

# A LIGHT IN THE MIST

THE JOURNAL OF HOPE

A HEALING ENVIRONMENTS PUBLICATION  
VOLUME THREE, NUMBER THREE, 1998




TAKE YOUR PRACTICED POWERS  
AND STRETCH THEM OUT  
UNTIL THEY SPAN THE CHASM BETWEEN  
TWO CONTRADICTIONS...  
FOR THE GOD WANTS  
TO KNOW HIMSELF IN YOU.

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RILKE





*The  
new era  
is the era of  
spiritual  
creativity.*

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Henry Miller



by Richard Simon

A few years ago, theater director and actor Andre Gregory, probably best known as the beguiling raconteur and spiritual bungee-jumper in the cult classic *My Dinner With Andre*, had just finished a lecture when a man got up to ask a question. "I'm a writer and a great admirer of *My Dinner With Andre*," the man said, "and I would like to write something as good. How do I do it?" As the audience tittered at the mix of gush and naiveté in the man's question, Gregory thought for a moment and replied, "I remember the night my wife, who was dying of cancer, was first put on heavy, pain-killing drugs. About two in the morning I suddenly realized that there were certain things I wanted to say to her and if I didn't say them now, she would never be able to hear them. So I rang her up in the hospital and said, 'Sweetheart, there are some things I have to say to you,' and I started talking and whenever she would say, 'I'm getting sleepy,' I would say, 'Wake up, sweetheart. There's more I really have to say to you.' Write from that kind of necessity and your work will be great."

♦ ♦ ♦

Sometime during the mid-'70s, Gregory descended into what he now describes as "seven years of hell," a mid-life crisis that led to his abandoning his career as a director, haunted by a sense of dread and purposelessness in his life. Ultimately, this time in the wilderness became the raw material for *My Dinner With Andre*, conceived out of 2,000 pages of transcripts of discussions between Andre and his friend, playwright Wallace Shawn, and nearly a year of rehearsal. In the film, Andre recounts his near breakdown and a series of exotic adventures in his quest for spiritual revelation, while an increasingly flustered Wally, as Andre's unadventurous, comfort-seeking counterpart, defends the pragmatics of seeking answers to life's Great Questions in closer proximity to his electric blanket. The film pokes fun at the narcissism and absurdity of both characters, while extending an unusually intimate invitation to the audience, who become almost a third guest at their dinner table, to consider what this rambling conversation tells us about our own lives. Although, for some movie goers, the film established Gregory as a kind of oracle in his own right, he is careful to distance himself from that Andre. "I see him as being on the lowest rung of the spiritual ladder," says Gregory. "He's so afraid that he's not alive that he'll go to any excess just to feel something, just like the man who will come to the brothel to have the whore whip him."

The surprising box office success of *My Dinner With Andre* gave Gregory the financial freedom to stay outside the straight and narrow of commercial theater. His next project-of-the-

decade emerged again out of a period of psychological turmoil. In the late '80s, Gregory's wife, Chiquita, was diagnosed with cancer. Drawing together a group of actors who were themselves in the midst of some kind of emotional crisis—one actor had lost a son, another's father had recently died, others were going through other kinds of personal and professional turmoil—Gregory began rehearsing a production of Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, a classic about thwarted people coming face-to-face with the failure of their life's aspirations. The group began rehearsing without any thought of performing the play for others—the idea seems to have been to emotionally inhabit Chekhov's characters and his world as a way of turning their own group therapy into a kind of art form. The family-like bond that developed among Gregory and his actors became so intense that they continued to work on the play together for five years, scheduling rehearsal times in the midst of their busy professional lives. As word-of-mouth spread within the New York City theater community about what they were doing, they agreed to open their rehearsals in a crumbling 42nd Street theater to a select group of family, friends and members of the city's cultural elite: Mikhail Baryshnikov, Robert Altman, Mike Nichols, Susan Sontag, all came to observe at one time or another—some came back repeatedly.



It was only after Ruth Nelson, one of the actresses in the group, died of cancer that Gregory and Shawn decided to film the production and make a permanent record of it. They again enlisted as their collaborator Louis Malle, the director of *My Dinner With Andre*, and the result was the critically acclaimed *Vanya on 42nd Street*, which was shown at the 1995 Family Therapy Network Symposium. Reviewing the film at that time, *Networker* film critic Frank Pittman wrote:

*The film of these actors rehearsing is so intimate, the relationships between the characters and the actors so warm and sympathetic, that we come to believe that understanding and sharing the universal pain of living can both sustain and satisfy. The meaning that Andre seems to have found in Vanya may be less in the play itself than in the endless process of rehearsal, in imperfect people coming together to share the elusive search and thus to discover that we don't have to be alone.*

His newest work, *Bone Songs*, is inspired by the death of his wife five years ago. Gregory describes the play as

a "kaleidoscopic view of marriage loosely based on Solomon's 'Song of Songs,'" and expects that it will take shape in much the same way that *Vanya* was developed.

♦ ♦ ♦

Gregory: My play, *Bone Songs*, is about marriage as a journey. There are five characters. There's a young couple who are going to spend their honeymoon on a cruise to Antarctica, which is a strange place to go. The ice is a metaphor for death and for the unknown, and for what happens between people when they're not able to connect with each other. There's a middle-aged couple who took this boat on their honeymoon and are now taking a second trip because she's ill. And there's a very old man who first took a trip on the ship when he was on his honeymoon and then again when his wife was ill. Now he's doing it because there's something he needs to learn or remember in order to live these last years as fully as possible. So this is not a safe journey—it's sailing through some of the worst waters in the world. I remember my spiritual teacher once explaining that there were two ways to go on a spiritual path. She had chosen to be a monk, and have a relationship with God, which was very, very tough, a very, very hard road. Then she added, "I wasn't quite up to the tougher one, which is marriage."

FTN: How does the play reflect your own experience of marriage?

Gregory: I read the play to a Jungian analyst who is a friend of mine. She wept through the whole second half of the play and then said, "For most people, when someone they love dies, there's nothing more they can do with that person except mourn or struggle with the inevitable issues that were left unresolved. But in your case, you have sat with a ghost that you love for two-and-a-half years, and you've given her the words she needed to say if she could have lived, and you've given yourself the words you might have answered had she been able to say those words, so that you've been able to actually end the relationship in truth and love, and let her go her way and you go yours." But the audience doesn't even have to know that I lost my wife, and in a way that has no significance for them. The play is about the ambiguity of relationship. People who have seen it report to me that afterward they spent the whole night talking about their relationships. So this is not unlike *My Dinner With Andre*. The purpose was to send people out of the theater talking.

♦ ♦ ♦

My wife's death has given me more of an appreciation that you better really live who you are and do anything to find out who that is as quickly as you can, because one of the problems about dying can be recognizing that you haven't actually lived your life....



Where did that idea come from?  
Is there a guiding force?

**M**y pencil touches the paper and the magic begins. Where did that idea come from? What guided my hand? Why did I do that? I really don't know, so I asked some friends. These are their replies. **SS**

**I**nspiration develops in my peripheral vision. An independent and shy creature, she first appears in the corner of my eye when my mind is quiet and receptive.

If I notice her at all she will step front and center and the meeting can be joyous.

However, there are far too many occasions in which my mind is overburdened with linear thought and I am not available to receive my guest.

Sharon Penn  
Sculptor

**I**deas are like a seed that turns into a flower. Ideas come from anywhere and anything. There are several possible ideas around you right now. It is the state of mind you are in that can trigger an idea. Being in the right place at the right time (mentally). When you're in a spontaneous mood you may see many goofy ideas with unlimited potential. It's when you *do not* seek an answer, yet live the question, then you may arrive at a good idea. Ideas are a logical and experimental game of elimination.

Unique ideas: There are several ways to say the same thing. Reword the questions in your own way. Where do my ideas come from? Is there something that provokes me? All ideas are spiritual healing and nourishment to the mind. We live, eat and drink someone's ideas all the time.

Becca Smidt  
Graphic Designer

**P**erhaps it emerged from the dance of candlelight shadows.  
Or the cry of the burdened freight train struggling in the night.  
An infinite whisper waking you from an imageless dream.  
A note that lingers long after the music has ended.  
And the inescapable feeling of knowing that it is all somehow connected.

Brian Eder  
Graphic Designer

**Q** Where did that idea come from?  
**A:** Carving the matter out of mystery.  
**Q:** Is there a guiding force?  
**A:** Carve the mystery out of matter.

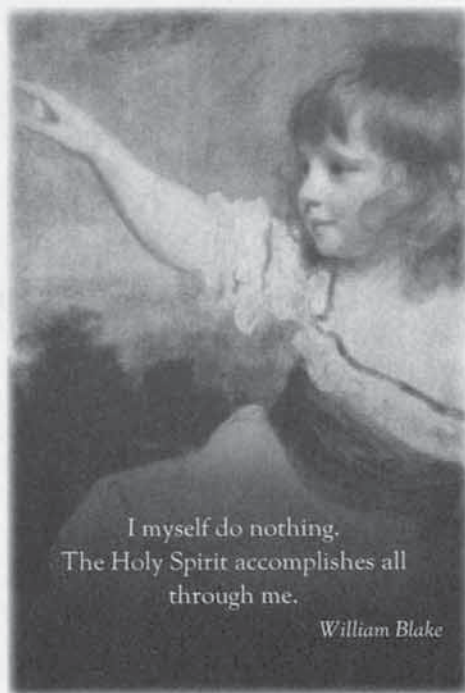
Nancy Mercury  
Painter

**A** few years ago I asked renowned veteran designer Milton Glaser where his artistic ideas come from and he told me, "They come from the most unlikely places. Usually when I pay attention to something I haven't paid attention to before, such as the way a shadow falls across a curb or the way a television set distorts the color of an image or... exceptionally good work done by anyone." I believe that in reference to graphic design the idea already exists within the problem itself. It's just a matter of pulling it out and presenting it as a solution. Is there a guiding force? Not for me. My ideas come the same way as Mozart said his did. "When I am... entirely alone... or during the night when I cannot sleep, it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly."

Rick Tharp  
Graphic Designer

**A**s a young boy during the depression, I learned to relate to myself, and much of that process continues on through my life and certainly today. I learned most to develop a dialogue within me, and in so doing, trusted what was within my inner self. Generally, we mistrust our intuition, or pay little heed to it, and focus on the development of our conscious thoughts primarily. The intuition, however, is that hidden place where many new things are possible that we never thought possible, and the process might be referred to as, "that urge". A conversation within yourself can uncover the universe, as it did with the likes of Albert Einstein and his inner dreams.

Nathan Oliveira  
Artist



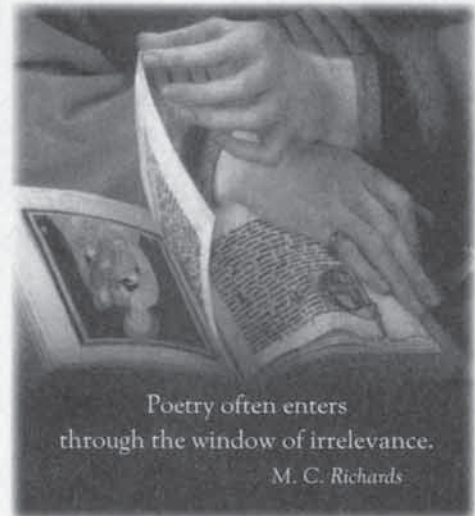
Sir Joshua Reynolds, "Master Harp," Louvre

I myself do nothing.  
The Holy Spirit accomplishes all  
through me.

William Blake

**I**t seems to me that ideas emerge from the mysterious coalescence of past, present and future. They are the sum of all that we have already witnessed, experienced and absorbed in our own lives; our ability to be open to what is available to us (on many planes) in the present moment, and our courage to envision what may be possible in the future. With some patience and prodding, out of all this comes something new, guided, I believe, by a force that is ageless and boundless: the creative force.

Susan Sharpe  
Writer



Poetry often enters  
through the window of irrelevance.  
M. C. Richards

Quentin Meys, "The Moneylender," Louvre

**I** actually find there are two distinct ways in which ideas happen: one is when I'm actively searching for a creative solution for a specific problem, the other is when I'm walking down the street and an idea comes from out of the blue. So I'll answer the question twice.

In situations where I'm looking for an idea, where does that idea come from?

Playing around—putting things where they don't belong, using things incorrectly, turning things upside down—until I recognize the perfect mistake.

Is there a guiding force? Faith that I'll find the answer and fear that I won't.

In situations where an idea comes out of the blue, where does that idea come from?

The idea is the result of some random physical element breaking through my consciousness and smashing into my sensibility.

Is there a guiding force? I have to be in an open, receptive state of mind. These types of ideas don't come when I'm preoccupied or stressed.

Tom Scarpino  
Video Artist

**T**here are no ideas, simply forces that can guide and endow each individual with the wisdom for exploration of search.

Joseph Bellomo  
Architect

**T**he brain is the ultimate super computer. Our parents' genetic input, or our mothers' habits during gestation,



our upbringing and environment all shape our personalities and the career we choose or wander into. Everyone on some level is a designer. I wonder how many brilliant, creative people remain undiscovered (or should I say undeveloped?), especially in societies racked with poverty or, like ours, where money and possessions are celebrated and art is not rewarded for its own sake.

Creative powers are, like an athlete's fitness, diminished if not exercised regularly. Unlike an athlete, designers, especially architects, become more valuable as they grow older and their minds can roam freely, unencumbered by the fear of inexperience.

Richard Pennington  
Architect

If I must develop something during the daylight hours, I look into the eyes of my beloved puppy, actually my doggie and there is a vision. She looks at me and I gaze at her and in that communing, an idea will emerge, or not.

There are the hard-core times when I have to clean my studio and label every single possible item—drawer, bin and folder—with a color-printed, laminated label, which is attached with double sticky tape and perfectly placed, in order to create a spontaneous and free-flowing idea about something other than labeling and organizing.

Bonnie Bernell  
Psychologist / Artist



Henri Matisse at the age of 82 in his studio at the Hotel Regina above Nice, France

Creativity is  
harnessing universality and  
making it flow through your eyes.  
Peter Koesterbaum

I have been asked the question of where my ideas come from many times, but never sat down to actually write down the words to describe the process or the sources of my creativity—an “act” that is so natural for me and a “process” that is a part of my being (energy).

A guiding force? During a recent trip to the Midwest, my birthplace, my mother asked me, as she has many times, “Where did you get your talent?” Knowing that I was being asked to write about this, I began to question her, as she is one of my guiding forces.

After some childhood stories, lots of laughter, a short family history, a few tears here and there, a glass of wine or two, we came to the conclusion that my talent was born from very supportive grandparents, parents and a brother and sister who gave me the opportunity to be and do whatever I wanted, as long as I cleaned up after myself!

My slightly different look at life was never laughed at, nor was I ever discouraged from being myself.

I was shown love and support in every decision I made in life. All of these factors, plus the experiences of my “past lives,” has resulted in this—my guiding force.

One day a client asked, “I would love to see through your eyes for a day to view the way you see the world.” My reply was—a tear.

John Martin  
Interior Designer

Many of my ideas are generated by collective mental environment and experience and/or memories of environments and experiences. Less concretely defined, yet equally powerful, are the ideas which seem to come from a different source—from a deeper sense of my being.

While “being” implies physiology (including mental processes) coupled with the physical dynamics of time and space, there is art whose source I consider to be my soul.

Sam Richardson  
Artist / Sculptor

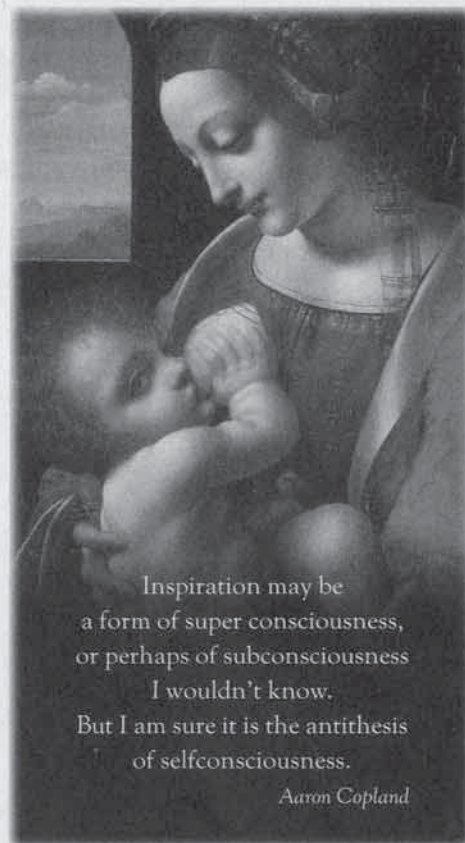
I get my ideas from restaurant napkins. For some reason, napkins make it easier to... get into the flow of writing ideas down knowing that the ideas are about to be “born” into the world. The limbo phase in “napkinland” allows for one to sketch, write and on occasions, wipe with their ideas, prompting a performance art in a surrealistic way. It's like using toothpaste (Aquafresh) as paint for canvas, while instinctively brushing teeth.

Ralfy Ungson  
Graphic Designer

Ideas in Hiding.

So where did that idea come from? Seems like every idea that I get is some variation on one of my previous ideas. One big long chain of linked mediocre ideas trying to evolve into something better. Even when I try to pirate an idea from someone...it comes out like some variation of my thinking. Big question is how does that first idea get started. I don't worry too much about how it all started... but I do wonder when it will end.

Ron Carraher  
Filmmaker



Leonardo Da Vinci "The Virgin and Child," Hermitage

Inspiration may be  
a form of super consciousness,  
or perhaps of subconsciousness  
I wouldn't know.  
But I am sure it is the antithesis  
of selfconsciousness.

Aaron Copland

Idea Source: I desire to represent inner vision like dreams or meditative states of awareness. Images derived from the world sometimes compel me. Often ideas congeal from the relationship between a particular vision and a given material like beeswax. Metaphor deepens the meaning.

Guiding Force: In the process of art-making I experience a viable dialogue with the energy developing in the work—an excitement for the metaphor. This feels like a guiding force. I believe that the energy of the collective unconscious affects the process somehow, subtle or otherwise, in an ebb and flow way.

Lynn Powers  
Painter

Ideas spring from one's intuition, which somehow correlates one's lifelong “memory drum” of images and sensations with current needs and problems. These “connections” can be sparked in many ways, but usually it is some change in physical activity, some form of meditation, or seeking the stimulus of new information. One does not need to wait for the muse.

A primary guiding force is trust in one's feelings and one's abilities to invent rather than depending on tradition or theory. Sort of like early aviators “flying by the seat of their pants” as they sensed spatial orientation by variations in gravitational pull. It is a confidence in one's intuition.

Harry Powers  
Painter / Sculptor

From deep inside my right brain... plus a little from somewhere in my left brain... and a good portion from my heart!

David Turner  
Designer / Photographer



## HAVEN

Picture a safe place in your mind. Seriously. Please just take a moment and let your mind create the safest place it can imagine. Can you picture a safe place that no one, and I mean No One can find except for you?

As you picture this place, take a moment to explore it. Let your mind delve into this place like a video playing back a home movie. Let it be all that you need it to be. This is your personal haven.

The Italian Cathedral—I can picture it in my mind: rock-solid columns soaring into the air, supporting heavy vaulted ceilings over 400 years old. Woven into the walls are century-old, jewel-colored windows with religious stories carefully depicted on each panel. When sunlight touches this monument, it comes alive. The unbelievable dedication of artisans and architects, but also the ongoing vision of the church and state. A community effort and vision wrapped into one testimony. A message that often still stands today. These are the places that often inspire me in my work and in my personal thoughts. The ongoing dedication to a single project. No holding back on the creative cause—layer upon layer of sculpture, paint and hard labor.

What I have come to realize in the last few weeks is that what I wish to convey is sometimes we need a vision to hold onto. For myself it is the light shining through the stained-glass windows of Gothic cathedrals. When times are especially rough, shouldn't we all have a backup to keep a part of ourselves secure?

These visions are like anchors between reality and dreams, which I believe is especially important when you are not sure of what is going on around you; when your personal space is in jeopardy. How do you see yourself through these frightening moments?

Fortunately, we are all born with the creative talent of manifestation. We have sorted through millions of tiny bits of information to hand select what we remember. From this we choose what inspires us. That is quite a gift. You do not need to be an artist or a certain type of person to do this.

I know that all of us, not just some, carry a vision of what is safe in our minds. Whatever it is, be it a hole in the ground or Buckingham Palace, you deserve that place. Let your imagination explore it.

What is it made of? Whether it is masonry or down-stuffed pillow walls, I hope that vision stays with you during your hardest and best times.

If you would like to share some of your visions, we would enjoy hearing about them. **TTP**

## ON CREATIVITY AND HEALING

I sit at the top of the stairs, my head in my hands, my shoulders bowed. I am frozen in pain, in a vise of despair. There is no room to move, no way out. I am trapped in a suffocating morass of hopelessness. Last May the bottom of my world collapsed. Things had been difficult for months, but early in May something happened to shake the very foundation of my world, shattering my hopes and dreams. I could no longer make sense of my life. Slowly, painstakingly, I had to reconstruct a new reality. One that could make room for the pain and accommodate the suffering. It was a massive task. Not unlike shifting tectonic plates.

The turning point came for me when I read a letter from a Catholic nun on the East Coast. "Thank you for the delicate beauty of your ministry," she wrote. Suddenly I was reminded that a world existed outside of my pain. One in which I had a role. One that mattered very much.

This petite epiphany opened the door to memory. The memory of opening to the universe, of trusting in the universe, of letting the words flow through me—of letting myself be used for the greater good.

In my despair I had lost my connection to God or the life force. Eastern thought speaks in terms of life force as *chi*. Physical illness or emotional difficulties result in a block of the flow of *chi*. Not unlike writer's block. Conversely, when I am in a state of well-being I experience my life as a stare of flow, or dynamic harmony.

So how can creativity be utilized to heal suffering? The act of creation reconnects us with the universal. It enables us to transcend our pain by placing it in the context of a larger reality. For some of us that larger reality is God, for others merely the universe. When we are being creative we are in a state of flow. The life force or *chi* literally courses through our being. When we align ourselves with that greater reality which is God or the universe, our suffering is subsumed. We trade in the individual vagaries of our lives for the universal truth which is art. And in so doing we are healed. **KS**

tuesdays with  
Morrie

## NATALIE GOLDBERG

Seldom do I feel that words fall effortlessly onto the page before me. Writing does not come "naturally" to me—I can easily become overwhelmed by the feeling of not conveying myself clearly. Procrastination and frustration are often the result of an evening of writing. Not to mention a virtually blank page. But I believe in everyone's ability to own their creative mark. Why is writing difficult?

Thank God for Natalie Goldberg's, *Writing Down the Bones*. On a couple of occasions since I received this book as a gift from our beloved friend, Doree Allen, I have consulted the mini-chapters as if they were writing guides. Ms. Goldberg demystifies the act of writing and helps the struggling author create an authentic voice that is not caught in a battle of writing ego. This is especially challenging for those of us that feel our identity lies elsewhere.

Natalie teaches us to treat writing as a practice. Something you return to and strengthen. It is not a muscle that is instantly developed. She reminds the reader that, just as life is a process, one of the goals is to return to what we have started and revisit it; pick it up and add on, change it, play with it.

Well, I am definitely still in an early stage of letting my creative writing juices flow, but for those of you in the same boat, there is hope. And it can be pretty fun to learn and explore your own potential with Ms. Goldberg's help. **TTP**

*Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*,  
Shambhala Publication, Inc., 1986

## TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE

*Tuesdays with Morrie* is about passing away gracefully.

*Tuesdays with Morrie* is about leaving something behind.

*Tuesdays with Morrie* is all about love. You can feel it from the first paragraph:

*The last class of my old professor's life took place once a week in his house, by a window in the study where he could watch a small hibiscus plant shed its pink leaves. The class met on Tuesdays. It began after breakfast. The subject was The Meaning of Life. It was taught from experience.*

As a professor emeritus myself, I can appreciate Morrie's need to leave a legacy to his students and to all of us who read this little jewel of insight and compassion.



Mitch Albom, the author and former student of Morrie's, eloquently organized the conversations that they had every Tuesday morning at 9.

Here are a few excerpts: **SS**

*Feeling Sorry For Yourself:* "Sometimes in the mornings," he said. "That's when I mourn. I feel around my body, I move my fingers and my hands—whatever I can still move—and I mourn what I've lost. I mourn the slow insidious way in which I'm dying. But then I stop mourning. I give myself a good cry if I need it. But then I concentrate on all the good things still in my life."

*We Talk About Regrets:*

"The culture doesn't encourage you to think about such things until you're about to die. We're so wrapped up with egotistical things, career, family, having enough money, meeting the mortgage, getting a new car, fixing the radiator when it breaks—we're involved in trillions of little acts just to keep going. So we don't get into the habit of standing back and looking at our lives and saying, 'Is this all? Is this all I want? Is something missing?'"

*We Talk About Death:*

"Everyone knows they're going to die," he said again, "but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently. To know you're going to die, and to be prepared for it at any time. That's better. That way you can actually be more involved in your life while you're living."

*We Talk About Family:*

"The fact is, there is no foundation, no secure ground, upon which people may stand today if it isn't the family. It's become quite clear to me as I've been sick. If you don't have the support and love and caring and concern that you get from a family, you don't have much at all. Love is so supremely important. As our great poet Auden said, 'Love each other or perish.'"

*We Talk About Emotions:*

"Detaching yourself?"  
"Yes. Detaching myself. And this is important—not just for someone like me, who is dying, but for someone like you, who is perfectly healthy. Learn to detach." He opened his eyes. He exhaled. "You know what the Buddhists say? Don't cling to things, because everything is impermanent."

*We Talk About the Fear of Aging:*

"It's very simple. As you grow, you learn more. If you stayed at twenty-two, you'd always be as ignorant as you were at twenty-two. Aging is not just decay, you know. It's growth. It's more than the negative that you're going to die, it's also the positive that

you understand you're going to die, and that you live a better life because of it... Listen. You should know something. If you're always battling against getting older, you're always going to be unhappy, because it will happen anyhow."

*We Talk About Money:*

"Remember what I said about finding a meaningful life? I wrote it down, but now I can recite it: Devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning. 'You notice,' he added, grinning, 'there's nothing in there about a salary.'"

Excerpted from *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom, Copyright©1997 by Mitch Albom, Doubleday

## SETTING A PLACE FOR THE MUSE

*Inside you there's an artist  
you don't know about....  
Say yes quickly, if you know,  
if you've known it from before the  
beginning of the universe.*

Rumi

When I finished *The Artist's Way*, I felt a pang of loneliness. As someone for whom creative expression has always been as challenging as it has been necessary, I felt comforted by this book which spoke so knowingly of my volatile relationship with the muse. Julia Cameron, the author of this *Course in Discovering and Recovering your Creative Self*, is a writer-director who has been teaching creativity workshops for more than a decade. When she is asked—as she often is—"How can you teach creativity?" she responds, "I can't... I teach people to let themselves be creative." And perhaps it is in such subtle shifts of perspective that the power of Cameron's teaching lies.

An abiding premise of the book is that creativity is a basic human instinct and not something only a chosen few possess. "Through my own experience and that of countless others that I have shared," she writes in her introduction, "I have come to believe that creativity is our true nature, that blocks are an unnatural thwarting of a process at once as normal and as miraculous as the blossoming of a flower at the end of a slender green stem." Cameron's loyal commitment to this belief is one I long to emulate; it is a point of view that comes easily to me as a teacher, and yet in my own writing and creative endeavors I find myself somewhat less than trusting about the

resiliency of the creative process.

Cameron is persuasive, though. As I made my way through her "course," my own commitment to making a place for the muse was rekindled, and I found myself quoting Cameron in my journal, reading passages over the phone to friends, and buying her book for the people I know who share this desire to practice *the art of creative living*, as she refers to it.

Cameron understands intimately the voices, both internal and external, that censor our creative impulses and collaborate to sabotage our good intentions. She urges us to ignore our internalized perfectionist who says smugly of our first drawing, "It's not Picasso," reminding us that the censor's opinions are not the truth. And though her analysis of the cultural and psychological forces that subvert our creative energy is both sophisticated and subtle, her strategy for recovering the artist's way is quite straightforward and involves two basic tools: *the morning pages* and *the artist date*.

*Morning pages*, she explains "are three pages of longhand writing, strictly stream-of-consciousness." They must be done daily, first thing in the morning (as we might guess), and they are not to be reread or read by anyone else. The *artist date* simply requires that you reserve a block of time each week—she suggests two hours—to nurture your inner artist. "In its most primary form, the artist date is an excursion, a play date that you preplan and defend against all interlopers." Cameron, of course, elaborates on these pivotal tools and includes a variety of tasks and affirmations to complement the basic principles of her program. Also, a compilation of quotations, such as the Rumi passage I begin with here, grace the margins of the book, serving as a kind of reassuring chorus to her own sage recommendations.

I must confess, I have not been as faithful to my morning pages as I aspire to be (somewhat of an understatement, actually), but I have found the book a wise and compassionate companion nonetheless. While the author does dispel the myth of the artist's "plight" as it is stereotypically portrayed, she is careful not to demystify the artistic process—for mystery, after all, is what it is about. So if you have a poem to write, a figure to sculpt, or a mandolin to play that you have been putting off until an ever-elusive tomorrow, read *The Artist's Way*, if only to be reminded by Julia Cameron that dreams matter and creativity is not a luxury. **DA**

*The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* by Julia Cameron, Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book, 1992





Dear Friends,

*I am gazing in awe at the world's tiniest hands, most delicate fingers—  
a tiny miracle, a gift of life, a gift of love. A week ago today Kyle was born—  
my daughter Laura's son—my first grandchild. Words cannot describe the joy!*

*It was as though the heavens had opened and a gentle shower of epiphanies  
blessed us all with healing and with hope. I wish for all of you that  
you, too, in the midst of pain, may be blessed with an epiphany which will  
restore your faith in life, your hope in renewal, your joy in love.*

*Peace to Kyle, his parents and all of you. In deepest gratitude,*

Kate

*Photograph by Thayer Allyson Gowdy*

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.

HEALING ENVIRONMENTS  
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