



Healing the Deepest Wound

Everything is a manifestation of Buddha nature, of Christ consciousness. The Beloved can only be everything. We are each fundamentally radiant, sacred human beings.

Consciousness does not die. Yet as I have worked with groups and with individuals over the years, as well as in my own practice, again and again arise the contractions, the long-held conditionings, that cause us all to suffer. Even though the details of the stories change, the stories are a reflection of the same deep woundedness.

There is a simple healing practice that takes great courage yet has the potential to bear great fruit. Tonglen, also called taking and sending, is the practice. It can be done for others as well as for the lesser pain we all experience. Eventually though, we are invited to admit and identify the place of our deepest wound.

Imagine this wounded *you* seated in front of meditating *you*. Open your heart and become truly vulnerable. Let the heart be broken. Can this brokenness then begin to meet the place of woundedness, the separateness, this place where you have felt there is something outside of yourself that you need in order to be whole; this feeling of being not enough? Can you begin to feel directly, to experience in your body how this wound has caused



suffering over the years, probably even decades? Can you feel it ever more deeply?

Seeing the suffering on your face; feeling deeply enough that you begin to experience true compassion for this part of yourself; your open heart meeting the suffering; keeping your heart open to the fire of the pain; letting this compassion deepen; letting yourself touch and be touched by the suffer-

ing more directly, to the degree where you finally become willing, out of the depth of your compassion, to take this suffering into you. You breathe in, with compassion, willingly taking the suffering, as you visualize the suffering, coming from this suffering *you* into every pore of your being and then into your heart of hearts. If you like to visualize, you can picture the suffering as hot dark smoke going into your own body and then gathering into your innermost heart. As you breathe out you send with great lovingkindness the antidote to the suffering *you* in front of you, that you may visualize as sending cool white light; cutting through the very core of the place where you hold onto pain, where you hold onto separateness. With each breath this willingness deepens, taking the suffering on the in-breath with compassion and sending the antidote on the out-breath with lovingkindness; transmuting suffering into joy, healing. Touching, meeting who you are beyond identification with suffering,

with the old wound. Eventually we can do this in just a few breaths whenever suffering arises, realizing it is the gateway to union with the Beloved.

— Dale Borglum



*Why do you so earnestly seek
the truth in distant places?
Look for delusion and truth in
the bottom of your own heart.*

Ryokan

*Fear is the cheapest room in the
house. I would like to see you
living in better conditions.*

Hafiz

Just as nurturing our ability to love is a way of awakening bodhi-chitta (the desire to realize enlightenment for the sake of others), so also is nurturing our ability to feel compassion. Compassion, however, is more emotionally challenging than loving-kindness because it involves the willingness to feel pain. It definitely requires the training of a warrior.

When we practice generating compassion, we can expect to experience our fear of pain. Compassion practice is daring. It involves learning to relax and allow ourselves to move gently toward what scares us. The trick to doing this is to stay with emotional distress without tightening into aversion, to let fear soften us rather than harden into resistance.

Pema Chödrön

Instructions for living a life.

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

Mary Oliver

Saying Goodbye to Travis



Our dear friend Travis took her last breath on September 29, dying at home with her husband Gene and daughter Carey. Travis had been a volunteer with the Project for many years. In addition to the work she did with clients of the Project, she offered her office as a place where we could meet for our monthly volunteer support group. I remember Travis brewing tea for all of us as we settled in our chairs. What a sweet, generous person she was.

Last year Travis wrote about her deep friendship with Mary Beth, a client whose story appeared on these pages for four years. I don't think any of us expected she would be leaving so soon after Mary Beth's death the end of 2016, but this living and dying thing can often astonish us.

Travis was especially close with Dale since in addition to serving as a volunteer, she had attended Dale's Marin weekly **Healing at the Edge** group for a few years. Dale visited her a number of times over the months of her convalescence, the last being the afternoon of September 29, a few hours before she died. I joined him for that visit. What was remarkable was how very peaceful the room was.

Travis's first reaction to the diagnosis of cancer was close to elation. She had been immersed in working with the dying and it seemed she was



being given an opportunity to experience the journey for herself firsthand. Here is what she wrote to friends and family six months before her death.

Being with people as they are dying has always drawn me and I actually enjoy the intensity of that work very much. I... feel as though dying is a kind of adventure, and aside from leaving my loved ones and family in pain, I'm kinda excited about what my own journey-adventure-experience might be. Though this may be difficult for some to hear (and believe me, my family is tired of hearing me talk about the possible upcoming adventure!), it IS part of who I am. I hold dying to be one of many

complex, intimate and exhilarating parts of living. And gosh, we're all going to do it - why not enjoy it!

I'd love to get a report from her about how this adventure is going but alas we'll only know the truth when we've taken the journey as well. Rest in peace Travis and, if possible, say hello to Mary Beth for me.

— Curtis Grindahl
Client Services Coordinator

*The body passes away.
Everything is impermanent
except love of God.*

Maharaji

It Feels Like Coming Home



Shortly before my 70th birthday I was diagnosed with 4th stage ovarian cancer. Without treatment I would have lived for maybe 3 to 6 months. Because I have family, 2 adult kids and three grandchildren under age 5 at the time, I concluded I was not ready to leave this planet. I decided on treatment. I surrendered to months of chemotherapy and a major “debulking surgery.”

I used the treatment time as a retreat and took to my bed until it was done and gone. It was a 9 month ordeal, but I had wonderful results and have lived the last 4 years in great health and spirit.

This spring, just when I began thinking I was going to beat this disease, I got results from tests that showed I am no longer in remission. The cancer has metastasized to my lungs. I've made peace with the fact I'm dying, and at this time in my life I choose to do no further treatment. I want to accept what is happening to me with grace, and recognize that death is just the natural progression of things. I am being with what is.

I must admit that I'm in no pain and do find it hard to believe this is actually happening. I feel really, really healthy and that makes it all kind of weird. I'm not sick, I just have cancer. So that is what brought me to the Living/Dying Project. In my quiet times I'm aware of the need to be able to talk with someone about this experience or be in a group with people sharing this kind of transition. It can be a lonely experience and difficult to talk about with family or friends. It is hard to see the sadness in their faces.

In my early years, at age 34, I was diagnosed with melanoma. My kids were 4 and 5. At the time it felt like I was being terrorized. It was 1978 and I chose to pursue alternative therapy. I went to Mexico to Dr. Contreras's clinic in Tijuana, and used laetrile for my healing.

Luckily for me, Stephen Levine, Ram Das and Ram Dev (Dale Borglum) had started the *Conscious Dying Movement* around that time. I was blessed to attend a *Death and Dying Retreat* with Stephen 40 years ago. We were all pretty young at the time. I'm so grateful for finding that path. Over the past 40 years I've attended many retreats which I believe has prepared me to face what lies ahead. It feels like coming home.

I was so happy to discover after all these years that Dale is here in Marin and has continued this compassionate work. I was able to connect with him. He immediately responded and referred me to Curtis who is volunteering his time to help me work things through.

I've felt that I have much to share given all the experience I've had with death and dying. I've been with several people in their dying process and the experience is rich and rewarding. I've been dealing with cancer in my life for the past 40 years; it is no stranger to me.

Curtis in his insightful wisdom asked if I would be willing to speak with another woman in a similar situation so we can co-counsel one another. Betty and I have been talking weekly for a check-in. It has really been a beautiful experience for us both. We share a kinship that goes deep given what we are both experiencing.

Resisting treatment and calling the shots in one's own healthcare is important, because at this stage of life it is about quality of life. It is not an endurance race.

— Eileen Rossman
Living/Dying Project Client

Everything I encounter is my life.

Kosho Uchiyama Roshi

My Mother's Last Days

Three days before our mother died, my youngest brother told me he had said goodbye to her two times already.

I couldn't.

As long as she breathed,

I needed to lift her head and arrange her pillows.

I needed to turn her body and adjust her bed.

I needed to count her breaths and give her morphine.

I needed to call the nurse when I was unsure.

I needed to ask loudly in her ear:

"Ma, do you need to go to the bathroom?"

And when she quietly said, "I think so," we needed to dance her up and onto the commode, then up and back onto the bed.

I needed to watch her, kiss her forehead, change her bloomers, listen to what she needed.

I needed to tell her, an hour before she died,

"Ma, I'm going for a walk. I'll be back."

Then, I needed to lean a little closer to her left ear and say:

"Ma, you need to drop your body soon. It's not workin' for ya."

I needed to give her another kiss her on her forehead.

After she stopped breathing,

I needed to bathe her, change her sheets, dress her in clean clothes, doll her up a little.

I needed to sit in the recliner at the foot of her bed in the middle of the night crying my thanks to her, sobbing my gratitude that she loved who I am.

There was making sure her two friends who came the next morning had time with her body, that the candles were lit and the flowers were fresh.

There was making sure that the young men who came "to take her away" knew how precious their charge was, how respectful they needed to be.

There was watching her body be put in the van, watching the van drive away.

There was moving the hospital bed out of the heart of the house and taking all the equipment apart, moving the table and chairs back into the dining room and sitting for a few minutes together.

There was making sure the candles were lit and the flowers were fresh.

There were meals and driving in the night to visit Aunt Rosemarie who began dying two hours after my mother took off.

There was keeping track of my mother's body until it was burned in the fire.

I said: Thank you.

I said: I'm so happy for you.

I said: Good job.

I said: I love you.

But I never said goodbye.

I couldn't.



Deborah Leoni

Project News

- We have free-of-charge, volunteer-based spiritual support services for clients with life-threatening illnesses in San Francisco, Alameda, Marin, Sonoma and Contra Costa counties. If you or anyone you know could use the services please call the our office at **415-456-3915**. Our volunteers are now offering support services at Maitri AIDS Hospice in San Francisco.
- Services that have been available only in-person in the Bay Area are now available online through our website. Training workshops to consciously support the dying are being offered online. This training will include live, interactive discussion, Q&A, and guided meditations. After taking the training there is the option of becoming a Living/Dying Project Adjunct Volunteer with access to ongoing interactive online support sessions. See the **Live Online Education** link on our website for more information <https://www.livingdying.org/online/>. We have trained volunteers in Europe, Australia, and throughout Canada and the U.S.
- Dale will be facilitating weekend workshops/volunteer training programs in Santa Rosa, San Anselmo, and San Francisco in February of 2019. Please see the next page of this newsletter for details.
- If you are on our physical mailing list and not on our digital mailing list, please go to our website and signup on our digital mailing list. We print and mail only one newsletter per year, but a few times a year have been sending out email updates about the Project as well as emailing a digital copy of the annual newsletter. These shorter emailings contain updates on events and activities, articles on the services that 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 and trees.
- More useful material continues to be added to our website. There are some great new audio files of lectures and meditations. We are endeavoring to be the go-to website for anyone wanting information about the spiritual opportunities that life-threatening illness and caregiving can offer. Meditations, practices, audio and video files, and descriptions of the services that the Project provides all are available.
- **Healing at the Edge** ongoing small groups are being facilitated by Dale. These groups meet Tuesday afternoon in Santa Rosa and Monday night in San Francisco. There is also a group co-facilitated by Samantha Fargeon on Wednesday nights in Greenbrae. We may soon begin a Tuesday evening group in Sebastopol. 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. More information is available at the **Ongoing Groups** link on the homepage of our website <https://www.livingdying.org/ongoing-groups/>. There are a few spaces available in the group on Wednesday evenings Marin group. The other groups have waiting lists. If you are interested in talking to Dale about these groups, call him at **415 456-3915**.
- Dale now has his own video blog channel on the **Be Here Now Network**, <https://beherenownetwork.com/category/ram-dev/>. There are interviews with many of his friends including Ram Dass, Donnie Nelson, Melanie Bien, Sandra Fish, John Fox, Annie Lamott and others. There are also talks by Dale on this channel.
- **Insight Timer** smart phone app and <https://insighttimer.com> have lots of wonderful guided meditations and talks by meditation teachers including Dale. Now you can meditate anywhere!

Live life as if everything were rigged in your favor.

Rumi

THE HEART OF THE MATTER CONSCIOUS LIVING / CONSCIOUS DYING

**A WORKSHOP FOR CAREGIVERS, THERAPISTS,
NURSES, ACUPUNCTURISTS AND
ANYONE WANTING TO DEEPLY EXPLORE HEALING**



Sponsored by the **Community Institute for Psychotherapy**, a workshop offered by the **Living/Dying Project**. Participants seeking continuing education as Psychologist, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Licensed Clinical Social Worker are directed to cipmarin.org. Please select *Professional Development*, choose *Continuing Education for Professionals* and click on the course title. The **Living/Dying Project** offers C.E.U.s for nurses and licensed acupuncturists. A flyer for the workshop may be found at the **Living/Dying Project** website at livingdying.org

Physical healing, emotional healing, spiritual healing, collective healing – the journey to wholeness takes many forms and has many starting points. 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 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 an open heart. Having explored these wisdom traditions during 35 years of being a guide to the dying, a 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 to create a healing experience that will lead to a life consciously and compassionately lived and eventually to a conscious death. We're all caregivers and all seekers of healing. These deeply uncertain times are an incredible opportunity.

Santa Rosa workshop will be held **February 2 and 3, 2019**.

San Anselmo workshop will be held **February 9, 2019**.

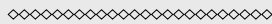
San Francisco workshop will be held **February 23 and 24, 2019**.

For information about locations and registration please contact the **Community Institute for Psychotherapy** or visit the **Living/Dying Project** website. Registration is handled through the **Community Institute for Psychotherapy** regardless of whether the registrant is pursuing continuing education or not.



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 founder and Executive Director of the Living/Dying Project and co-author of **Journey of Awakening: A Mediator's Guidebook** (Bantam Books).

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.

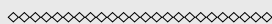


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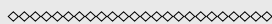
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The Living/Dying Project

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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 over thirty five years. In addition to spiritual support, we offer training and educational services through our website and by telephone, Skype or in person. The mission of our work is healing, both the healing of that which blocks us from full aliveness and the healing of our collective and individual relationships with death. Fear of death separates us from each other and from our own essential selves. Now as always it is vital to keep what is most meaningful and inspiring to us at the motivating center of our actions.

Our operation is simple and our overhead is minimal. A great majority of our budget comes from individual donations. We ask for your support, both financially and your blessings and your prayers. This support allows us to continue the vital work of the Project. Please make a donation in the enclosed envelope (if you received the printed newsletter). You also can make a donation online using PayPal or credit card by visiting our website www.livingdying.org, and clicking the **Donate** link at the top of the page.

We encourage those of you receiving our printed physical newsletter who could be just as happy with an emailed version to go to the **Mailing List** link on our website, sign up for the mailing list and then send us an email asking to be taken off our physical mailing list.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of you who have supported us in any way. 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, Client Services Coordinator for the Project. On page one is a photo by Curtis titled *Epicenter*. *Mojave Sunset* on page two was taken by George Ward. The photo of Travis on page three was taken by a friend during her casket decorating party last summer. Mark Leoni took the photo of his mother Peggy on page five. The photo of Dale on page seven was taken by Heather Swain.