window: how is this all going to fall out? So I went into chaos.

\* Then as a third stage, I tried to find where I was through all of this. What was left of me? What did I have left to work with? I tried to reconnect somewhat with who I was and what seemed like mine to do: Where am I? Who am I? What solid ground do I have left to stand on?

\* As I did that, a fourth stage started to kick in, where I started thinking about my personal process in broader terms: How is this happening and why? What currents of consciousness brought this about? What deeper dynamics are at work? What's the macrocosm of which my experience is the microcosm? What are the themes, issues, and principles at work here-what's the bigger picture? How does my experience relate to collective evolution? These sorts of questions were important to me, because the more I had some vision of what was going on in a big way, the more I could deal with the process positively, constructively. Victor Frankl said you can endure any "what" if you know "why." Well, I tried to find a "why" in terms of some meaning that connected my process to something larger, some transformational process. I tried to learn and grow from what was going on. That effort gave my pain meaning for me.

\* On the basis of that I started building a new life for myself and explored options for what the new life would be. I embarked on a new relationship. That's a fifth stage.

\* In a sixth stage, I started to get enough distance on the information and chaos of the earliest stages to be more reflective and to take stock of the inner shifts that I was making all along the way. Shifts in awareness, shifts in consciousness: I became more conscious of these and learned from them. I learned to observe, to notice what was happening within and without as part of the healing, change process.

\* And then I guess I had, as a seventh stage, some acceptance that, okay, I'm engaged in a process of transformation and this a good thing, and this is what life is about. I've got to hang in there. I have to trust it and feel it at work in me, to see my patterns, and to feel a healing force going on. I've gotten used to my waves of pain. I've ridden them and they move me to a different place. So, it's a sense of acceptance that I'm engaged in this process. It's for the good, for growth, for expansion.

When you asked about stages of healing, I used that sevenfold template as a framework to think it through. If I thought through the stages relative to my other situations, it might be different, I might express it differently.

JH: If you were to identify the healing challenge that's before you right now, what would that challenge be that you're faced with right now?

DB: Well, my challenge right now in terms of both my life and my relationship is to create a new life. I don't think the stages are linear. As you go along, you feel them all happening at once to some degree. So, for example, to build a new life, I need to draw in the sixth stage too, namely, to expand my consciousness such that I keep moving to a new place, not to get stuck in old habits that don't help. I'm praying for a consciousness that I need at this moment. After everything that this process has involved for me-things falling apart that I thought were solid, expectations about how things might work out utterly falling through-I can't think what else to pray for. If you pray for things to work out a certain way, well, you don't know everything, and maybe what you're praying for could be the worst thing to have happen. Even if it's the right thing, it's not right if it's the wrong time for it. You just can't pray for specifics.

JH: Because when you do it doesn't happen.

DB: Right. It's just one disappointment after another, so it's not really a right prayer. Praying that way demoralizes. It makes me small-minded, fixed in how I want things to work out. It

deludes me into thinking I know what's best, and chances are, I don't. Prayer ought to do the opposite, namely, to open me to a bigger unfoldment than what I had in my mind. Life is exciting when it's bigger than what I think, so prayer needs to open me to the bigness, not to shut me down into narrow ways of thinking. I'm not God, so how do I know what to pray for?

JH: And what would that form of prayer be like?

DB: Well, I just ask for help in my inward process, which also has a touch of the seventh stage, namely, embracing and accepting my process for what it is. So I pray something like, "Please help me have the consciousness that I need, that is most appropriate, that can make the most of this opportunity of transformation or whatever it is, whatever the healing process requires. Help me have a consciousness that connects me with what's going on most deeply, most effectively, so that I can move with this and not be resisting it. Open me in consciousness, so I can heal or change or whatever is called for. (I don't know anymore. My consciousness has felt so mangled and confused, so lost in chaos, which I now realize isn't bad at all but essential to the creative process.) Help me have a consciousness that will see me through, and it could be different at each moment. (Maybe one moment I need to feel pain about something, because that triggers or spurs healing, throws me into the process more deeply.) Help me realize that that's going on when I feel like I'm sinking...."

DB: As you know, Chris is an excellent astrologer, and thinking about my process in terms of those symbols has helped me enormously. Through this whole period, Pluto has been squaring my Moon and so you asked me before, "What helped me through?" Well, I would pray to Pluto and to my Moon, which is to say that I would pray to the qualities of consciousness that those planets symbolize. I would say, "Okay Pluto, you're a force for transformation. That's what you're always pushing for. And Moon, you're about my emotional structure, my emotional habits, and how I find emotional security. So, Pluto energies, or powers of transformation, do your utmost with me in making sure I don't get rutted in emotional habits that aren't serving my growth. Don't let me sacrifice my individuality and inner spiritual evolution for emotional security. Just do your transformation job with me. Because I know you're going to do it anyway, so you may as well do a good job right up front. I may as well not resist or fear this process. I may as well embrace it as for my good."

So what I jokingly call "praying to the planets" helped me feel that I was going with the process rather than fighting it. There's enough pain involved in all of this without the additional pain of resisting or fearing a process that's really necessary for my greater good. So I sent out the word, "Okay, I get the hang of this, do it, and give me a consciousness that can show me my way, my process, my ability to respond that maximizes the potential for healing and transformation here."

JH: So, that's the way that you find you can respond to this challenge most effectively at this point?

DB: Well no, I don't do that all the time. But it's easier when I have the wherewithal to approach it this way. And it persists as a background reassurance to me, even when pain and confusion come on center stage.

JH: Right. And the not doing it all the time, there's value in that too.

DB: Yes, but it's more painful. I get swamped, my head goes under with all the changes coming so fast, all the immediacies, and I feel like my body can't keep up either. I get swamped on every level.

We're back to the pain issue. On the one hand, I don't want to use prayer to avoid pain that I need to process. On the other hand, I don't want to exacerbate or intensify pain needlessly, that is, if the pain is being generated from fear or resistance to a process that I really don't need to fear or resist.

JH: So sometimes it's not high and not utmost, it's just swamping.

DB: It's just swamping, yes. But I think something in the back of my head somewhere says there is an order to this and if I'm being swamped, there's something being worked out. Sometimes I've felt as if the angels and guides or my soul or high self throw me down, throw me way down to the bottom, because I need to go there for whatever reason. Recently, for instance, I had to go to the bottom to do what I needed to do, which I wouldn't have done if I hadn't gone to the bottom. And I couldn't believe that I could go from being okay to being in such despair around a trigger that somebody else wouldn't think is a trigger. But for me it was a huge trigger. I was astonished at my emotional swing. And I had a feeling I was thrown down because I needed to be thrown down. So even when that happens, I try to remember that there's a sense of meaning in it which isn't quite the same as being totally thrown down. You know what I mean? I've felt that there was some purpose to even that. Granted, I don't always get it and certainly don't feel it when I'm in the moment of despair, but it happens pretty soon after.

JH: Now having heard your responses to this and having reflected on your healing, how would you define now what true healing is?

DB: Well, I would say true healing is the ability to move with the powers and forces of transformation. Having everything work out fine in life, everybody happy with whoever they want to be with, that would be just dandy too!

JH: For those who may be going through an especially challenging part of their healing process, what would be the most significant guidance you would offer them?

DB: I guess just knowing that somewhere behind everything they're not out of the divine order, that some powerful healing process, something sacred is at work in their lives that purposes their highest good. That they're moving in processes that have significance on all sorts of levels—personal, community, and collective—even if they don't feel it or see it. And that emotional pain, agonizing as it is, isn't going to kill them if they can honor it and work through it, allow it, not get too freaked by it.

Naturally we all know that if pain isn't handled rightly, it can kill. If I don't process it—if I turn away from the healing call or try to deny the need of healing—whatever needs healing goes into my body or into my relationships or family structures and I don't process it rightly. Ignored pain causes more suffering and can be deadly.

So, what would I say to others in the pain of transitions . . . is just to try to move with the process and to trust that somehow you're being guided and moved by a healing principle or force or wisdom within you and within your life. Something healing beyond your immediate awareness is in charge of this. You're not being destroyed; you're being called to heal, just in a much bigger way than you were imagining. Naturally, the trick is to listen to the process and to trust it and go with

it. That's the challenge. It's hard. But you're not having to invent the healing; it's going on from a force beyond you, something that's built in and that we all share. As you go with it, you'll find you're discovering these healing powers within you, and that's a strength you'll have now.

Michael Toms, who does [New Dimensions Radio](#) out of San Francisco, shared a story about his healing. I think his experience with a swollen foot says a lot about the healing process and how there's an innate healing principle at work. He had an old injury in an ankle, and years after the injury, the same location started swelling and looked nasty. He went to many doctors, specialists, and holistic practitioners, but they couldn't figure out what was wrong. They were afraid that the swelling would get gangrenous. It was a very frightening physical situation for him. So finally, after many scary prognoses, including the threat of amputation, the wound, or the painful area of his foot, opened up, and a lot of hardened scar tissue came out. With all of that hard stuff out of his foot, the whole thing healed up and was fine. He could move much more easily than before, and he didn't have surgery or anything. It was his own body working something out-literally.

That's a powerful metaphor for trusting that there is a healing process that we don't know, that's both in us and beyond us. All the original stuff that we carry around, all the old wounds, are like hardened scar tissue that gets in our way and clogs our minds, emotions, lives, bodies, relationships-everything. All the coping mechanisms that don't work any more as adults, that worked for us as children: they're like hardened scar tissue. They impede our movement or get in the way of our being able to be honest or authentic with others or connected with our present reality. His case suggests that there's a healing principle that brings these old scar tissues to the surface to get rid of them.

In my marriage to Chris, this force for healing said to us that it was time we graduated and went on to a new phase. We went as far as we could go on the healing path together, and to continue with our healing processes, we had to go our separate ways and find new relationships and new communities to do it in, as well as new work arrangements. So this said to me that there's a healing principle imbedded in our relationships that wouldn't let us stay in a relationship once it's fulfilled its purpose, and it's time to grow beyond it. I certainly wasn't budging, as I said. I never would have chosen divorce, and yet it was what the larger healing of my life required. So, there are healing principles imbedded in our physical being, in our emotional being, in our psychological being, in our relational being, in our spiritual being. The idea is that everything that happens to us is, to some extent, brought about by these in-built healing processes. It's a question of trying to trust that, or trusting it, learning to trust it, whatever.

*Love is the way messengers  
From the mystery tell us things.*

*Love is the mother.  
We are her sons.*

*She shines inside us,  
Visible-invisible, as we trust  
Or lose trust, or feel it start to grow again.*

~Rumi,  
translated by Coleman Barks, "Birdsong,"

Denise Breton, philosopher and writer, co-authored with Christopher Largent three books: *The Soul of Economies: Spiritual Evolution Goes to the Marketplace* (Idea House, 1991); *The Paradigm Conspiracy: Why Our Social Systems Violate Human Potential and How We Can Change Them* (Hazelden, 1996); and *Love, Soul, and Freedom: Dancing with Rumi on the Mystic Path* (Hazelden, 1998). Her latest book, co-authored with Stephen Lehman, is *The Mystic Heart of Justice: Restoring Wholeness in a Broken World* (Chrysalis, Fall 2001). A second book on justice is planned, tentatively titled, *Creating Justice from the Inside Out*.

To order books, click on them, or go to [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

The following websites are provided as sources of information about resources mentioned.

New Dimensions Radio, <http://www.newdimensions.org/html/aboutus.html>

Rumi, <http://www.khamush.com/>

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