

# CHANGE

When two of my oldest and dearest friends, Marsden and his wife, Elizabeth, left the West Coast for a long-awaited month in Tuscany, they never dreamed they would spend it instead in an intensive care unit in Texas. Stopping off in Austin to visit their two grown sons, they accepted the invitation of Scott, a cardiologist, to check out an intriguing machine in his office which could noninvasively detect arterial blockages. Minutes later Marsden was told he needed an immediate triple bypass. Surgery led to complications and Marsden very nearly lost his life.

How can we weather the storms that life sends us? Better yet, can we use the winds to billow our sails into transcendence?

In the six years since we have produced *A Light in the Mist*, the four of us have been beset by a number of life altering changes. Three births, two deaths, three marriages, one separation, surgery, disability, a major move and four difficult birthdays: 30, 40, 60 & 70. We have seen our world rocked by terrorism, our economy reeter-totter from a Silicon Valley surreal bubble to a world recession.

THEN SUNRISE KISSED MY CHRYSALIS—  
AND I STOOD UP—AND LIVED—

Emily Dickinson

Through it all, we have struggled to maintain some semblance of stability. Our commitment to mission has been our saving grace.

A therapist I once saw said that, ideally, we would all be like expert skiers whose resilience and adaptive technique enables them not only to master any slope they encounter, but actually to enjoy the challenge and exhilaration of an ever changing terrain. Some of our anguish comes from a peculiarly Western illusion that we are in control of people and events. We, at Healing Environments, find ourselves frequently drawn to the teachings of Buddhism, which remind us that the only constant in our lives is change and the only refuge a rich interior life of inner peace.

Recently I read a remarkable book by George Vaillant, director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development. *Aging Well* does far more than tell us how to weather life's challenges, it outlines the very values which serve as rud-ders through life's tempestuous seas. Vaillant tells us it is integrity which allows us to accept life-threatening illness, aging and eventually death.

In this issue, we look at change as a challenge. We offer cameos of people who, like Olympic skiers, have risen to the challenge of harrowing life scenarios and stretched the limits of what is humanly possible.

We have changed our format to echo life's changes. And Sam has designed a chart on which to record the challenging changes of *your* life: the lessons learned, the current issues, the future dreams and the final legacy which you hope to leave behind.

Blessings to you in your individual lives. May you be blessed with the grace and courage to live consciously and die with integrity.

Kate

## A LIGHT IN THE MIST

THE JOURNAL OF HOPE

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# CHANGE

To every thing there is a season, and a time for  
every purpose under the heaven.

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant,  
and a time to pluck up that which is planted;...

ECCLSIASITES, 3:1-4

TOGETHER  
WE  
WILL  
COMFORT  
THE  
SUFFERING

### OUR MISSION

Our mission is to aid the current movement toward holistic medicine — toward treating the whole patient (mind, body, spirit) and encouraging hospitals, hospices and individuals to nourish patients, families and caregivers with healing environments. What is a healing environment? We believe a healing environment is one that offers sustenance to the soul and gives meaning to experience. It is one that enables those who are suffering to transcend their pain by connecting to the universal through the transformative power of beauty and art, and that gives comfort through this connection.

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### CAMEOS

What I know for sure is that there is no strength without challenge, adversity, resistance, and often pain. The problems that make you want to throw up your hands and holler "Mercy!" will build your tenacity, courage, discipline, and determination.

OPRAH WINFREY

Our friend Greg was a sophomore at Stanford when he was paralyzed from the neck down in a touch-football game. Not only did Greg finish Stanford with the help of a special computer, but he went on to work full-time for Microsoft, was featured in the *New York Times* as a successful investor and recently married one of his admiring nurses.

Kathleen was the successful CEO of a major East Coast department store when she was promoted to corporate headquarters in the Midwest. Unwilling to make the move, she spent her generous severance pay touring the country and giving her creative ideas away to people she admired. George Lucas was so impressed he created a position of importance at Lucas Films just for her.

One of the greatest stories of transcendence we have ever heard is that of Lisa Fittipaldi, a woman who became an artist after losing 80% of her sight.

Toiya was a CPA when she took her first photography course. Delighted with the experience of greater self-expression, she took course after course, until at last she decided to become a full-time photographer. Her innovative black and white photographs captured the electric energy and joy of my daughter's wedding. Now she and her husband, John, are starting their own nonprofit to promote the joys of creativity.

Peter is a courageous man living with both cancer and AIDS. Last summer, Peter was given less than a 2% chance of living. Today, he spends his free time surfing the Web for donations of medicine, which he then ships to Africa to help those less fortunate than he is. Here he shares the insights that his illness has given him about the nature of change.

Dealing with change regarding your health can be extremely challenging; it does disrupt day to day living and priorities of life take a major change.

One can take these changes and try to turn negative situations such as anger, depression and anxiety into positive ones such as helping others who are sicker, or less fortunate. This is sometimes very hard for people facing terminal illness to do.

Once people know they can talk with you honestly, it's amazing how much more supportive people can be most of the time. Accepting help also may be hard as you feel less independent. When you allow others to help, you make them feel less helpless and afraid. In a strange way, you are helping others deal with your illness.

Change happens all the time. The weather, seasons, news and life, sometimes good, sometimes not so good, but staying positive is important when faced with the negativity of dying.

As the heart mends, the meaning of life continues to change. At first perhaps with a bit of disappointment, but then with great relief and a sense of limitless possibility, we come to the realization that the meaning of life —to life—is the meaning we bestow upon it. That nothing but forgetting separates us from the divine.

How we approach not knowing what comes next is what gives meaning to our lives. Learning to trust the joy and pain of our unpredictable lives engages the richness of the heart and suggests purpose.

STEPHEN LEVINE

### RESILIENCE

Life is formed by two forces: the events that take place and the way in which we react to those events. Some people are laid low by relatively minor reverses, such as getting a traffic ticket or being passed over for a promotion. Unavoidable losses, such as children leaving home or the death of a parent, may send them into depression. However, others are undaunted by terrible misfortune — catastrophic illness, the deaths of loved ones, financial collapse. One quality that separates the first group from the second is resilience.

Resilience is the ability to recover from an adverse change. The trait is as important to human beings as it is to rubber balls. We don't bounce back well without it.

Although some people seem to be innately better at coping than others are, resilience isn't established at birth. It can be enhanced or eroded later in life. Experience is a great help. Recovering from one setback makes it easier to come back from the next.

Because it is so important to success and even survival, psychologists have devoted quite a bit of attention to defining resilience and to investigating ways to enhance it. Much of the information on resilience has come from studies of people who are unusually resilient: concentration-camp survivors; children of broken, impoverished homes; people with severe physical handicaps; and others who have succeeded against the odds. These people share many of the following characteristics.

- *Authenticity.* Being the same person inside and out contributes to resiliency. The person who is content to be herself doesn't waste time and energy maintaining a facade or trying to conceal an unappealing "real" self. Nor is her identity dependent upon external factors, such as money, position, or association with others. Thus, she isn't likely to be devastated by the loss of these factors.
- *Willingness to accept responsibility.* Resilient people don't see themselves as victims, even when they find themselves in circumstances for which they are in no

way to blame, such as a natural disaster or a serious illness. Instead, they think of themselves as confronting a challenge. In doing so, they "own" the experience by addressing the situation with a positive action. When they err, they acknowledge their mistake and use the experience as a learning one.

- *Acceptance of change.* Like it or not, change has become one of life's constants. Moreover, it's occurring at an accelerating rate. The resilient see change not as frightening but as presenting new opportunities.
- *Responsiveness.* Resilient people are attentive to their environment. They are aware of the world around them. They listen to others and are open to new ideas. This gives them the flexibility to adapt to changing technology, social customs, and economic climates.

- *Faith in themselves.* Resilient people are self-confident. They don't fret about whether or not they can rise to the challenge; they just take it on. They remind themselves that if others have bounded back from adversity, they can as well.

- *Ability to take risks.* Although they aren't daredevils or given to foolhardy endeavors, the resilient are willing to strike out into the unknown if there is a reasonable chance of success. They are often creative or entrepreneurial in spirit.

- *Belief in the transcendent.* This is often manifest as religious faith, but it may also be a love of nature, art, music, or humanity. A sense of purpose beyond oneself often produces the unflagging conviction that life is worth living.

Excerpted from "Bouncing Back From Bad Times," *The Harvard Women's Health Watch*™, February 1998.

RAYMOND DAVI:  
A MENTOR OF CHANGE

Harriet Lerner's book *The Dance of Connection* offers this, "Authenticity brings to mind such elusive qualities as being fully present, centered,

and in touch with our best selves in our most important conversations. Moving in this direction requires us to clarify — to ourselves and others — what's important to us."

Finding your authentic voice and bottom line is as easy as listening to yourself — taking what you hear seriously and following through. Believing it — knowing it and practicing it.

Some of the best advice I have received on this matter I have learned from my friend and mentor, Raymond Davi. Ray Davi has made a career of helping people change. Through his mentoring process I found my personal road map to how I want to live my life. I worked intensely with Ray over five days to better understand what truly motivates me, structuring my time to better live up to my own values, and in review, creating a concrete schedule and timeline to help me get there. It feels like a road map — I carry four pages of this information in the front of my date book. Reminders of how I believe I could best live my life.

Most recently, Raymond held his Second Annual Collaborative Event for

his clients at the Henry Miller Library in Big Sur, California. The theme of the gathering was, "Conversations with Creators of Solutions." In his own words, the event centered around "presenting individual conversations with unique leaders who have transformed their already successful careers by creating greatly needed solutions in their particular areas of interest."

"Americans have always been leaders in lifestyle," he says. "But we have been so intent upon work and money that we are in danger of losing not only our identities as creative, supportive people, but our feeling, sensitive methods of dealing with our work and our lives. The only way to avert this loss is to take the time to focus on bringing about our internal reincarnation. The popular belief in reincarnation entails physical death and rebirth. I believe rebirth can be achieved here and now, in the lives we are living." When asked what his best advice was for dealing with change, he offered this:

#### RAY'S ADVICE

- Explore the works of theologians, philosophers, poets, and writers.
- Visit places and attend events that inspire you.
- Create a regular schedule for taking personal retreats.
- Be courteous and make a habit of humility.
- Create an individual world of words, music and images that have special meaning for you.

For further information, call 831.625.9659 in Carmel, California.  
[www.raymondndavi.com](http://www.raymondndavi.com)

Dear Ray,  
I want to thank you for your support. Having you in my life has been a true blessing. You are a tribute to all things possible by modeling it yourself. I thought just knowing you was enough. Actually, it wasn't.

In due time I was able to take refuge in your Creative/Transformative/Mission-oriented Mentor work that you do. Really Ray, I believe this might be a part of an answer to a prayer. Your work is an opportunity to step away from the constant demands of life. In a matter of twenty hours you work your goals through transformative exercises and put them into positive, attainable goals.

I am trying to pay close attention to everything I learn from you. What I find surprising is how much is changing in my life. I have been hoping for some shifts and they have arrived. I can only imagine what the future holds.

Thanks to you, Ray, I have a road map for my life — or better yet, a practical list of what I need to reach my own transformation. This is some of the best work I have ever done for myself.

With love and utmost respect,  
Traci Teraoka Patel

#### DONNA'S LETTER

One of the most inspiring aspects of our work is the correspondence we receive from our readers. The following is a letter we especially wanted to share in the context of this issue.

In September of 1999, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Never was I afraid or sad. In fact, I was ignited and impassioned! The first words journaled were: "It's cancer, greatness will follow." During my cancer experience, I reunited with an old family friend, Mrs. Jeanette Ropala. It was at the wake of Jeanette's mother (who died of breast cancer) that we reunited. At this time Jeanette informed me that she, too, had breast cancer. A week later, I called her and told her that I also had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

What followed were the best two years of my life — The spiritual enlightenment and shared journey that followed was truly incredible. While Jeanette passed over in December 2000 — it was during the last year of her life that Jeanette, a wife, mom and jazz singer/ pianist, made her first CD. Four songs in a jazzy, gospel-like style. Four of the most spirit-filled songs that I have ever heard. I, in turn, took my shared journey with Jeanette and journal entries and self-published my first book: *Art, Soul, and The Missing Peace*. With the book, I included Jeanette's CD.

I am giving my life to inspiring others and serving God with my life — I want to share with the world the greatness that "came to life" with my cancer experience. What Jeanette and I came to know was that it's all about God/Spirit guiding the journey. Neither of the two of us were ever victimized by cancer, but greatly enlightened, blessed, guided and grateful.

"Transcending pain by connecting to the beauty of art." No one defined this better than Jeanette, though forced with a set of heavy circumstances. She ministered to all, to her last day — In her music we see the power of spirit and even though the physical body may be weakening — Spirit never dies!

DONNA MARIE VESSINI  
You may reach Donna at  
[viavisualsmiverse@aol.com](mailto:viavisualsmiverse@aol.com)

Always trust yourself and your own feelings, as opposed to argumentations, discussions, or introductions of that sort; if it turns out that you are wrong, then the natural growth of your inner life will eventually guide you to other insights. Allow your judgments their own silent, undisturbed development, which, like all progress, must come from deep within and cannot be forced or hastened. Everything is gestation and then birthing. To let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely by itself, in the dark, in the unsayable, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one's own understanding, and with deep humility and patience to wait for the hour when a new clarity is born; this alone is what it means to live as an artist; in understanding as in creating.

RAINER MARIA RILKE,  
Letters to a Young Poet

At thirty-one, a suicidal but only partially deaf Beethoven had written of his loss of hearing, "Oh, if I were rid of this affliction, I could embrace the world." At fifty-four, an utterly deaf Beethoven immortalized Schiller's Ode to Joy, "Be embraced by ye millions with a kiss for all the world," in the lyrical, life-affirming chorus of his Ninth Symphony.

GEORGE VAILLANT,  
From *Adaptation to Life*

### CANCER AS A TURNING POINT

As an editor for *A Light in the Mist*, I am often forced to face my fears, mostly in the form of reading and thinking about

emotionally difficult subjects I would rather avoid by relegating them to the shadowy recesses of denial. Cancer is one of these difficult subjects for me, as I'm sure it is for many people. So when Kate asked me to review *Cancer as a Turning Point: From Surviving to Thriving*, a collection of six audiotapes distilled from Jan Adrian's Healing Journey Conferences, I must confess that I felt a bit daunted by the prospect, even though the tapes did feature nine exceptional authors and healers, many of whom I have read avidly and have previously written about.

But as is often the case, when we face our fears they are rarely what we had imagined them to be. As I listened to the wise and inspiring counsel of Jean Shinoda Bolen, Rachel Naomi Remen, Michael Lerner, and Marion Woodman, to name only a few of the distinguished speakers included in this collection, I realized that the subject of the tapes was healing not illness, restoration not loss, and, ultimately, trust not fear. In each session there is an invitation, in the words of the editors, "to reframe the healing process in a positive, creative and spiritual light." And although I still have a few more tapes to listen to, one thing is already quite clear, it is an invitation that could change your life.

Cancer as a Turning Point:  
From Surviving to Thriving  
published by  
Sounds True  
of Boulder, Colorado, 2000.

For more information regarding a summer conference with Lawrence LeShan entitled, "Cancer as a Turning Point," go to [www.cancerasturningpoint.org](http://www.cancerasturningpoint.org).

We also highly recommend Lawrence LeShan, Ph.D.'s seminal book, *Cancer as a Turning Point: A Handbook for People with Cancer, Their Families, and Health Professionals, Revised Edition, 1994*.

ERRATA: Our profound apologies to Clare Cooper Marcus for referring to her as Claire Cooper-Lewis in our last bibliography. We also regret misspelling the following names: E.M. Forster and Florida Scott-Maxwell.

# CHANGES

## A CHART FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS LOVING GIFT.

Use it as a tool to weather life's challenging changes, as an inspiration for increased personal growth or as an heirloom for family and friends. Record lessons learned, current issues, visions of growth and the legacy you wish to leave behind. The words are merely to suggest possible topics. Make it your very own.

## GROWTH

BIRTH

## EMOTIONS

## INTENTION

PRAYER

MEDITATION

*An easy life and a good life are not the same thing.*  
RACHEL NAOMI REMEN

*Your grief for what you've lost lifts a mirror  
up to where you are bravely working.*

*Expecting the worst, you look and instead,  
here's the joyful face you've been wanting to see.*

*Your hand opens and closes and opens and closes. If it were always a fist or always stretched open, you would be paralyzed.*

*Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding, the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as birdwings.*

RUMI

## INTEGRITY

## GENERATIVITY

## RETIREMENT

*If we can say that grace is a sense of connection with the sacred within and around us, we may see how, impossible as it may sometimes seem, tragedy holds the seeds of grace. And we see, too, that grace may not always be pleasant but it always brings us closer to our true heart.*

STEPHEN LEVINE

## MY WISHES FOR YOU

FOR SOCIETY

FOR THE WORLD

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### MY EDUCATION

paste a  
picture of  
a favorite  
memory  
here

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## MY RELATIONSHIPS

---

My Family

---

## MY CAREER

---

### MY INSPIRATION

---

WHO AM I?

---

My JOURNEY

---

My MISSION

CREATIVITY

---

WISDOM

DREAMS

SPIRITUALITY

---

MY LEGACY

---

My Gifts

---

MY HOPES

*The process of wounding awakens us to our strength. It shuffles our values, and the top priority is never what you thought it would be. It's never about perfection or power. It always turns out to be about love.*

RACHEL NAOMI REMEN

Being an artist means:  
not numbering and  
counting, but ripening  
like a tree, which doesn't  
force its sap, and stands  
confidently in the storms  
of spring, not afraid  
that afterward summer  
may not come. It does  
come. But it comes only  
to those who are patient,  
who are there as if  
eternity lay before them,  
so unconcernedly silent  
and vast. I learn it  
every day of my life,  
learn it with pain I am  
grateful for: patience  
is everything.

RAINER MARIA RILKE