



The Beloved Can Only Be Everything

The poet Rumi wisely said that grief is the garden of compassion. In a fundamental sense, spiritual practice is the inner work of transforming the separation inherent in grief into the connectedness of compassion, which is our true nature. So long as we live with unresolved grief in our hearts, grief that has not been transformed into compassion, our lives are lived only partially and death comes

too soon. We are all grieving until we no longer feel separate — separate from those we care about, separate from our own true selves, separate from God.

Those who have had near-death experiences often report that they have learned three things about life: We are completely loved and cherished; there is absolutely nothing to fear; and, we can never do anything wrong. These are the truths that will be revealed to all who step beyond feelings of separation. These are the truths that are the sweet fruits of spiritual practice

— meditation, contemplation, and prayer.

Again and again we begin movement toward wholeness from a place of fear and separation. Finding motivation in the midst of these feelings requires great honesty



and the courage to ask from the depths of our hearts for surrender into this compassion. Can we trust that compassion will carry us from woundedness to wholeness? Only by letting go, again and again, into the spaciousness, the emptiness of self that is our heart, not knowing what will happen, will we see that each experience, each moment, can reveal the Beloved, the Beloved who can only be everything.

I once was called to the bedside of a tiny, week-old baby whose birth had gone horribly wrong. The birth process had deprived his

brain of oxygen for much too long. He only had brainstem activity and couldn't think, see, hear, or swallow. He seemed to have no connection with the outside world except a slight response to touch. Ostensibly I was there to help him die well, but

really, the crying need was to help his parents survive their almost unbearable grief. Every time I visited their home, I first picked up and held the baby. While holding him

I went into a state of deep bliss. My guess was that since he hadn't been pulled into the world by his senses at all, he remained in a state beyond fear, a state we might call love; entirely pure, boundless — a space available to each of us now. Becoming fresh again, becoming selfless, touching the nature of experience and letting go of the incessant need to understand experience was the gift he gave me. We find that our nature truly is love, compassion. *The Beloved can only be everything.*

A few days ago, I visited my dear

friend Josh, who is in a rather advanced stage of the disease ALS. He is gradually losing his ability to breathe. For short, frightening periods of time, Josh can't catch his breath. Imagine that you almost suffocate again and again. Could you or I remember at such a moment what the baby showed me and what people who had near-death experiences have reported? Can we find the strength, the courage, to surrender into the boundless emptiness of compassion where there is nothing to fear, knowing that we are loved? Can we see even the failing body as the beloved?

On the wall near the reclining chair Josh rarely leaves is attached one of my favorite quotes, a quote which seems to be a perfect description of his situation and, of course, also of ours:

We live in illusion and the appearance of things. There is a reality. We are that reality. When we understand this, we will see that we are nothing, and being nothing we are everything. That is all. –
Kalu Rinpoche

– Dale Borglum
Executive Director

*Whoever finds love
beneath hurt and grief
disappears into emptiness
with a thousand new disguises*

–Rumi



Bombay Walkies

So many veils and illusions separate us from the stark knowledge that we are dying. When we finally know we are dying, and all other sentient beings are dying with us, we start to have a burning, almost heartbreaking sense of the fragility and preciousness of each moment and each being, and from this can grow a deep, clear, limitless compassion for all beings.

Sir Thomas More, I heard, wrote these words just before his beheading: “We are all in the same cart, going to execution; how can I hate anyone or wish anyone harm?” To feel the full force of your mortality, and to open your heart entirely to it, is to allow to grow in you that all-encompassing, fearless compassion that fuels the lives of all those who wish truly to be of help to others.

–Sogyal Rinpoche

Millennium Blessing

*There is a grace approaching
that we shun as much as death,
it is the completion of our birth.*

*It does not come in time,
but in timelessness
when the mind sinks into the heart
and we remember.*

*It is an insistent grace that draws us
to the edge and beckons us to surrender
safe territory and enter our enormity.*

We know we must pass beyond knowing

and fear the shedding.

*But we are pulled upward
none-the-less
through forgotten ghosts
and unexpected angels,
luminous.*

*And there is nothing left to say
but we are That.*

And that is what we sing about.

—Stephen Levine



Heaven Knows Best

A Bump In The Road

At our first meeting Eric led me to the sun porch that ran the width of his home. Passing through French doors I saw an expanse of glass overlooking Stinson Beach and the Pacific Ocean. Eric told me his family built the home in the 1960's shortly after this gated community came into existence. He'd lived there since his marriage came to an end, commuting over and around Mount Tamalpais to his work as a computer specialist for a software developer.

For the next nine months I met with Eric every Friday on that sun porch. Our conversations touched on many subjects, but it was the fact his illness had taken a turn for the worse and he wished to explore the possibility he was going to die, that brought us together. That didn't stop him from getting medical treatment when warranted and some of our conversations touched on this as well. But typically, we would gaze out the window and muse about both living and dying.

Eric lived alone, which was cause of concern for both friends and family members. Yes, he had someone who brought him food a couple of times each week and someone else who came to give him occasional massages. He even had a musician come to play for him. But for long stretches of time he was home alone.

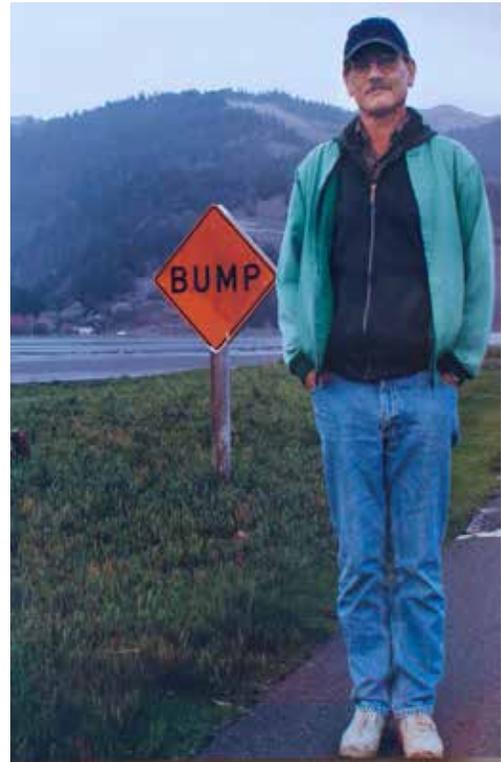
I remember the time he told me about trying to climb a ladder I'd seen affixed to a wall in the living room. There was a sleeping loft built atop two bedroom that he and his sister used when they were young. He now slept in the main bedroom on the first floor but apparently there was something he wanted to retrieve. He slipped off the ladder and fell. He lay on the floor for three hours before one of his regular visitors arrived and helped him. This episode led to great consternation for both his mother who lived miles away in San Francisco and his sister who lived even farther away in Oregon. They insisted he get someone to live with him.

As I explored the matter with him it seemed clear Eric was content with his life. He told me he'd rather spend three hours alone on the floor than have someone else living with him. It seemed important to support him in his choice to live alone. Since this was his life, possibly coming to an end, it was essential for him to take the journey in a way that worked best for him.

After that accident our conversations became more focused on the end of life. I recall watching seagulls floating above the ocean as we took in the huge sky and the distant horizon. The openness of the vista was comforting and became the metaphor for saying farewell at the end of Eric's journey.

As the weeks slipped by I saw how his energy was flagging, though he always made the effort to be a good host. I recall the day he tried to move my chair to a better position but was unable to do so. It was a week later that I got the telephone call telling me Eric had died during the night. The call came early Friday morning as I was getting ready for my drive to his home. When I arrived his close friend and mother were there. I spent a few moments with them before heading to Eric's bed. I sat with his now cold remains and said my farewell.

The family asked if I'd officiate at the memorial service they planned a few weeks later. I read a short poem I'd written that appears on the opposite page. As others shared, I discovered how unhappy folks were that I'd supported Eric in his wish to live alone. I understood, of course. They loved him and wished



Eric on Highway 1

for him the safest journey. Yet, I knew this was the journey that Eric wanted to take, even if there were bumps on the road.

We scattered his ashes into the rolling surf and all said farewell.

— Curtis Grindahl
Outreach Services Coordinator



Stinson Beach Breaking Waves

Sitting on a Sun Porch – Standing by the Sea

*Waves come rolling in,
reflected sun light sparkling
like diamonds,
birds soaring,
seals emerging from rolling seas,
heart beating, eyes soft,
lips smiling,
life in all its fullness.*

*I speak to you of riding those waves toward
the distant horizon,
friends gathering at the seashore as you
disappear from view,
words of blessing and farewell in our hearts,
even as tears touch our cheeks.*

*We speak of life as a gift,
each meeting a celebration,*

*moments together treasured,
yet knowing that
the vase is already broken.
We love because it is our nature
and grieve because those we love will,
all too soon,
be taken from us.*

We love, we grieve, we accept the gift of life.

*Thank you Eric,
for sharing the joy of so many
precious moments
until it was time for you to go.
As I promised, I'm standing at the beach
waving,*

My heart filled with gratitude.

Project News

- The one-to-one, free-of-charge spiritual/emotional support program for people with life-threatening illnesses called Open Circle now has volunteers in four Bay Area counties—Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin and Sonoma. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, go to our website and join our digital mailing list. You will then be informed by email of our next training workshop. If you know of anyone who could benefit from Open Circle, please have them contact our office, (415) 456-3915.
- If you are on our physical mailing list and not our digital mailing list, please go to our website and sign up on the digital mailing list. We print and mail only one newsletter per year, but every month or two send out updates about the Project via email. We also email a digital copy of the annual newsletter. These emails contain updates on events and activities, articles on the services the Project offers, and thoughtful and inspiring pieces on the spiritual path. Also, if you are willing to unsubscribe from our physical mailing list and thus forego a physical copy of the newsletter and receive only the email version, we would save money. Last year's newsletter cost over \$2 each for printing and mailing.
- More useful material continues to be added to our website. We are endeavoring to be the go-to website for anyone seeking information about the opportunities that life-threatening illness and caregiving can offer for spiritual deepening. Meditations, practices, audio and video files, and descriptions of services the Project provides are all available.
- Dale recently did two television interviews with **A Forum on Spirituality**. Archives of these shows will be available at vimeo.com/user9803556/videos. Also a transcript of another interview with Dale is available at <http://blog.sevenponds.com/professional-advice/an-interview-with-dale-borglum>
- **Healing at the Edge** ongoing small groups are being facilitated by Dale. These groups meet Monday night in Berkeley, Tuesday afternoon and Tuesday night in Sebastopol and Wednesday night in Fairfax. These groups are not focused on end-of-life issues, but on spiritual transformation with an emphasis on meditation and on healing the psychological/physical imbalances that limit this transformation. The two groups in Sebastopol are filled, but there are a few spaces available in the Berkeley and Fairfax groups. More information is available at the Ongoing Groups link in the Services menu on our website. If you are interested in talking with Dale about these groups, call him at (415) 456-3915.

*The only thing that is
important is how much you
love God.*

—Maharaji

CONSCIOUS LIVING/CONSCIOUS DYING

A WORKSHOP FOR THOSE WISHING TO BECOME
LIVING/DYING PROJECT VOLUNTEERS AND FOR
ANYONE WISHING TO EXPLORE DEEP HEALING



Physical healing, emotional healing, spiritual healing, collective healing — the journey to wholeness takes many forms and has as many starting points as there are people who embark upon the journey. Each of us is at a particular point on our healing path, confronting our next challenge, often without clearly knowing whether attitudes or practices we have been using to facilitate growth in ourselves or in our clients are becoming stale, without knowing which direction we should now turn to create meaningful transformation.

In this workshop, we will draw upon the wisdom of Buddhism, the diagnostic message coming from the connection between stages of early childhood development and energetic patterns in the adult body, as well as the softening and the passion of heartfelt devotion. Having applied these wisdom traditions during thirty years of being a guide to the dying, a very clear and practical paradigm for the healing path has become apparent to me. Healing occurs through direct contact with the Sacred, through realization of our true nature. There are no shortcuts, but certainly neither taking unnecessary detours nor spending time spinning our wheels can inspire us along what is often a difficult journey to a life consciously lived.

During this workshop we will explore together a clear, concise and usable model of the healing process that can specifically diagnose and identify the next step that is transformational for each of us, even during crisis. Short, intensive, guided meditations and other practices will be presented in order to create a healing experience that will lead to a life consciously and compassionately lived and eventually to a conscious death. We are all caregivers and are all seekers of healing. These deeply uncertain times offer an incredible opportunity.

*This training workshop will be offered on **Saturday, January 26, 2013**, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and **Sunday, January 27, 2013**, from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. at St. John's Presbyterian Church, 2727 College Avenue, Berkeley, CA. There is a \$180 fee for attendance. 10 hours of Continuing Education Units are available to nurses, as well as M.F.T. and L.C.S.W. license holders. Please visit our website for further information at livingdying.org.*



Workshops will be conducted by Dale Borglum, Ph.D., who, with Stephen Levine and Ram Dass, established the Hanuman Foundation Dying Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the first center supporting conscious dying in the U.S. Dale directed the center until moving to the San Francisco Bay Area. He is the founder and Executive Director of the Living/Dying Project and co-author of *Journey of Awakening: A Meditator's Guidebook* (Bantam Books).

Board of Behavioral Sciences Provider Approval Number 4367. Board of Registered Nursing Provider Number 9621. Course meets qualifications for 10 hours of continuing credit for MFCCs and/or LCSWs as required by the CA Board of Behavioral Sciences. Refunds will be made only with notice given two days in advance of the workshop by calling or e-mailing the Living/Dying Project. A \$15 processing fee will be deducted from refunds issued.

Imagine facing death without fear. Imagine using a life-threatening illness as an opportunity for spiritual awakening. Imagine approaching the unknown with an open heart. We often resist change as a natural part of life. Strength and healing can be found in life's most difficult situations.



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Mission Statement

The Living/Dying Project offers conscious and compassionate support in the spirit of mutual exploration to those facing life-threatening illness and their caregivers. We also offer education and training in the practices of spiritual healing to those confronting life's most difficult situations and to anyone committed to spiritual transformation.

Supporting Us

We offer spiritual support free of charge to those with a life-threatening illness in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as to their caregivers. As the first organization in the Western world whose mission is to cultivate conscious dying, we've offered these services for thirty years. In addition to spiritual support, we offer training and educational services through our website, via telephone and Skype, as well as in person. Healing our individual and collective relationships with death remains the most immediate and direct means to heal that which separates us from others with whom we share this frequently confusing and occasionally conflicted human journey.

The work of the Project is done almost entirely by volunteers. Expenses incurred are financed largely from individual donations. Your support, both financially and with your blessings, allows us to continue this vital work.

You may donate using the enclosed envelope either by including a check payable to the Living/Dying Project or by filling out the attached form that permits you to make a one-time donation by check or credit card as well as recurring donations by credit card. Please be aware that donations may also be made by visiting our website, www.livingdying.org, and clicking on the link that says "Support Us," where it is possible to donate by credit card or using Paypal.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of you who support us. May this holiday season and the year to come be filled with wisdom and blessing for you and for those you love.

—Dale Borglum



Credits

Layout and design of this newsletter was done by Curtis Grindahl, who also contributed two photos, *Berkeley Pier* on page 1 and *Stinson Beach Breaking Waves* on page 5. Curtis is Outreach Services Coordinator for the Project. On page 2 is a photo entitled *Bombay Walkies* by Cory Goldberg, a professional photographer who spends part of each year in India. On page 3 is a photo titled *Heaven Knows Best* by George Ward, a longtime friend of Dale's whose work regularly appears in the Sierra Club Wilderness calendar. His portfolio may be seen at www.georgeward.com. On page 4 is a photo of Eric Skjei taken by a friend and given to Curtis following Eric's death.