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SoulCircling

*The
Journey
To The Who*

Kenneth H. Hamilton, MD



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SoulCircling: The Journey to the Who

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Foreword by August T. Jaccaci

Here is a most timely book of rich rewarding wisdom; a work of prose poetry for the soaring of our souls. Now, when human conscious evolution is the emerging necessity of humanity and hangs daily in the balance of potential eternal defeat, now comes a new page in the history of the healing arts, and just in time. For here we learn that in our reunion with our souls is our salvation, our personal and social healing.

Here in the life and work of Dr. Ken Hamilton are inspiring stories of personal revelation and learning which lead to medical and spiritual medical and spiritual insights which, in turn, lead to a series of social inventions for personal and group healing. These inventions of H.O.P.E. groups and Soul Circles are pioneering examples of an evolutionary pathway up and out of our devolution and on to our human fulfillment and our divine destiny.

Ken Hamilton has come to his depth of insight wearing his soul on the outside as all great leaders do. We are privileged to have a close up view of an archetypal soul story. We also get full confirmation that the future of medicine is inevitably a soul-seeking enterprise. "In this time in human history, soul returns to our awareness as a guide to the truth", he writes. Dr. Hamilton knows and demonstrates that this is truly a critical time of transformation in human culture. Sufficient to all those creative challenges, beyond the current dynamics of light, electricity and information, lies the healing dynamic of the human soul. The soul is the vessel of our salvation and our evolutionary triumph. Hamilton is one of the precious few among us who are the visionary voices and personal and social soul guides to open and tend the gates to the renaissance culture.

In this book, you will see the gatekeeper as prose-poet, the gatekeeper as medical doctor, the gatekeeper as inventive social

scientist and entrepreneur, the gatekeeper as cosmological theologian and inspired preacher-teacher. In times of renaissance, when all the conceptual boundaries between domains of practice must dissolve and some among us must create and witness a new higher order synthesis of human potential and promise, here stands Ken Hamilton calling to us. Here he is offering us the soul-sharing social inventions of H.O.P.E. groups and Soul Circles. One hundred years ago Nicola Tesla formed the first dynamos for the generation of electricity; today here is Ken Hamilton inventing and forming the human dynamos of collective synergetic souls. From my experience of Ken's groups, I would describe their "output" as the soul collaborative creativity or the "soul creativity" of human transcendence.

My friend Margaret Mead asked me to consider how to create scientific models which are organic and natural instead of arbitrary and man-made. She said the difference is in the intention. Arbitrary man-made models have as their intention the manipulation and control of people. Organic natural models have as their intention resonance and reverence. Welcome to the words of Ken Hamilton. Welcome to the heart and soul of Ken Hamilton. Welcome to the reuniting of your egoic identity with your eternal soul.

Prologue: Eden, the Garden of Ego

Today, people are saying that we are spiritual beings living human experiences, rather than humans simply trying to be spiritual. I first heard the expression in 1989 at a conference on addictions, and I knew it was true. For me, and I encourage you to look at your own experience, the only problem I have believing this is that my ego gets in the way; it needs so much to be in control. As I look around me, I sense that our egos have been doing this for countless centuries. There is a simple reason for this—our egos are very concrete about their business of keeping our survival interests in mind.

Evolutionary pressures created in us the complex, fight-or-flight survival response. When threatened, our spinal cord screams, “Look out!” and our survival program kicks in, making us super-strong, super-fast, and super-intelligent. This remarkable program assures us the greatest chance of surviving any dangerous situation. Our remarkable memories and our ability to actively seek and acquire knowledge enables us to keep track of the things that kicked off the response in the past and become alert for events that look like the old threat — not without inherent dangers, as we shall see.

With our acquired knowledge, we developed many other wonderful abilities, and many not so wonderful ones, especially the ability to use the survival response to control others by making them afraid. Our abilities to apply knowledge include the ability to misapply knowledge.

We have a long history of the use and abuse of knowledge; reaching back to before the early humanoid we call Neanderthal Man. Neanderthals were resourceful, fire- and tool-using, cave-dwelling people who survived several serious ice ages. About 30,000 years ago, a new human appeared—Cro-Magnon Man. Cro-Magnon humans are our ancestors. We increased our knowledge, as homo sapiens, the knowing human, is wont to do. We were learning.

We had begun to misapply our knowledge for the purpose of attacking and defending ourselves. It seems we have misused the knowledge of good and evil for only about 7,500 years.

We did not know how we had gotten this great power, but our ability to harm each other told us that it had to be a mistake of God in which somehow all of us had taken part. The storytellers of the children of Israel figured it out and their account of how it happened is the Legend of the Garden of Eden. This legend is a remarkable story of ego. In it, even God has one! Here, I'll use "God" for The Source because the original legend uses that name for the Unnamable.

One day, when God wasn't looking, Serpent stole a fruit off the tree and took it to the woman because he knew he could talk her into eating it and that she in turn could talk the man into eating it.

It happened just as Serpent planned, but God figured out what had happened. He got mad at all three of them and punished them for their disobedience of his law. He told them he was done with them and they were going to have to get out of the Garden. He cut off the serpent's arms and legs making it crawl on its belly forever after. He told the man that he'd have to work painfully hard in the fields to grow food for himself and the woman. He told the woman that she was going to have to bear children, which would hurt like hell and make her work hard for the rest of her life raising them.

To make matters even worse, he told them if they ever tried to come back, there would be armed guards at the gate to keep them out and a shining sword over the gate that would chop them to pieces if they managed to get past the guards. He was just that mad at them. He's God, so He never forgets and he never goes back on his word.

We've been out on our own ever since.

The story of the Garden of Eden took centuries of polishing in thousands of campfire repetitions before we had the skill with which to write it down in about 750 BCE. It lays blame, guilt, and punishment on us through a shameful belief that the divine Source

of our lives, God, has rejected us. The Eden story is as much with us today as ever... perhaps even more so in view of the murderous technologies that we have developed with the knowledge we believe we got from God against His will.

That belief must change, or we are doomed to misapply that knowledge until we have destroyed the world. This book is all discovering that we have everything we need to be able to make that change—a star-born presence in all of us—our soul.

Soul works in collaboration with the ephemeral, secular ego to create every human life. This collaboration reveals the vital need for the ego to recognize the presence of soul and allow itself to integrate into soul.

The work of integrating ego and soul is a process that heals us. I offer you the idea that this healing enables us to change problems into possibilities. My name for this process is homecoming. Homecoming gives us hope of finding meaning, value, and purpose in our lives.

We are born spiritual, remembering God. Contemporary society has forgotten how to remind us of this wonderful, vital aspect of our nature that knows God personally. 600 years ago, we rose out of The Dark Ages and its feudal, dispirited life to begin a secular movement toward classicism and humanism that we call The Renaissance. Over the next 300 years, it phased into the rationalistic Enlightenment, in which we fell in love with the physical universe by discovering that we could take it apart and measure it, forcing it to reveal its secrets and giving us the power of knowing it. Geniuses like René Descartes, Isaac Newton, Galileo, and Copernicus were all part of this great expansion of knowledge.

Descartes' rationalist thinking, summarized as, "I think, therefore I am," made the body-mind all-powerful. Rationalism rejected soul, and even fought the Vatican's claim to the existence of our spirit. We must head toward home; it is time to remember who and what we really are, spiritual beings called souls living in ego-directed human bodies. The time has come to learn how to bring our egos, our secular centers, into partnership with our souls,

our spiritual centers. It is time for us to learn how to be Human Beings. We need only to look into their wondrous variety to find the songs of our individual souls. The more we sing and dance this song, the more our souls come to share their experience of the physical universe with the spiritual universe.

I will teach you how to recognize your soul, your spiritual center, and hold onto it in this world of rapid change. Souls come to human life for good reasons, and we shall explore what those reasons might be. Circling your soul is both a process and a practice. As you move through it you will become proficient in working with others, and you will learn to recognize the difference between ego-based relationships and soul-based relationships. When minds work together, their output exceeds their individual capabilities in separation — synergy. When souls collaborate, they create super-synergy.

Introduction: A Surgeon Sheathes his Scalpel

Let me tell you now about the way in which the Mystery of the Universe revealed Itself to me, changing my life forever.

In 1975, I was struggling with anger, not knowing that it was mine. I complained to my practice manager that I thought the world was angry with me. His response was to offer me the loan of a Nightingale-Conant INSIGHT audiotope that he had received a week before. He told me that he thought it addressed my concern. In it, Earl Nightingale, radio personality, author, and co-founder of the Nightingale-Conant Corporation, talked about a variation of the Law of Returns that he called the Law of Correspondence. Simply stated, it says that the attitudes you sense in the world around you are reflections of and correspond precisely to the attitudes that you project into that world.

I was in a crisis over the anger. I had to make another choice, and when I found myself in a familiar, anxious situation where the anger would come up, I encouraged myself to “take it easy,” repeating it over and over in the face of the anxiety that led to the anger. The effect was immediate... and I knew the meaning of “Physician, heal thyself!”

I subscribed to the monthly INSIGHT tape series and discovered a great resource for my own development. Coincidentally, every new tape seemed to bring helpful ideas I could share with those patients who wanted more than an operation. They clearly benefited from their vicarious studies of what I came to call “the psychology of success.” They recovered very quickly from their operations and got out of hospital with record short stays. This psychology had no direct correlation to the “bedside psychology” I had learned in medical school, so I had to take time to see if it really worked. After ten years of its study and application, I knew I had to take a critical look at conventional therapeutic psychology. Rather than leave my surgical practice and its wonderful people for two years in a graduate program, I chose to study under a tutor, and my intention led me to Barry Wood M.D., a gifted psychiatrist in a nearby city.

He was a wonderful mentor. Over the following year, we developed a rich, productive relationship. He had a great reserve of valuable experiences, including extensive work with the “Twelve-step” recovery programs of Alcoholics Anonymous. He sensed my own recovery needs and suggested that I became an active participant in that part of the twelve-step program that focused on helping Adult Children of Alcoholics recover from family patterns of addiction (which I did not realize were present in my family). I followed his recommendation and the experience proved to be instrumental in what was to follow.

Our relationship deepened in many ways when he found he had incurable cancer. While he was still in hospital after the emergency abdominal surgery that diagnosed the illness, he was given a copy of Bernie Siegel’s *Love, Medicine and Miracles*. Bernie’s experiences and knowledge fascinated Barry and he connected with Bernie shortly after getting home from the hospital. When Barry and I came together again, he arranged for Bernie and me to meet.

That meeting took place at one of Bernie’s workshops called *The Psychology of Illness and the Art of Healing*. I also found Bernie’s work fascinating, and I commented on it to the hosts who told me of the similar work of Jerry Jampolsky, M.D. who would be giving a workshop one month later, so I signed up on the spot.

Both Jerry and Bernie were working with medical/surgical patients in support groups. Barry’s experience with non-medical 12-step recovery support groups became the third element in discovering the miraculous potential humans have when they join their minds in a shared intention.

Three months later, five of my cancer patients clearly had the potential to be able to support each other’s lives in the face of their illnesses. I asked them if they would like to start a support group for each other. We came together for the first time on February 12, 1987, and chose our name — HOPE. At the next meeting, we made our name an acronym for *Healing Of Persons Exceptional*. “Healing” was synonymous with wholeness, health,

and holiness; "persons" signified our common human-ness; and "exceptional" reflected our wondrous diversity.

Because of the lethal potential of cancer, death of some group members was inevitable; so I knew that I needed to learn about the growing hospice movement. Moreover, one name in the hospice movement kept cropping up — Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D. A brochure for one of her workshops called "Life, Death, and Transition," appeared on my desk. It would take place in a lovely Shaker village fifty miles from home, so I signed up.

I had not read the brochure at all well, biased as I was to learning about hospice work. This workshop was not at all about such work... it focused on healing the traumas that life could bestow on a human! The stories I heard stunned me with their suffering, calling me into a space of grieving that I had never experienced. At dawn on the third day, emotionally exhausted, I wandered out of the dormitory into a gray, misty dawn and down a maple-lined lane toward the peaceful Shaker cemetery with its single stone with one word on it, "SHAKER."

Halfway there, and right next to a full-size wooden sculpture of the crucified Jesus, I was aware of a presence in the mist beyond a gap in a stone wall — it was my mother, and she had died ten years before! She was sitting still, looking gently at me with her remarkable, yellow-brown eyes... just looking. Without giving a thought to this seemingly unnatural phenomenon, I said to her, "Mom, I love you. Thanks for waiting. You're free to go." She smiled with her whole being and swished off into the mist!

Now, something to my left got my attention. There, in the same mist was a human outline in black, looking as if someone had drawn it on the whiteness of the mist with a piece of charcoal. I knew it was my father, twenty years dead. Behind him was another outline of exactly the same shape... his father who had died in 1929! I heard myself say these words: "Dad, I love you and I've always loved you. Thank you for waiting. You're free to go." As I said these words to a father who could never talk about love, I saw a black cord that stretched from my heart through his heart to his

father's heart. It began to glow cherry-red. The glow became brighter and brighter, finally becoming yellow-white, at which magical instant, it burned! And these two images swished away into the mist. I felt as if some great power had lifted a huge weight from my shoulders.

When the work began later that morning, I wept no more. I felt the pain and the suffering, but no longer suffered myself. I sensed then that my parents had suffered in their youth, and I had somehow taken on their suffering. The pain had ended with that simple, beautiful moment of love, compassion, and forgiveness that I had experienced with their souls in that early morning mist. As the day of peace wore on, I knew I had to tell the others what had happened to me that morning. I had not taken my turn "on the mat" telling my story, and it seemed that the time for the story had not been right until that evening, the last evening of the work. I told the story in full reference to what had happened early that morning. My facilitator commented, "Elisabeth calls that divine intervention." I responded with a silent nod....

Essential to this experience was the Grateful Dead song, Ripple, a spiritual, metaphysical piece about the wonder of the path of life for every human being. I'd been singing it to myself when I met my parents in the mist, and I knew I had to memorize the words to the song, create a dance to express them, and share them with the group in the "skits" scheduled for the next evening. I spoke with the "MC" of the evening, and he accepted my offering.

The next day dawned bright and clear; so I began in earnest to develop my gift to everyone there. I danced and sang when and where I could in private, away from everyone else. By that afternoon, I had it, and I was as high as a kite from the repetition of the song and its dance. I heard a voice inside of me say, "You've got to ask the dancers their opinion of your dance." "The Dancers" were the Shakers who used to dance to attain altered states of consciousness.... I was in as high as a kite as I walked down the lane to that cemetery, and as I turned to face the latched cemetery gate that I knew from my visit the day before was hard to open, I saw a smiling face in every maple leaf in the dozen trees in front of

me—the souls of the many inhabitants. In that instant, I found these words: "I have a song and dance I'd like your opinion on. May I come in please?" The smiles widened, so I reached for the gate... but while my hand was still a foot away from the latch, it moved back and the gate opened wide — I had not touched it! In my delighted amazement, I said aloud, "It opened all by itself!" I sang my song and danced my dance for this space full of souls. I felt a warm acceptance, a deep gratitude, and an inner peace. It was October first, the 54th anniversary of the day I took my first breath. Happy Birthday, Kenneth!

Today, I wear a brass belt buckle cut to make the word, "SOAR." People often comment on it, and then I tell them two things about me that both satisfy and pique their curiosity. First, I tell them that it reminds me of my soaring experiences in a beautiful, white, long-winged glider from 1967 through 1981, during which time I asked a friend to make it for me. These motorless, soaring flights lasted as long as eight hours, went as far as 200 miles, and climbed as high as 24,700 feet! Second, I tell them that today I soar longer, farther, and higher than I ever did in that glider as I help people discover their soul's journey through H.O.P.E. Groups and SoulCircling.

In 1990, I reached a peak of guiding seven H.O.P.E. Group meetings a week. Some of the H.O.P.E. Group members asked if I would teach them how to guide groups, and we worked out a training program. Their groups were successful, too—the process could be replicated.

From the outset, participants described the H.O.P.E. process as "spiritual." The focus on hope developed motives for discovering meaning, value, and purpose in their lives. This discovery helped people heal, although it might not have cured them of their disease. (We will discuss this distinction later.) We saw that healing was a unique, spiritual process for everyone, celebrating his or her exceptional nature. We also saw that everyone, persons all, could find the process for him- or her- self.

We came to see each life as the journey of a soul, and to understand that H.O.P.E.'s work was to help people find their

soul's purpose. That discovery was a coming home to their truth. We refined the group process into a workshop format, and called this homecoming "Circling the Soul: Coming Home to Yourself"®. H.O.P.E.'s group work and SoulCircling workshops transform people's lives.

Many have requested that I write about H.O.P.E. and SoulCircling. It has been a delight to be able to respond to those requests. I have divided my response into three parts:

Part One opens with a look at the history of the universe and our world, and how we got to where we are today. It then examines ego, soul, and the psychology that describes their relationship. It describes homecoming in detail, and it emphasizes how awareness of the presence of soul is vital to the achievement of success.

Part Two contains a detailed description of the process that opens the dialog between ego and soul — SoulCircling. It contains specific exercises to help you with the process. It also tells you how to create a powerful support group to help you on your journey.

Part Three offers a consideration of the potential that lies in front of us... the soul journey of our human race.

Chapter 1: In the Beginning

Well, Human, you and I have been here since the beginning of time. It makes no difference whether time began with the cracking of the Cosmic Egg, Genesis 1:1, or the "Big Bang" (an expression coined in 1950 by the astronomer and mathematician, Fred Hoyle). This Great Adventure is the result of a perfect, pure intention rising out of an indescribable void and uttering its only commandment: "Be!"

"Be!" is a perfect, eternal thought encompassing a perfect, infinite body in a single point of light. In the glorious instant of Its becoming, that Holy Thought, that Incredible Speck, expanded its light into all of the dimensions of time and space and joyously cried out, "I am!" That passionate cry echoes yet from the farthest reaches of the universe. According to Big Bang theory, this Incredible Speck of Light, in the first instant of being inflated at an unimaginable rate... a trillion, trillion times in the tiniest fraction of the first second of all time. Our beautiful universe must be part of a great idea.

This expansion of Light produced what we can truly call "stardust." Scientists exploring... seemingly accidental relationships in the Universe have found special fixed numbers called "constants" to describe these relationships. Now they find that if these numbers were off by the tiniest percentage, the Universe could never have given birth to stars, let alone us humans.

When we focus sharply and clearly for a long enough time on any thought or idea, we can create physical things. The invention of the incandescent light bulb by Thomas Edison typifies the result of exercising this power of focus. Look at what minds have created.

Questions that analyze Divine thought—Truth—cannot threaten it; it simply is. Questions threaten secular thought because it lacks the integrity of Truth. The Great Invocation opens with the expression, "From the point of light in the mind of God...." Though

she wrote this years before Fred Hoyle coined his famous phrase, it speaks of how the Great Expansion began, and still goes on within The Source's mind—sacred thought. If our minds move, store, and combine information, so must The Source's mind, for we are made in The Source's image, are we not? Does it not make sense that the mind of The Source encompasses its entire creation? Does it not make sense that The Source needs to know what goes on in its body—the physical universe?

Thought must connect all of the pieces of the universe. It must be able to move between them without any limitation of the physical universe, which is limited by space and time. As a result, some scientists have brazenly concluded that thought originates in the chemical processes of the brain. Their thesis makes the creative mind secondary to the created body. The quantum physics experiments mentioned above, coupled with some later thought experiments, suggest that a mental universe encompasses the physical universe. Money? Greed? The Source's passion creates and sustains that wondrous Point of Light. Passion is a matter of soul, not the mind, or the body. Joyous laughter is not unique to humans. We learned it from The Source. The sound of the Great Expansion is certainly The Source's joyous laughter. Fear is not of the Universe. The time has come for us to stop throwing ourselves all over time and space. The Source has already fed us the knowledge to know that the Point of Light in its Mind promises each of us the time and space we occupy here and now.

As we have God's body, mind, and soul within us, so must we have God's spirit within us. The Source's spirit expresses itself in perfect relationship with the whole universe. Ours would reflect God's spirit back at The Source. Three more points will close this chapter: First, we are all equal.... We are all Mind, Body, Soul, and Spirit. Second, all human beings are different. Our bodies, temperaments, passions, and experiences are all different. Third, like God, we are also Light, Life, Love, and Laughter, which make us equal in God's eyes.

And now a simple question based on this awareness: "What did The Source put each one of us here to do?" And one more

question out of the first: “What was The Source's purpose in creating our wonderfully diverse and creative species? My experience tells me that we find the answers when we open a dialog between ego and soul. So let us go and visit ego and soul and ask that question.

Chapter 2: Ego, the Navigator of the Ship of Life—the Seeker.

What is the ego?

The first Latin words Sir Hayes taught us in sixth grade were *ego sum*, meaning I am.

Later, I discovered I had an ego. Looking back on my life, I have become aware that my ego was certainly not the who of my life but the what of it: what others felt about me, what I had, and what I could achieve. My ego had physical properties of size and strength, as I might have heard a family member say: “Toby (my childhood nickname), you have a strong ego,” or “Your Uncle Alex certainly had a big ego!”

Medical school taught me to define ego as “that portion of the human personality experienced as the ‘self’ or ‘I’ which perceives, remembers, evaluates, plans, and in other ways is responsive to and acts in the surrounding physical and social world. Britannica CD 98 Multimedia Edition © 1994-1998 by Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.” The root word for personality is Latin *persona*, which means mask and a mask is a cover-up. If the ego’s work is to respond to the immediate, surrounding world, then what could it cover up than the opposite—the eternal, infinite universe. Ego is not the essential self; rather, it is something temporary — a transient construct that creates the mask which covers up who we really are.

We usually think that the personality comprises only the intellectual, emotional, and moral aspects of our life. The mask consists of much more than these three mental aspects; it must also include the three physical assets with which we meet life—our body, our talents and intelligence(s), and our temperament. The latter three aspects have profound influences on the first three, and all six qualities belong to our genes. In other words, they comprise our form.

The ego's job is to create an individual. It works with these assets. The finite ego focuses on that life which exists between birth and death — between dust and ashes. There can be no doubt that the ego is extremely valuable. Sigmund Freud recognized the value of the ego for each person, and I believe that he looked at ego as the navigator of the ship of life — I certainly do. It may help to look at these three aspects of self in terms of human development: the id is ancient history, the ego is modern history, and the superego is postmodern history.

Our egos have responded to stress for a long time, and each one of us follows the course of human history in our own ego development—we wrote the program.

Where does the ego live?

Our life force gathers in seven specific centers of the body called, in Sanskrit, chakras (wheels). The third lies in the solar plexus—the sun center—the center of control and the home of the ego, the mistress of control. Ego has its home in our energy system, my friends; one perfectly suited to its need for control. In short, its focus is on its physical world, just as science focuses on the physical universe.

How does the ego develop?

Ego must figure out how to use these assets to shape our personalities and survive. Ego development begins in our childhood homes, continues in our schools, and moves on into our workplaces, adult homes, and families. You can understand that, with but rare exception, our ego's encounters shape our personalities. Survival is indeed the ego's game.

Individuation

From our earliest beginnings, ego, our judging, differentiating function, learns the difference between “me” and “you.” This is *individuation*. Individuation is the goal of a healthy personality that naturally and comfortably brings together ego and higher parts of *self*. Individuation applies to all personalities. It is a

learning process. A learning process has no limit. We all have different life experiences and knowledge, and wonderfully unique ways of responding to them...there can be no true clones. Though we can clone bodies in this dynamic, constantly changing world and its universe, we cannot clone knowledge and experience.

The Western World does little to nurture connectedness, so the ego comes to believe that it is the only navigator of the ship of life. The ego keeps an inventory of that which it has condemned to these shadows, framing all in the judging attitude of fear. Following the law of attraction—like-seeks-like—ego will seek out others with whom it shares similar qualities of temperament and talents. Nurturing is essential for life and growth; without it we wither and die.

When I tried to dig clams with a garden rake at high tide, my aunt “rescued” me from what looked to her like my impending drowning, shaking me and hollering, “You stupid little boy!” In this way, my ego withdrew from my aunt, and our relationship was scarred for the rest of her life. In consequence, my ego came to consider itself an expert in deciding what comprises a “stupid” behavior. I also became skilled in creating stupid behaviors that I could not seem to fix. Surgery may fix physical trauma caused by stupid behaviors, but it doesn’t fix the behaviors. Ego remembers. Ego always works to correct the painful happenings of its early experience because it wants to feel better. My experience tells me that *we must stop accusing people of being stupid*. Calling a person “stupid” does not make anyone intelligent.

It doesn’t work. Insulting others, especially children, never works; it *marginalizes* them. Naturally, that part of them that is concerned with survival leads them to create a new society of similarly marginalized people who can support each other’s egos.

Dissing

Today’s high school students are acutely aware of the harmfulness of disrespect and dismissal, which they call “dissing.” In some juvenile societies, when a person is “dissed,” s/he is considered justified in taking extreme measures, up to and

including murder. The more we find it unacceptable to subject another person to dismissal or disrespect, the more we must direct ourselves to find another, more acceptable, behavior, lest the old one return, for nature abhors all vacuums. We must realize that everyone tries his or her best to learn how to get along with others. We all need encouragement rather than dismissal. The ego finds this hard work, but help can come from many sources.

How the ego works:

The “survival response” and the ego:

We shall always need the “fight-or-flight” survival response that we used but seldom in our primitive years, but because of our high speed, high stress life, we use it every day, often several times a day, and often inappropriately. Because of its reflexive, life-saving nature, our survival response is set up to fire off after only a superficial evaluation of the life-threat of any given situation. Once activated, the response goes on afterburners; after all, its purpose is life-saving.

The code in our genes tells our bodies to respond to life threats with two powerful chemicals, adrenaline and cortisol. Our problems with the survival response grow first out of ego’s undying commitment to survival and second out of today’s social environment replacing yesterday’s natural environment. Humans rather than predatory animals have become the trigger of the survival response.

Ego uses memory and judgment to keep an inventory of everything it feels ever harmed it. This inventory enables the constant reappearance of life threat in our day-to-day living. The results are dangerous and all too often lethal.

Memory and judgment

The traumatic childhood clam-digging incident from my childhood demonstrates how ego uses its experience to help it respond to new circumstances. Subsequent to this episode, I had a terrible fear of water that my mother attributed to the near drowning. Fifty years later, in a workshop on healing the “inner child,” by recovering repressed childhood memories, I

remembered. In that fifty years, my life had had a distinct, powerfully judgmental focus on a “stupid” behavior and the person who committed it, especially if I was that person. On recovering the memory, I was no longer “stupid”

Now I became a defender of those who would suffer emotional abuse from being called “stupid.” It developed a set of rules of safe behavior based entirely on its perceptions of that clam-digging incident: Rule one, withdraw from people, and row your own boat, it’s safer; Rule two, be judgmental, it’ll protect you; and Rule three, dissociate when another person’s anger gets unbearable. My ego had tried always to make those rules work for every threatening situation, but not all threatening situations were like my terrified and terrifying aunt accusing me of being “stupid.”

Ego needs to judge itself and its performance, too. As we shall see later, the need to judge grows out of fear, and this, in turn, causes ego to choose either defensive or aggressive behaviors (both of which are angry) in order to control the situation.

How does the ego get us in trouble?

Through its misperceptions, separation, temporo-spatial projections, and judgment.

The ego's awareness of life is tragically, desperately finite.... It is destined to begin in dust and end in ashes. Once the ego learns to take the measure of the world with its physical and emotional senses, it sets up a courtroom in the mind to cope with every life situation it meets. It plays every role in the courtroom from police detective to judge. It even plays the role of the accused! That unfortunate role predominates in the lives of many, revealing itself in the expression, "how could I be so stupid?" Have you ever called yourself "stupid"? Guilty! You are now sentenced and committed to a life of punishment for your sin of stupidity. In the present, the ego maintains an image of an equally punishing, fearful future. All of these ego functions arise from misperceptions of the truth... the simple truth that tells us there are no mistakes, only lessons.

Healing the ego's mistakes:

Superego

We have spent the better part of one hundred years recognizing and defining our ego, as defined by Sigmund Freud. Today, we are seriously trying to define the “self,” part of which is the ego. Another “part of self,” the superego, comes out of our recognition of our ego’s potential for destructive, rapacious behavior. It is a group of egos working together with collective memories to find those patterns of social behavior that work better than others. The judging, perceiving egos that create a superego can also subject its truth to terrible distortions in exactly the same way that an individual ego can distort individual truth. We use the superego to control harmful behaviors in socially approved ways. When we choose a destructive force to limit the ego’s destructive power, we challenge the ego in its home territory, and stacked the results in favor of the ego.

We shall have to learn to love our ego. With ego’s ability to do harm where it feels fear, loving ego seems risky. The ego’s ability to come together with other egos and create the superego reduces this risk. Superego, always reflecting society’s wishes, continually seeks the better way, and creates safe environments like support groups for such loving meetings.

Loving the ego

Some spiritual practices disparage ego by describing it as fearful, judgmental, guilt-ridden, and subject to repeated misperceptions of reality. In doing so, they judge the judge. I see value in my ego—and in the egos of others. Ego has valuable qualities, even though it has limited perceptions.

The two most powerful attitudes are love and fear. The ego, devoted to its own survival, naturally does its best with whatever resources it has. Ego is our worldly navigator, wily and resourceful in its ability to respond to these actions. In order to develop its navigational skills, ego must first come to know itself as an individual. Separation is the way of ego, believing it has to figure

life out by and for itself. Remember, ego “evaluates, plans, and in other ways is responsive to and acts in the surrounding physical and social world.” Even though the word, ego, can be used as an acronym for “easing god out,” we may do well to consider that God had something to do with the creation of ego. If It didn’t, then ego is an accident. That finite part of self that uses the qualities of personality to navigate the ocean of life cannot be an accident; it can only be a product of Divine Intention, and the ego deserves to be held in that divine light. Consider, then, that ego is that part of self which seeks God.

Acknowledging that survival is always in the ego’s best interests, and that the projective nature of fear and anger have been an essential part of its methods of survival, we would do well by looking at the dark side of these two feelings—the harm that comes from them. Harm returns harm, and we are beginning to discover how damaging that can be. We can spare our selves a lot of grief by learning to red-flag every impending action that could harm self or others. When ego is about to make a crucial decision, recalling this directive helps keep us out of harm’s way.

It helps to remember that harm never comes from hope and love, only from fear and anger, ego’s attitudes that created separation. Fear’s defensive, fight-or-flight survival-based attitudes fade now, replaced by the empowering, creative embrace of love. Love comes to us from a different part of self — soul — the captain of our ship. Let us go to the captain’s quarters and the life that changes our focus from surviving to thriving.

Chapter 3: Soul, the Captain of the Ship of Life— Immersed in Life.

*Take time to listen to the song of your soul...
And see where it leads you.*

(Soul) is the indirect presence of your spirit and in your soul sleep all the possibilities of your human destiny. (John O’Donohue)

“We all come to earth with field orders.” (Søren Kierkegaard)

Consider that all harm to the body and mind comes from a starvation in the human ego—a spiritual starvation. Call, then, on that part of self that knows its divine Source—your soul.

In H.O.P.E. Groups and SoulCircling workshops, where we help people establish a dialogue with their soul, people often ask me what soul is and if it isn’t the same as their spirit. Have you ever wondered what soul means?

What is the soul?

The Encyclopedia Britannica tells us that the soul has the following five qualities:

1. Soul is the “immaterial essence of a human being.” Soul is not material—not of the body—and yet its presence is vital to our being, our essence.

2. Soul “confers individuality and humanity.” Soul is “considered to be synonymous with the mind or the self.” This creates an identity between mind and self. The Self is our individuality—those unique qualities that distinguish one person from another and that comprise both the ego and the soul.”

3. Soul is “considered to be synonymous with the mind or the self.” This creates an identity between mind and self. The Self is our individuality—those unique qualities that distinguish one person from another and that comprise both the ego and the soul. Mind, our collection of conscious and unconscious processes that

influence behaviors of all kinds, becomes transpersonal thereby—greater than the brain.

4. Soul is “that part of an individual which partakes of divinity.” It knows The Source and Truth—that which cannot be interpreted.

5. Soul is commonly “considered to survive the death of the body.” It has eternal aspects—it precedes me and succeeds me.

Our Western spiritual traditions believed that The soul was one of the four essential parts of every human (the other three are body, mind, and spirit). Our belief in the existence of the soul and its process of reincarnation enriched our lives for about 2000 years from Plato (died 486 BCE) to Descartes. When the Age of Reason came along and subjected The soul to the test of objective reason, it failed and was left by the wayside. As Plato’s thoughts on the soul are considered fundamental to Judeo-Christian beliefs, so, René Descartes’ thoughts on the body and mind are considered fundamental to contemporary, Western philosophy of science. Descartes did us all a favor by not throwing the soul in the garbage—he hid it from the rest of the rationalists by putting it in the brain.

The soul could never stay in the recesses of the brain; it is endowed with the spiritual power that created the physical brain. Even Hitler had to have a fragment of soul hidden deep in the recesses of his incredible, evil, ego-directed being. The soul’s patience will always be rewarded ... evil is ephemeral.

John O’Donohue tells us that the soul comes here to love and beloved. A Course in Miracles tells us that we can always perceive others as extending love or giving a call for help. Neither statement explains why some souls come to inhabit bodies directed by evil egos — egos that define love in their own narcissistically self-satisfying, corrupt, destructive ways. These souls collect their energy from the human experience of “flight-or-flight” responses to fearful situations and ego’s use of fear to control and dominate others. As the soul’s home is the heart, its attitude is love and its function is compassion and forgiveness. Our soul has been holding

our ego in its loving, compassionate arms, waiting for the time when the ego can open a dialog with the soul.

The soul knows to let the ego run its own race—and fall in holes that are apparently not of its own making. The soul knows that the ego makes these holes in order to learn lessons of the spirit; so it bides its time. Now, when the ego gets out of the hole, it is ready to engage the soul in dialog.

Meet the soul. The soul is our divine Self, the essence of who we are. When we express concern about who we are to a SoulCircle or a H.O.P.E. group, the group usually responds with, “Have you asked your soul lately?”

The eternal soul, preceding and succeeding each individual life, comes to find truth and love. We have certainly made many mistakes in our lives, both individually and collectively, and the soul’s work is to make lessons out of mistakes—the lesson is always love in the context of truth. The soul’s ways of going from mistakes to lessons, from problems to possibilities, are far more powerful than the ego’s ability to control things. With eternity on its side, the soul can, indeed, direct many lifetimes to learning the lesson. It would seem today that our souls have devoted many lifetimes to this transformation, and at this time in human history, we move, under the soul’s direction, toward one of the great transformations of our species and our world.

Indeed, historically rich concepts of soul are rushing back into our consciousness. Book sellers enlarge their sections on spirituality to make room for books about the soul written by physicists, theologians, and psychologists, to name but a few of the professions (re-) discovering the soul. The soul always works in such grace notes and the soul of its author wants to be close to your soul. The soul’s inherent qualities of passion, feeling, relating, sharing, and tenderness are feminine. As a tragic result, billions of us have grown up in high-tech, low-touch, ego-rich, soul-poor societies whose heart-less minds have no conscious awareness of their own soul. Mind and heart, ego and soul must come to work together for our advancement.

When we blind the eye of the heart, our soul, we allow our minds to corrupt thought, and we misapply our knowledge. A respected teacher of our young in recognizing and correcting the application of knowledge, lost two lovely sons, one due to self-inflicted drug use, and the other to the bullets of a stalker. She saw that each had lost his life because of the misapplication of knowledge. The first had died because he misapplied his own knowledge and the second had died because of another person's misapplication of knowledge. Without heart, the mind is capable of dehumanizing people. We need our souls to guide us back to love, the way of the heart. We must remember that the soul never left us; we left it.

Reflect now on the idea that your soul carries with it the reason for your existence here on earth... the reason that gives your life meaning. Friedrich Nietzsche had this to say about life's meaning: "it is more important to find out why you live than how you live." Viktor Frankl's experience in Nazi concentration camps fully substantiated Nietzsche's statement. You live because Life, itself, wants your experience of It. That is your work—your soul's calling. Your soul came here to encompass your entire life with its love—to experience how you love, were loved, and showed others the way to love.

Your soul, in its eternal wisdom, chose to move into the background and become invisible to your finite, ephemeral ego. A cloud of the ego's perception came across the shining of your soul's vision and dimmed your sight. The supreme challenge of a lifetime is to first convince the ego of the existence and presence of the soul, and then to encourage it to move into a dynamic relationship with the soul.

Soul: a holographic fragment of Creation:

We have life because The Source is Life. The Life is in us, and we are in It. It is us but we are not It. We are but fragments of It—*holographic* fragments—fully dimensioned, but slightly fuzzy images of The Source's experience.

Sacred time, sacred art

A soul lives only in the sacred time of the present moment. Secular time comprises the historical past and the mysterious future—the time of memory and projection—time that does not exist except in the thinking of the linear, masculine ego. Keep in mind that all of us, women and men alike, have both masculine and feminine attributes. When we choose to live in the present moment, we choose to live in God's time. In the time of the Beloved, we can make our lives a collaboration of our personal ego and individual soul. In this way, our lives become lives of service of the universal spirit—consecrated lives. The soul's journey begins in the glorious, passionate birth of the stars. That soul swam the primordial seas with the first single-celled organisms. Each one of us writes a unique life story, a single volume in an encyclopedia of the experience of one soul.

Popular wisdom maintains: "We are spiritual beings experiencing the human condition, rather than human beings merely trying to be spiritual." The name of our spiritual being is "soul."

Body, mind, soul and spirit:

In many ways, mind resembles spirit. In many ways, body resembles soul. As we reach out to our spiritual nature, the mind evolves into the spirit and the body evolves into the soul. In short, we transcend our old, limited nature and discover the wonder of a creative life without limits. The discovery of neuropeptides has revealed the connections between the mind and the body. These remarkable chemicals render feelings tangible and measurable — they are part of the tangible soul.

Of the many neuropeptides and their emotions, only two are necessary for raw, immediate survival: fear and its stepchild, anger. Because of their importance, the ego uses these emotions to protect us from harm and thinks it is essential to life. Love, on the other hand, is essential to life and is capable of taking the projection out of fear and anger and turning them into awareness and presence. Love is the attitude of spiritual life common to all

great religions. This single attitude contains a remarkable constellation of emotions that evaluate our life-giving experiences: happiness, joy, bliss, serenity, and inner peace — the emotions of the soul. Today, ever more people are becoming aware of the wonder of experiencing these emotions. This awareness leads us out of the way of ego and into the way of soul.

Soul is, then, the essence of life, whereas spirit is the source of life; and, as soul encompasses an individual body-mind, spirit encompasses that body-mind-soul.

The marriage of body and mind, ego and soul:

The great Sufi mystic, Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273 CE), experienced the shift from intellectualism and reason to intuition and ecstasy and wrote about it. He stressed that the way of the heart was not to negate the way of the mind, but that the two were to work together in balanced relationship. The resulting balance would be, as he put it, the Perfect Man.

Whereas the ego believes that might makes right and that judging is a power that reflects might, the soul knows what is right without needing to judge anything. Consider that the soul uses that word, “right,” as Buddhists use it in their eight-fold path.

As Thomas Merton said, "Conscience is the face of soul." The simple and yet profound truth in these words sing deeply inside of me, touching my soul.

When people ask me about the soul, I like to tell them that soul lies at the heart of everything, encompassing the entire body-mind, including the ego. What matters is the experience of the journey, but in our world of intellectualism, the ego does not know that. It does not know that the soul is a piece of the ever-present divine Spirit that comes here to be an individual who creates a unique volume of life's experiences. The soul is, then, the essence of any one life, whereas the spirit is the source of all life; and, as the soul encompasses an individual body-mind, so the spirit encompasses that body-mind-soul.

Soul and personality:

Each soul comes into a genetic environment that contains all of the elements of personality. The physical being that will be its home will be born into a family which will respond to its gifts of personality with their own personalities. In this way, the environment of the older persons will begin to exercise an influence on the form, thought, and behavior of the new human, creating a new individual. If that environment is ego-centered, it will try to control the newcomer. If the totality is ego-centered, it will defend the *person*. If it is soul-centered, it will empower the person.

Soul and creativity:

Soul comes through to our consciousness in many ways. The soul of a playwright comes through to us in his plays. The soul of a mother comes through to us in her nurturance. The soul of a composer comes through to us in his compositions. The soul of an artist comes through to us in her landscapes. The soul of a teacher comes through to us in how she helps us inform our lives. The soul of a physician comes through to us in his healing ministry. The soul of a worker comes through to us in the quality of the product of that work. The soul of a portraitist comes through to us in her brilliant ability to portray the soul of her subject in the painting.

When a skilled musician plays a piece written by someone long dead, the soul of that musician joins with the soul of the composer, and the resulting product is a distinctive, wondrous performance. Can we find the soul of Bach, von Karajan, or Baumgartner by looking at the plastic disc? Is the soul of the composer in the electronic instrument? The soul of the performance lies in the spacing and power of the notes. Rudolf Baumgartner's soul adds yet another dimension to Bach's composition—and my appreciation of Bach's soul grows when I hear this new performance.

The great men and women of music pour their souls out to us in their work. Where do these notes and performances come from: ego-driven men or soul-directed human beings responding to

spirit's presence? Was The Source not wonderfully inspired to create the Universe? The work that you and I are here to do flows from the Soul of the Universe as an unencumbered gift to our own soul's creativity.

Soul and eternity:

“(Soul) often is considered to survive the death of the body” (Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit.). This fifth quality of Soul speaks to its ability to endure beyond the limits of time, as we know it. We must use them in order to understand and appreciate this fifth quality of soul.

Whereas reason tells us that there is no evidence of a “soul” that occupies a series of human bodies, intuition appreciates the anecdotal story of the little girl who asked her baby brother to tell her about The Source because she was “beginning to forget.” That same intuition can lead us to appreciate the work of scientifically trained professionals like Raymond A. Moody, Ph.D., M.D., Kenneth Ring, Ph.D., and Brian Weiss, M.D., all of whom have written eloquently about their experiences with people who have either experienced life before their life or after it. Each of these three heard stories from their clients/patients that challenged their scientific, rational minds to the core and lead them to an awareness of the non-rational, mystical nature of life—the life of a soul.

Soul and the heart:

Why the heart? It is central to us and to The Mystery that gave us its life in perfect love. It is impossible to define The Mystery or any of its expressions such as: love, grace, truth, life, and soul. With all that I have said before from my non-rational mind, I offer you this description of soul:

Soul is loving and kind; passionate and compassionate; patient and shy; courageous and persistent. It is an instrument of creativity and transformation: a non-judgmental energy moving effortlessly through space and time gathering experience of unfathomable, universal value. It is the essence of life.

Chapter 4: "Going Out of Body"

Five important soul phenomena have appeared in our Western experience in the last quarter of the 20th century: fragmentation of soul; out-of-body experiences, with or without a near-death experience (NDE); reincarnation, especially in respect to past life regression therapy; shamanic practices; and visits from beyond. A grasp of these concepts will help us to understand more about soul.

Words like "heaven" and "nirvana" that come from our spiritual traditions and experiences strongly suggest that life is far more than ashes-to-ashes, dust-to-dust existence. Indeed, it is a process that ties into the very life of the Universe. Only the incarnate soul that lives the sacred life can fully appreciate the value of the entire process; ego, living the secular, finite life, cannot.

Being eternal, soul has the power to outwait the suffering of its temporal home, the body.

Fragmenting the soul, having a piece of your soul leave home:

The soul's fragility makes it subject to wounding. Because we are at best only faintly conscious of soul's presence, we are hardly aware that a soul can be wounded, let alone how it would respond to the wounding. A soul can suffer a wound from any kind of trauma, even a sprained ankle, but none is more egregious than when a naked, soul-less ego — a Hitler — traumatizes and fragments another person's soul out of a craving to restore its own lost soul.

Soul-aware societies, the world over, share an awareness of soul's tenderness and sensitivity to trauma. The trauma causes breaks or gaps in the integrity of soul, and soul fragments, breaking off the injured piece in order for it to find safety from the trauma. Those lost parts of our soul damage the integrity of soul, and without soul integrity, we are not whole. The part that stayed

was a tender part of my soul that wanted to leave its earthly home for the safety of its eternal home.

When my aunt "rescued" me from my "stupid" clam-digging adventure, the terror I felt caused a part of me to separate from the rest of me and stay under the water... where it was safe from her terrified and terrifying anger. The part that stayed was a tender part of my soul that wanted to leave its earthly home for the safety of its eternal home. I paid a tremendous price for this loss and my ego did its best to compensate for it. It wrote a set of life rules that it believed would protect me from such insults.

However, they were not adequate for all of the demands that life would impose, nor were they adequate for the pressure of my soul to recover its lost part. The soul part of my self would patiently, subtly, ingeniously and inexorably set up situations in which it hoped to be able to recover that piece and be whole—to heal. As I have already mentioned, I would suddenly find myself doing something unbelievably stupid for which I would be discovered and accused of the worst—stupidity. Eventually, my soul succeeded and I recovered the memory, and in that instant I experienced the most profound relief I could ever imagine.

Out-of-Body Experiences, when the unfragmented soul leaves home:

Out-of-body experiences take place in altered states of consciousness and when the body experiences extreme physical or emotional trauma. We all experience the former in our dreams, those rich, visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic images that we all experience three or four times nightly, whether we remember them or not. We encounter meaningful legendary figures and experiences in dreams. For many indigenous cultures, dreamtime is a time for soul to wander, and they wake a person from sleep very carefully lest soul be not fully returned to the body by the time of full awakening. Dreams are soul-journeys.

An out-of-body experience in the awakened state can put a person in contact with people and situations from other times even when death has separated them. Toward the end of the last century,

out-of-body experiences became the subject of many books and popular media experiences. G. Ray Moody described the experiences of many of his counseling clients who had such experiences when their lives were threatened. Each one moved through a long dark tunnel towards a point of brilliant light only to be told by a presence at or near the end of the tunnel that his or her time had not come and that he or she was to return to the body. Kenneth Ring described the experiences of people who went all the way into the light at the end of this tunnel. There they were in the presence of beings whom they could sometimes see and sometimes not. Most of them received instructions as to what they were to do with their lives.

I would like to share with you some stories that came to me directly from the person involved:

An out-of-body experience without an NDE:

A woman in her thirties had experienced two recurrences of a difficult cancer. Her doctors had told her there was still cancer in her body, and were proposing more therapies. She was attracted to a weekend retreat with a healer who worked with music. There, she found she could enter deep meditative states while listening to his music. In one of these states, she found herself out of her body, going down a long dark tunnel toward a beautiful, brilliant, yet comfortable light. She went into the light and knew she was in the presence of beings that she could not see. They spoke to her without voices, yet she understood them clearly. They gave her instructions about what she was to do with her life. Immediately, she began to follow them to the letter, and was still in good health, many years later.

Another woman with severe musculo-skeletal pain from several accidents was studying brainwave biofeedback with a therapist. She found relief in this work, and started to find herself in strange, yet pleasant and reassuring places when she attained certain levels of relaxation. One session was moving along pleasantly when she suddenly found herself out of her body, traveling down a long, dark tunnel toward a lovely, brilliant light

that did not hurt her eyes. She burst out into the light and into the presence of the four adults in her family who had subjected her to a lot of physical and emotional abuse as she was growing up. They had all died years ago, and now their spirits welcomed her with peace and love that stunned her, transforming huge amounts of the anger with which she had lived most of her adult life. On returning to ordinary reality, she realized she still had the pain, but it was changed, much as her attitudes had changed. She was at much greater peace with herself and the gripping edge of pain was blunted and softened.

An out-of-body experience in an NDE

A woman brought her near-death experience (NDE) to an early H.O.P.E. Group meeting of sixteen people, all of whom had cancer, but her. She only had terrible pain in her body from multiple fractures that she sustained in an automobile accident in which her husband died. The first thing she became aware of after the accident was that she was in a hospital emergency room, "floating" up beneath the ceiling with her husband and her father and mother-in-law who had been dead for ten and eight years, respectively. All four were wordlessly communicating with each other about what was going on. After a while, her husband said, "I've done all the work I came here to do. I'm not going back." Her response was, "Well, I've not done all my work, so I am going back." She wondered aloud to us why she had decided to come back because of the physical and emotional pain. Sixteen people with cancer responded by expressing their deep gratitude for her story and her presence. I have repeated this story hundreds of times to people concerned about their own death and dying. It always creates a deep thoughtful silence in them.

Reincarnation

Up until the beginning of the 17th century, reincarnation had been a part of Judaic, Christian, and Islamic belief. Also, until that time, soul, the active principle in reincarnation, was a partner with body, mind, and spirit as an essential component of human

life. Though scientific reason at that time discarded soul, it seems that soul never left us. Today, for the first time in centuries, hundreds of books on soul are in publication.

Brian Weiss, MD, is a psychiatrist who met the reincarnation of soul in a remarkable encounter with a woman he calls Catherine about whom he has written a book, *Many Lives, Many Masters*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988. She was suffering from eleven different phobias, each with its own panic attack. As they worked together under hypnosis, she experienced the traumatic death of each of eleven different people living in different times and places. Each experience of dying bore a relationship to one of her phobias and its associated panic attacks. In each instance, she experienced the profound peace common to all who go out of body, and both the phobia and its panic attack completely disappeared on coming out of trance. His experience supports the shamanic perception that traumatic death may hold the soul in non-ordinary reality instead of releasing it to incarnate into another human still in its mother's womb. The consequences of such soul entrapment reach out over time causing illnesses that relate to the mechanism of death. The trapped soul seeks ways to attract the attention of healers who will set it free to resume its incarnations and experiences of life.

Weiss' experiences and those of his patient help us examine the validity of believing in the eternal nature of soul. My personal and vicarious experiences suggest to me that illnesses and dysfunctions might well be associated with wounds of the soul that go back in time even into the collective of human experience. What might it be, other than the soul that goes out of body, down a long tunnel and into a brilliant light to either return or leave? If you still question the remarkable properties of soul, read the following story told by a woman in another H.O.P.E. Group who worked as a hospice volunteer in regional nursing homes. She told us about being present to the dying of a tiny little old lady who had a wonderfully clear mind and a terribly weak heart.

One day, while she was paying a hospice visit to the old woman, the older one suddenly said, "Get in bed with me and hold

me, I'm going!" No sooner had she done as asked, than the tired old heart stopped beating. The H.O.P.E.'r held her center, remaining peaceful, and suddenly she found herself walking across a prairie towards a river, carrying her little friend who, to her surprise, was alive and alert! My friend has never seen the prairie, let alone walked in it, and yet she knew exactly where she was! They were approaching a river, on the other side of which she could see a small crowd of people approaching the river.

Her tiny burden suddenly cried out, "Jennifer! Is that you?" whereupon one of the group stepped forward and called, "Yes, Gram, it's me. How are you?" The old one replied, "I'm fine, but how are you? You died ten years ago, didn't you?" to which the answer came, "Yes, and I'm fine. It's wonderful to see you, Gram!" One by one, the others in the group came forward and greeted the little woman in my friend's arms. Like Jennifer, they were all family members who had died earlier. When the two reached the river, there was no visible way across, so the little one called out, "How do we get across?" "Keep walking!" was the reply, so she turned and walked along the river while the conversations across it continued. Twice more they asked how to get across. Each time they were told to keep walking, and the second time they were told to look ahead of them—there was a bridge! The little one said, "Take me halfway across and put me down." H.O.P.E.'r did as she was asked. They said "goodbye" and the H.O.P.E.'r turned back. Immediately, the prairie disappeared and she found herself in the bed in the nursing home, holding the lifeless body of her little friend.

Shamans and Shamanism: Soul Retrievers:

Virtually every society around the world has or had soul-workers called shamans. The archeological evidence for their work goes back at least 40,000 years! They specialize in going into what Michael Harner calls "non-ordinary reality" where they speak to souls to get stories, and retrieve soul fragments that dissociated because of trauma—and we thought psychotherapy began with Freud!

Shamanic practices teach that fragmentation of the soul by physical, mental or emotional trauma causes both physical and mental illness including PTSD and the psychoses. The shaman learns to travel in "non-ordinary reality" to recover the separated fragments, and to return them to the soul of the person for whom the shaman journeys. Ordinary reality, the pragmatic, nuts-and-bolts reality in which we move as we go about our daily lives, tends to exclude experiences of the mystery that surrounds our condition. The shaman routinely visits this mysterious realm in her rituals.

A shaman performing soul retrieval travels in trance to the time and place where the lost soul fragment hides, and brings it back home to the body that it had left in fear or because it was stolen by another fragmented soul that wanted to be complete. My teacher, Sandra Ingerman, used the word essence to describe the soul... the same word several of my Buddhist acquaintances use for the soul.

I often journey without knowing anything of a person's story ... it makes for interesting surprises! Journeying one day for a man in his forties, I entered the light trance state I have come to identify with the shamanic journey, and found myself in a newborn nursery in a hospital, standing in front of an infant incubator. I saw myself opening it, lifting out its infant occupant, and saying to him, "I'm here to take you home," to which he replied, "It's about time you came. I'm ready!" (In non-ordinary reality newborn infants can speak). I returned to the ordinary reality of my office, and as I was going through the closing part of the ritual, the man suddenly began to weep. I waited, and when he was quiet, I asked him what had come up for him. He said he did not know, but it seemed that the most profound sense of relief had come over him. He then told me that when he was born, his umbilical cord was wrapped twice around his neck, nearly strangling him. He had had to spend the first two weeks of his life in an incubator, away from his mother! He said that he had always had to work on deep, powerful feelings of abandonment. Subsequently, many harmful behaviors that had plagued him for most of his life just seemed to evaporate!

Visits from Beyond:

We can add to the above the many strange and wonderful stories of the visit of a dying person's soul to a beloved spouse or family member that sometime take place over great distances and enrich our perceptions of the nature of soul thereby. When a soul is liberated from the body that had been its home, what are its capabilities? Could it also be that soul knows how to thin the veil between the physical world and the spiritual world? Could it also be that the discovery and experience of these remarkable spiritual phenomena will lead us to the recovery of soul of the human species?

Chapter 5: Homecoming

Where we have been and where we must go:

We have seen that life is the journey of a soul that comes here with the experience of other lifetimes to gather knowledge and create yet more experience of Universal value. In each lifetime, the soul collaborates with a different personality and its ego. Of necessity, the life of an ego is a life lived in varying degrees of separation and loneliness, pressured by time into a fear-limited box out of which every one of us continually strives to do better than others. What would it be like if the ego were to commit itself to work together with the soul?

Life repeatedly gives us the opportunity for this collaboration in our crises — our dangerous opportunities. The ego looks for strengths that it can use to control or flee the danger and finds them in the “what”(s) of its life. Without the soul’s knowledge of the “who” of life that gives life meaning, the ego can only push its way through life, using its anger to get there.

However, the strength for all of this pushing usually peaks when a person is in her or his mid-twenties (along with her or his physical strength). It can only last for another ten or fifteen years. As the ego begins to fatigue, the soul, with eternity on its side, and love that puts everything in beneficial relationship, can now come forward to claim its birthright and guide the life through the crisis.

Success belongs to those who discover the way or path past the impasse that caused the crisis. However, the quality of the success depends on that part of self which discovers the way. If the ego finds the way, it achieves penultimate success because it works in isolation and lacks the timeless, spiritual value of the experience. When the soul finds the way through the crisis, it achieves ultimate success, for it has chronicled the journey in the pages of eternity.

The soul path beyond the crisis goes through the valley of the shadow of death, where the ego fears to tread. The soul’s experience of past lives demands that the path take it through the valley into the dark night of the soul. In these moments, the soul —

ship's captain following its earth orders — asks the ego to lend its strengths to completing the task. If it has been fragmented, the soul will subtly direct the ego to seek the help of others to help it recover and integrate those fragments. They help the soul gather up its experience in collaboration with its navigator and write a story of universal value.

Ego... and soul... and healing:

Ego is finite and secular, and, because it is confined to the body you are living in now, it cannot do such work. Only that which can go out of body and perceive patterns such as these can create such situations. Does that mean that my soul goes out of body so regularly? I am certain that my soul encompasses my body, so it is always not only "inside" but "outside" where it can perceive and respond to the marvelous patterns of flow of the living Universe.

This flow manifests itself as grace. We find it in the seeming coincidences of our lives... what a friend of mine calls grace notes. There seems to be a certain grace present in all life that touches and moves little things like making the book you need to read right now jump off a bookstore shelf and land at your feet. A larger, more obvious, grace moves larger things, like making a cat run across the street in front of your car, slowing you down so you miss hitting the drunk who runs the stop sign ahead of you. An even larger and more obvious grace protects slave ships in storms that threaten to sink them, out of which come earth-changing hymns like Amazing Grace. All forms of grace are the soul collaborating with God.

Seeing grace in all things is a soul function. It is healing work — the work of becoming whole. H.O.P.E. work is soul work, the work of relationship—the sharing way. Healing is impossible in a separated, fearful ego-state, but it can begin through an intellectual effort of the ego that eventually leads to the soul's passion and compassion. The soul, the relator bringing us together, is responsible for all healing.

As anyone's memory grows, it becomes more complex and so do the ego's responses to the (immediate) physical and social world and its actions in that world. As complexity increases, the ego perceives that life is becoming fragmented — wounded — and it seeks, often frantically, to control this apparent disintegration.

The phrase, "in our wounded-ness our human-ness lies," speaks directly to the most powerful gift of life — that woundedness. Only the soul can see the gift in that which leads us to the valley of the shadow of death. There, the soul will work on it. There it will ask the ego to help with its resources of personality. There, the ego will agree to work so close to death, its arch-enemy, because the soul will help with its strength of spirit.

Would it not be easier on the ego if it knew what the soul knew? What if the master of the "what" of life and the master of the "who" of life were to come together in the "marriage of true minds" of Shakespeare's sonnet? Would we not conceivably discover "why" The Godhead gave us life and "how" we are to live? Would we not be "coming home"?

Homecoming:

The ego and the soul work in the same domain, the body, our ship of life. To review my earlier comparison of the two, ego is impulsive and soul is subtle and shy. Ego is afraid or angry, sensing through fear-based physical feelings. Soul is aware, sensing through intuition — direct knowledge. When ego recognizes soul's presence and agrees to collaborate with it, we truly have our ship on course, directed by a crew, not just one individual.

In primitive societies that recognize the presence of soul, this integration of ego into soul takes place comfortably, progressively, nurtured from womb-time onward through all stages of growth and development. To them, The soul of newborn infant opens its wings and looks around in silence to see if it is in the right place. It then quietly shuts its wings and sleeps for five years while the infant, born with limited sensory experience (hearing) spends about six months learning to develop and use sight, smell,

taste, and skin sensations to evaluate its physical environment. The infant develops into a child over the next four to five years by learning how to emotionally evaluate its environment^{3/4} it hard-wires its limbic system. Now the soul opens its wings and gives a shout to announce its presence to the elders. They recognize its true nature and make it welcome with a name that honors its divine nature and sacred path. It shuts its wings again while the ego with which it is to work goes about developing its strengths. All the while, the elders keep making gentle reminders to the child as to its soul's mission. When it is twelve or thirteen, it unfurls its beautiful spirit wings and shows its true nature — its Self — to all in the society. The society's Elders encourage the new, young adult to sing its soul-song, to dance its soul-dance, to cry its soul-cry. Now its spiritual growth begins in earnest, propelled by the drive of the sex hormones that put it in relationship to members of both genders for the rest of its life. Its ego strengths will peak when this person is in its twenties, and then begin to fade after about ten years. If the soul has discovered a source of nurturance, the adult will mature beyond the waning strengths of the ego into a human being with a wisdom focus on serving humanity with the highest good in mind.

When the ego first hearkens to the clarion song of soul, it may pull back in confusion. However, soul can reassure the ego and call it back to listen to soul's alluring song and cry and to witness its beautiful dance. Soul, coming from a place of pure love, calls to ego to join it in life. When ego commits itself to dance and sing with soul, their human home becomes a whole self...and s-he heals.

Earlier, I said that we shall find our healing in our awareness that we are more than ego-directed body-minds; we are spiritual beings called souls. When we accept this awareness, we shall stop trying to shape soul to ego's temporal and secular perceptions of reality and encourage ego to accept soul's eternal and sacred image of that reality and surrender into soul's embrace. Thus we shall come to truly experience that each individual human life is a one-of-a-kind work of sacred art.

Attuning ego to soul is a journey of homecoming. The spiritual return of homecoming begins when we realize that each finite, individual life is part of the journey of an eternal soul.

The soul knows that its journey is an inner, personal journey without measure. It knows that the body that has lived a unique story. It knows that the ego is essential to its journey through eternity. The ego would like to believe what soul knows, but its need to be separate holds it back. When the soul guides the ego through crisis, and the ego hears the lovely soul-cry, its old belief system falls apart. When the ego hears the soul acknowledge it for its strengths of form, talent, and temperament that helped it skillfully navigate the ocean of life, the ego now believes what the soul knows.

When the ego discovers that it is essential to the soul's journey, it agrees to a partnership with the soul, and healing accelerates. The soul, never sleeping, now holds the ego in its loving hands and lets the ego get the rest it needs. The partnership heals the life... the person comes home to the Self.

Healing—becoming whole—is a birthright. It begins when the ego discovers that it shares its life with the soul that has come to be that life. When ego finds out that it is essential to soul's journey, it agrees to a partnership with soul, and healing accelerates. Soul, never sleeping, now holds ego in its loving hands and lets ego get the rest it needs. The partnership of ego and soul heals the life...a sacred journey of coming home to one's Self.

Chapter 6: H.O.P.E., Healing Of Persons Exceptional

Meeting the needs of the ego and the soul:

In Chapter Five, we brought together in a *homecoming* the most vital aspects of self, ego and soul. Ego needs to talk about its worries and concerns and soul needs to talk about its passion. It wants to love and be loved. Whereas the ego has extensive experience with judgment (and reasoned, analytic thought to support its judgment), the soul benefits not from any analysis, but from the love that nurtures it and promotes its growth. Both the ego and the soul need a safe place in which to talk about their needs, desires, and passions. A H.O.P.E. Group is just such a place.

H.O.P.E. Groups started in 1987 when I created a support group in my surgical practice to help people with cancer find meaning in their lives. Here is the story of how the 501(c)(3) H.O.P.E. organization grew out of my experience with helping these wonderful people with cancer find meaning and value in their lives.

In 1975, I had begun to familiarize myself with Earl Nightingale's lifelong study of the essence of success. Nightingale was responsible for showing me that our *attitude* was the key to accessing these resources because they determine the way in which we direct our minds. History had shown him that when people took control of their attitudes, they took control of their lives. When I started helping my patients take charge of *their* attitudes, their lives changed for the better, as had mine. This supported my personal growth and development.

H.O.P.E. Groups

At the first group meeting, the group decided it wanted to continue, and to call themselves a H.O.P.E. Group. At the next meeting, the nurse who had encouraged me to start the group, Sharon Williams, RN, offered "Healing Of Persons Exceptional," and got cheers for her idea. (Traditionally, humans are of four

parts, body, mind, soul, and spirit. A H.O.P.E. group is a relationship-centered group. The relationships are loving, caring and compassionate—attitudes that direct the growth of group. The groups focus on hope, the attitude of possibility, meaning, value, and purpose. The attitude of the relationships in a H.O.P.E. Group is love, unconditional love. Love provides the stable platform, the safe place, the compassion, and the support for everyone in a H.O.P.E. Group.

The focus on *hope* and *healing* that is expressed in the name, “H.O.P.E. Group,” expresses a vitally important semantic difference between a H.O.P.E. Group and a “Breast Cancer Support Group. Because we in H.O.P.E. are acutely aware of the simple psychological phenomenon, “What we focus on expands,” H.O.P.E. Groups are not cancer support groups, AIDS support groups, or depression support groups, *because they do not support those conditions*. Rather, they acknowledge the conditions, recognize the challenges in them, and use them to focus on the individual participant’s life and their intention for that life. There are H.O.P.E. Groups for people with cancer, but the focus is on hope and healing. This context of group work is not as common as one might wish. Some trainees and workshop participants are interested in guiding groups, and the center helps them start these groups. My nearly thirty years experience in this particular form of cognitive restructuring makes it possible to provide ongoing support for those whom we have trained and their groups.

In all our work we encourage and teach people to focus on what they would like to have happen in their lives, rather than what is wrong with those lives. We introduce people to attitudes that have helped thousands of other people throughout the ages. H.O.P.E. groups are open and ongoing. Caring people who are doing their own healing work guide them. These fine persons have been trained in the H.O.P.E. process, and meet as needed as a group with a senior guide to share their experiences. It does not take a special degree to guide a H.O.P.E. Group. We have trained school teachers, nurses, fishermen, and housewives to guide these groups. People who do personal *coaching* tend to make excellent

H.O.P.E. Group guides. If a person in their group needs “therapy”, the guides encourage that person to seek professional help.

H.O.P.E. encourages its group members to support their guides in ways that acknowledge their time spent with the group, their out-of-pocket expenses, and their willingness to study and learn more about the process.

The style of a H.O.P.E. group:

H.O.P.E. Groups all have the following in common: a focus on healing and wellness, support for the processes of each individual’s life. showing neither judgment nor criticism but unconditional love.

The crucible of a H.O.P.E. Group meeting:

H.O.P.E. Groups guides create the crucible by *setting the context* for the meeting by welcoming the group and inviting introductions between those who are new to any of the others. The guide describes the nature of the following three parts to newcomers, and the group takes turns reading the following, one phrase at a time:

Part One, The H.O.P.E. Group opening:

This part names us and states our primary intention, finding *wellness*. It then describes how we find it. This leads us to the second intention of seeking the power to be able to choose to focus on the whole of life. It ends with a description of the nature of that power.

Part Two, The Principles of Attitudinal Healing:

With deep gratitude to Jerry Jampolsky and the Center for Attitudinal Healing, for permission to use them in our work. Jerry describes the power of the first seven of these twelve principles, in his book, *Teach only Love, the Seven Principles of Attitudinal Healing*. In the context of H.O.P.E. work we teach people to use these principles as affirmations with which to empower themselves to shift out of the paralyzing, destructive attitudes of fear and anger into the empowering, creative attitude of peacefulness.

Part Three, The H.O.P.E. group guidelines:

This is a verbal contract to which we all agree to guide us in our relationships with each other for the duration of the H.O.P.E. Group meeting.

Closing the H.O.P.E. Group meeting:

We use the “Prayer for Serenity” (sometimes slightly modified to suit the sentiments of the group).

Chapter 7: SoulCircles

In the last chapter, we brought together in a *homecoming* the most vital aspects of self, ego and soul,. Now that they are both in the same house, as it were, they need to keep up the dialogue they began while the ego still secluded itself in its private quarters. Ego needs to talk about its worries and concerns and soul needs to talk about its passion. Ego wants to be safe, as any ego wants to be safe, so that it can talk about itself. It wants to love and be loved. Whereas the ego has extensive experience with judgment (and reasoned, analytic thought to support its judgment), the soul benefits not from any analysis, but from the love that nurtures it and promotes its growth. Indeed, the soul and its passions are parts of the Universal Mystery that may forever defy scientific analysis and yet forever remain available to human experience. Both the ego and the soul need a safe place in which to talk about their needs, desires, and passions. A SoulCircle provides just such a place.

SoulCircles:

SoulCircles are small groups that convene for the express purpose of helping one, some, or all of its members open the envelope(s) that contains their "Earth Orders." A SoulCircle can be of any size. It may consist of none other than your self — your soul and your ego — and this book., but four to seven seems to be optimal. SoulCircles have a precedent in Quaker clearness committees that they have used for over three hundred years to conduct the pastoral affairs of their meetings. I have come to appreciate the power of clearness committees through a lifetime of exposure to Quaker ways. In Quaker practice, a Friend seeking help in finding a solution to a problem (a concern in Quaker terminology) convenes a clearness committee to which s-he brings the concern. Because s-he is (obviously) the center of attention for the clearness committee—s-he is its focus person— and they are her or his support persons. Personal friends make wonderful support persons because of their support and sympathy.

Quakers long ago established guidelines that would help support people avoid personality traps. Because Quakers believe that the "Light of God" is within everyone, the focus person has within her or him all of the resources s-he needs in order to resolve her or his concern. Therefore, the support persons who comprise the committee do not have to judge, criticize, make recommendations, or give advice. Instead, they ask open, honest questions for personal clarification only; they reflect on what the focus person is saying and share those reflections; and they affirm the focus person for her or his work on the concern. In Quaker-Rumi ways of seeing the work, the unseen presence of The Friend—the source of the Light—facilitates the process.

In SoulCircling workshops, within a matter of but one hour, a SoulCircle can complete the clearness work to the satisfaction and benefit of a single focus person. Participants in SoulCircling workshops describe the process as one of taking a fearless personal inventory of their assets and describing them to like-minded, supportive people. For those who come to SoulCircling occasions sponsored by H.O.P.E., we have developed the following guidelines that we read aloud together at the beginning of the SoulCircle work:

- We are a SoulCircle.
- We come together in support of each other as focus persons.
- We agree to hold the focus person in loving regard and respect at all times.
- We agree to withhold all criticism and suspend all judgment.
- We agree to refrain from any and all tendencies to give advice or make recommendations.
- We agree to listen with heart and mind and reflect fairly and honestly on that which we see and hear.
- We agree to affirm the focus person for her or his unique gifts.

- We agree to keep all personal information that is shared in this SoulCircle in complete confidence.

SoulCircles search for those paths of life that bring meaning to the lives of all their participants. The work of circling one's soul is never done, so SoulCircles can continue to meet for a lifetime.

Love is the primary characteristic of a SoulCircle. Love is the essence of open and honest relationships. It is the context in which we work, critical to the successful achievement of SoulCircling process. Intention is the focus of a SoulCircle, for it focuses on discovering the reason for a soul to come into human form. Faith in the spiritual nature of the process is the belief system of a SoulCircle. "Feedback" is a living instrument affirming the focus person by answering the question, "How am I doing?" It is Nature and Spirit talking to us ... mind and body working together. SoulCircle support persons take notes that will help them recall the points of the story that got their attention. Support persons make a gift of these notes to the focus person.

You are now ready for the creative work of your SoulCircle—SoulCircling.

Chapter 8: SoulCircling:

It is time to create your own SoulCircle and set the gossamer web in which you will catch your soul and ask it what it came here to do. It will allow itself to be held in the loving hearts of your SoulCircle and help you develop the four elements of SoulCircling: your StoryCircle, your Inventory, your Intention, and your Affirmation. Let us take them in order.

Your SoulCircle:

First, you must set the environment for catching that butterfly, Psyche. Butterflies like warmth, light, water, and food. If you convene a small group of friends, provide for their comfort, too. You will need the following materials: a sheet or two of 8½ by 11 paper for notes, two large sheets of easel paper that you can get from your school or library, and some colored pencils or pens.

If you do this with only this book for company, provide for your own comfort. If you convene a small group of friends, provide for their comfort, too. If you have engaged the services of a H.O.P.E. LifeCoach, go through your checklist and see that everything is ready for your talk with her or him.

Your StoryCircle:

You are living a life unique in the annals of the universe. It is a single story in an encyclopedic collection of stories that comprise the journey of your soul. Take one large sheet of easel paper and write the words "My Story" at the top of. Write "My Intention" on the top of the other large sheet. Take a sheet of 8½ by 11 paper and write the words "My inventory" at the top. Take another sheet of 8½ by 11 paper and write "Life-shaping events" at the top. Now, give yourself two minutes and, as quickly as possible, list those life-changing events as they come to mind. (The average adult will recall between eight and fifteen of them in those two minutes. Please do not dwell on them; today's important ones are right up front, ready to go on the paper.)

Take the "My Story" sheet and decide of what kind of a background you would like for your Story. Perhaps the simplest of all is a circle, so we shall work with that as a starter. Pencil in a faint circle almost as big as the sheet and put a mark at the top of the circle where the "12" would be on a clock face. Midnight or noon, this is the point where dusk and dawn lie equally behind and before you. In SoulCircling, this point is midnight; for the next step, which is but a moment in time, takes you toward morning. How you take it sets the stage for how you meet the light of the coming day. Indeed, you are always at the morning of the rest of your life.

Please take note of this: every successful person knows at the bottom of her or his heart that success comes from the way with which s-he meets the new day. Also note this: success is, in and of itself, not the goal; it is the process of moving towards the goal. Using midnight as the starting point, make a mark for each of the numbers in your list, spacing them fairly regularly around a clockwise circle. Note midnight well, for it marks a truly remarkable event—the moment of your birth into the rest of your life. Draw a picture of the second event in the second space. Move around the circle this way until every space contains an image of a point in your story. Work on the background until it is complete in your eyes and mind. If you're like me, the name may not be the name your parents gave you. As you reflect on what I've just said, let your own soul-image come to mind, draw it in the center of the circle, and sign it with your soul name.

Your Inventory:

With the completion of the story circle, the next steps develop a loving inventory of your assets with which you make your soul's journey; assets your soul knew it would have when it incarnated. It will be a list of your qualities that comprise each of the following:

- your archetype
- your genetic gifts of form, intelligence(s), talent(s) and temperament

- your core passion
- your attachments and responsibilities
- your goals and intentions
- your will.

(If you have difficulty with any part, get the help of your soul circle, your H.O.P.E. LifeCoach, or a friend or family member who knows you intimately and well.)

Your archetype:

In its most recent incarnations your soul developed a passion to be an archetype, an original model of thought and behavior. Any time you say of someone, "Oh, she's a typical _____," you have just named an archetype. Whether a person lives the life of one archetype or a blend of archetypes, s-he is still a one-of-a-kind work of art. It knows that its archetypes always have different resources with which to work each time around. Your ego has likely given little consideration to this spiritual awareness, but SoulCircling draws one's ego into a new perception of its role and purpose.

Your genetic gifts:

Form, intelligence, temperament and talent—your soul knew it would share these with your ego.

Your core passion:

Your soul accepts your genes without judgment, knowing that these genetic attributes are gifts that it works with to be able to follow its "Earth Orders". Whereas the engine of your ego's drive is survival, your soul's engine is its core passion that lights your fires and resonates deeply inside you. It is what you love to do—what you would rather do than anything else—the reason for your soul's call to life.

Your attachments and responsibilities:

Your ego, with its memory of the past, makes attachments to its judgments of its experiences, and resists all attempts to move it out of its past—until it recognizes the captain of the ship of your life. Its attachments are both that which you fear most and that which you desire most ... your aversions and your cravings. Your attachments resemble an unhealthy set of mooring lines or a spider's web that some of the people, places and things in your life have used to bind you down and take your power. Those unhealthy strands bind your ship of life to the wharf and hold you in your past. If you have already cast off, the unhealthy attachments have given the main sheet and tiller to someone out of your past who owns you still. As long as someone else is at the helm they will try to get you to sail of course that is not your own. You are certain to run up on the rocks or find yourself in the eye of hurricane. You must be willing to take back your power and take over the wheel.

Your goals and intentions:

Your ego, with its memory of the past, makes attachments to its judgments of its experiences, and resists all attempts to move it out of its past—until it recognizes the captain of the ship of your life. Its attachments are both that which you fear most and that which you desire most ... your aversions and your cravings. If someone else is navigating your ship, it must be your ego. If your ego wants control, then you are in an ego vs. ego combat and no lasting good can come from it. Whereas your ego-attachments you hold you back, your soul-responsibilities to other people, places and things that you accepted when you signed on for this journey have the potential to help you move forward.

Your soul and its intentions stand at the opposite pole from your ego. Passionate desire—soul's "call"—opposes ego's "gotta do it" craving. Your soul takes command with love, the power of spirit. Remember that souls come here to love, to be loved, or to teach love. Your love of the other navigator will touch that person's soul and release it from your ship's helm. Intention is a process (like success) that keeps extending (stretching) beyond that

which you have achieved up to this point. Intention gives you an aiming point on the horizon of achievement. It calls your soul to a Universal adventure. The intentional journey is personal and soul-centered, independent of the tribe, and yet contributing to it ... no longer secular, but sacred.

Intention is a birthright of your soul. When you pay attention to your talents and passion, your calling in life reveals itself to you.

Your calling in life is your work. It is never a job. Your "job" is simply a way of putting bread on the table and clothes on your body without any spiritual investment. Your talents can have a direct bearing on your choice of a job but without any spiritual investment. Remember the Zen expression, "Before enlightenment, chop wood and carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood and carry water." Put your ego's "job" in a spiritual context, and it becomes your soul's "work."

Your will:

A central axis connects these two poles of intention and attachment — your will. The energy of creation that God gave us depends on your will for its success. The will comprises four qualities: strength, skill, ethics, and spirit. Will is the mental property by which you choose a course of action. Such a choice is always deliberate. Will is essential to movement and creativity. Without will, you cannot get out of your attachments and move to your intention.

Soul and ego, a further contrast:

As the soul extends from its Universal perspective, it empowers rather than controls its environment and thereby removes all limits to personal creativity. The soul's transpersonal power extends over and beyond ego with love, compassion, and forgiveness. The soul's presence transforms the ego's attachments into responsibilities. The archetypal power of the talents, temperament, and core passion flow without limit along the central

axis of your will, and the intention at the upper end of the axis glows on the horizon, calling us to it.

Ego creativity functions on a me-first, win-lose model of who sells the most product. Soul creativity functions on an equal partnership, win-win model of living in service. Ego model shuns service and servitude, equating them with slavery. You need now to call together your circle of friends who make up your SoulCircle, show and tell them your story, and describe your inventory. Take your time. Savor your experience.

Clarifying Your Intent:

Setting, holding, and moving toward an intention bring meaning, value, and purpose to all life. There is growing awareness that modeling our lives after the life of the Universe has its own built-in rewards. Intention shares the dimensions of space and time with the rest of the physical Universe. Stating an intention is similar to saying a prayer. Think back over the processes of your life. Think of the times when you set intentions and how they materialized. It is time for another. And this time, you will create a picture of your intention—that glimmer on the horizon, that beckoning muse. It develops out of your story held in the light of your form, talents, temperament, passion and will. It's fun to try your hand at expressing your soul's intention this way. As soon as the image begins to come up in your mind, take the second sheet of easel paper and your drawing materials and let the image flow onto the paper.

Affirming Yourself:

This is the final step in SoulCircling—empowering your intention with an affirmation. A simple sentence (subject, verb, and object) repeated out loud to yourself where you can see your face and hear your words make the most powerful affirmations. State the object of your intention clearly, even if you believe (as we all are prone to do) that you're never going to make it. Don't worry; three weeks of repetition will change you. Ah, yes, you will change ... and that is scary. However, it is the reason you got into

SoulCircling in the first place—the old ways were no longer working well. The structure that your finite ego thought it could impose on life has begun to come apart at the seams. Your internal soul with its depth of compassion can embrace and reassure your ego while it leads the way back to the constancy of change that inheres in the Universe.

What I have to say next, I direct at your ego. Your soul knows all this already, and it knows, too, that to read about such things helps in understanding them.

Chapter 9: Moving on

"The most secure way is indeed the most insecure way. The way in which the richness of the quest accumulates is the right way. To find the right way is to follow your own bliss."

—Joseph Campbell

The path to bliss lies in inner peace—the peace that goes beyond understanding, known to the soul that transforms the ravaging of the ego into a burning desire. The greatest constant in the universe is change. In this chapter, I shall show you a pattern to life's changes that helps understand how we got to where we are and why the future will be so different. We shall come to understand how important it is that we take what we have learned about ourselves and use it to clarify an intention for our lives—today.

A process-pattern of life:

Did you ever wonder how you got from a fresh, single cell to a complex and beautifully organized multicellular adult human being? Gus Jaccaci, my gifted artist-friend, taught me to view this as a four-step process of gathering, repeating, sharing, and transforming.

First, though, I must point out a barrier between the repeating and the sharing that the developing life must pass or die. When you were first conceived, you actively gathered the nutrients you needed from the fluids around you in your mother's Fallopian tube. Your inner, living processes made more of your inner stuff and you got bigger.

You repeated yourself! You then had to share yourself with your mother or pass on out through the cervix and die. You did it, my friend, you crossed that barrier between repeating and sharing ... and only half of all conceptions make it past this barrier! Having successfully shared space with your mother, you rapidly transformed into an embryo for the purpose of making your organs.

You now grew at a tremendous rate by gathering and repeating in the sharing space of that womb. This "hooked up and working" state means that they were all sharing their functions for your continued life. If one of the organ systems wasn't working, you would have died—your mother would have miscarried you ... and one out of ten human pregnancies end this way. If you shared okay, then you transformed into a fetus.

You, you plucky, wonderful little fetus, you got it all right and you went back to gathering and repeating in the new sharing relationships for the next test of your sharing ability: your birth and the necessity of being able to share yourself with a totally new and different environment, the air. Welcome to the world, little infant!

The gather, repeat, share and transform didn't stop here. This transformed you into an adolescent, and if you lived in a tribe with a strong wisdom tradition, you would have had a rite of passage into the life of collaboration of soul and ego—a new sharing that would transform you into an adult ready for your spiritual development.

All along this path of yours how many ceremonies welcomed you into the new world of each transformation? If there were as many as mine, there were but a few, and they were a bit distorted. Mine consisted of getting my driver's license, graduating from high school, becoming old enough to get drunk, and, finally, graduating from college. Wouldn't it be appropriate to have had ceremony with elders and peers at each of these times to welcome the new you who has just crossed the barrier? Perhaps you would like to design a ceremony with your SoulCircle to celebrate your recent transformation, for you know that it's never too late to take the spiritual path. You have just demonstrated that to your Self and to other Selves. As a one-of-a-kind work of art, you are worthy of that ceremony. Enjoy it.

As you now move forward into the rest of your life, keep in mind that you have just had a good look at the effects of human beings sharing themselves with each other. How does it feel? Do you like it? Would you like others to feel as you do? If so, share what you have learned with us in H.O.P.E. let us work with you in

the sharing space. Work with others to develop their move across the big "I" beam. Be a virus of health and healing. Help the epidemic grow.

Join us all in rewriting the Garden of Eden allegory....

Epilogue: Eden, the City of the Soul

God utters me like a word containing a partial thought of himself.

—Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*

*Time means nothing. Eternity is not an everlasting flux of time,
but time is a short parenthesis in a long period.*

—Richard Bach

Consider what you have just done for yourself:

- You have explored your secular and spiritual sides.
- You have taken a deep, soul-searching look at your life
- You have worked with supportive human beings
- You have gained insights into yourself and others.
- You have a good sense of the meaning and value of intention.
- You know the practical use of affirmation.

Consider how this might apply to our wonderful species. What is our story—told and listened to with love and compassion? What do our species' acres of diamonds look like? What resources of talent and temperament do we share? What are our human passions? What is our will?

What are our human passions? Today, in terms of our human story, is a time of great upheaval and change. While science on the one hand seeks that source in the external universe, Buddhism seeks it in the inner realms beyond mind and thought. This, to me, is and always has been the work of soul; so let us explore the deep measure of soul.

How deep are the dimensions of soul? How many stories about soul are there today? It is time we let our imaginations get boggled by The Great Mystery ... once again. We are certainly the

most diverse, creative species this Earth has ever created. Through finding out our spiritual nature, we can align our lives to the Life that is The Source of all Being. We must know, moreover, that the Universe is more than just a Body of planets, gas and space: it is also a Mind that connects with thoughts, a Soul with a passion, and a Spirit that breathes its Being into all.

It is pure awareness. It is Love. We go beyond body and mind to soul. We go beyond body, mind, and soul to spirit. Love is not an abstract concept. We need love to live. Experience love, feel joy, and every cell of your body knows it.

Love's wondrous, universal power leads me to offer you the following:

The ancient wisdom of our wonderful species tells us that when we choose to develop our lives on a web of love, we will know joy that few can imagine.

Our own Homecoming:

We know our bodies are holographic fragments of the body of the Creation, our minds are holographic fragments of the mind of the Creation, our spirit is a holographic fragment of the spirit of the Creation, and soul we put aside a few centuries ago is a holographic fragment of soul of the Creation. It is time to reopen the dialog with our souls. The emotion of soul is love. The Godhead wants us to use our gifts of body, mind, soul and spirit to join It in the very act of Creation, itself.

Our agile minds have had a hunger for knowledge ever since our Source gave us Its fruit. Our place in the world is an important part of this flow. We are to use this knowledge for the good of the Universe—by starting at home with ourselves and all other life forms as caught up in the flow of life as we. Einstein said that every point in the Universe is at the exact center of its universe. Ego fundamentally disagrees with this statement because ego thinking proclaims but one center of the universe, itself. I pointed out earlier that ego is exclusionary and separatist. Therefore, if my ego is the center of the Universe, yours cannot be quite so central.

It sees each soul it encounters as the exact center of its universe. Its ability to love without condition makes possible the recognition of soul-centered universes, all of which have equal value in the Universe that is the Creation, Itself.

Ultimately our divine potential leads us to become collaborators in creation, authors of volumes in encyclopedias of universal experience that lead us to our Source. Creator and Its passionate intention to be became Father-God and Mother-Goddess, and the Universe was born.

Genesis 3, reprise:

Creator and Its passionate intention to be became Father-God and Mother-Goddess, and the Universe was born. It needed to know Itself, so it made woman and man. It made them different but equal. It saw that this was good and It placed them in a lovely garden with all that they would need.

In the center of the garden It placed tree whose fruit contained all knowledge and It sent the divine servant, the serpent, to invite them to partake of this fruit, knowing the immediate consequences. Having eaten of the fruit the woman and the man began to play with the resources of the garden. They made mistakes and their childish use of knowledge made them believe that they were bad. Thus their ego was born.

In their ego's self-punishment the woman and the man banished themselves from the garden, so Creator placed a shining spinning beacon over the entrance, and a cherub at either side. The beacon would give all the children of Its children a light to be seen from over the horizon to call them back, and the cherubim would be doorkeepers to welcome them back.

Creator sent beings, called angels, to subtly, gently guide his children through danger and past death, back to the garden of light, life, and love with the knowledge of why It had created them. After many, many years,

Creator's children felt Its love, compassion and forgiveness, and they raised their heads from their labors, the woman in childbearing and the man in the fields. And they saw the light on the horizon calling them.

They picked up their beds and followed the light. They saw the shining beacon and the smiling faces of the welcoming committee of cherubim. They walked through the great, open gate and saw in the beauty of the garden what they had overlooked before—a Universal City and on every rooftop a stairway to the stars.

They had come home ... they knew their journey had just begun.