

A LIGHT IN THE MIST

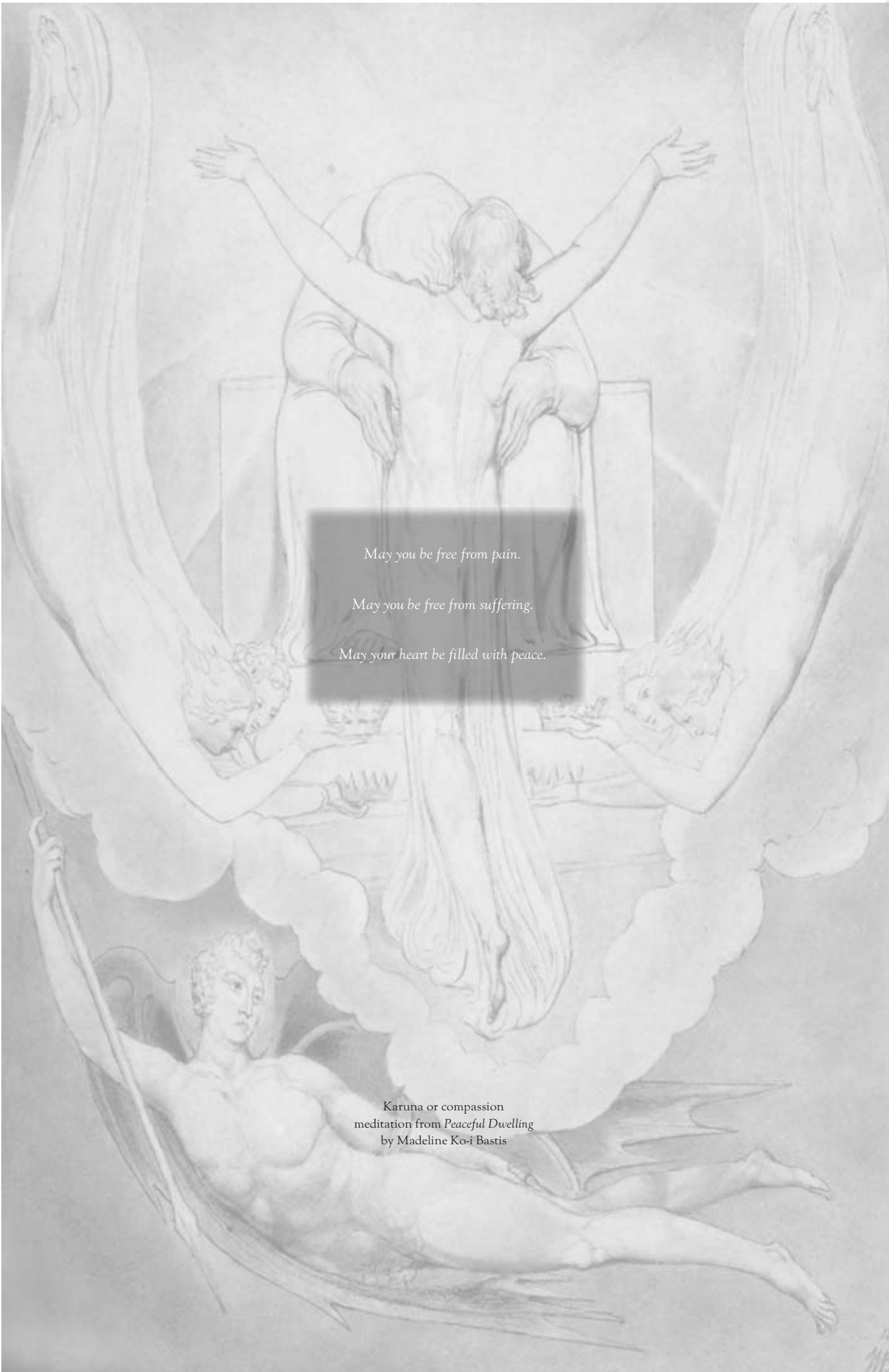
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AND WE ARE PUT ON EARTH A LITTLE SPACE.
THAT WE MAY LEARN TO BEAR THE BEAMS OF LOVE...

William Blake



May you be free from pain.

May you be free from suffering.

May your heart be filled with peace.

Karuna or compassion
meditation from *Peaceful Dwelling*
by Madeline Ko-i Bastis

MY AWAKENING THROUGH BEN

The Buddha taught that the twin fruits of meditation are wisdom and compassion. They are like the wings of a bird; lacking one, the bird cannot fly. Mindfulness meditation focuses on arousing wisdom; Metta, or loving-kindness meditation, helps us to uncover and nurture the qualities of compassion and to bring balance into our lives.

My Awakening Through Ben

During my second year of chaplaincy training, I sometimes listened to a guided Metta meditation tape during the long commute to the hospital and I began to notice that the quality of my day improved. Patients were more forthcoming with their problems, and I was able to open to their suffering without bursting into tears or distancing myself by erecting a glass wall between us. The bone-numbing exhaustion I normally felt after a twelve-hour day lessened. But I did not attempt to use Metta with patients until I met Ben.

Ben had a brain tumor and was in the end stages of AIDS. A couple of days before my visit he suffered a seizure and temporarily lost his ability to speak. He was terrified that another seizure might take it again. Then as we talked, Ben's head began to jerk, his body contracted in a spasm, his eyes rolled, and he opened his mouth in an almost silent scream. He was having another seizure, and I just froze.

I called the nurse. The code team arrived, and it took only minutes to stabilize him. Then we were alone again. But now Ben's nightmare, not being able to speak, had become a reality. The terror in the room was palpable. My stomach was like a clenched fist. His eyes were begging for something. My mouth was dry. I had no words for him.

In that moment of not-knowing, I began stroking his head and repeating the phrases of a meditation called "Metta," or "loving-kindness."

*May you be safe from harm.
May you be happy and peaceful.
May you be strong and healthy.
May you be free from suffering.*

I repeated the phrases over and over, as much for myself as for Ben, and gradually the atmosphere in the room seemed to soften and brighten. Ben relaxed into sleep, and I was filled with a peace and acceptance and joy that I had never before experienced. In offering loving-kindness to another, I had been healing myself.

When Ben awoke, he raised his arms to me asking for a hug, and as I cradled his wasted body, we were connected in a very intimate way. There was no separation; his heartbeat was my heartbeat; his pain, my pain; his life and death, mine. Metta had created a space where fear had been transformed into unconditional love.

Adapted from Peaceful Dwelling: Meditations for Healing and Living by Madeline Ko-i Bastis published January 2001 by Charles E. Tuttle Co. Inc. of Boston, Massachusetts and Tokyo, Japan. Used by permission of the publisher. The Rev. Madeline Ko-i Bastis, founder and director of Peaceful Dwelling Project (www.peacefuldwelling.org), is a Zen priest and the first Buddhist to be board-certified as a hospital chaplain. She has worked at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, NYU Medical Center, and in the AIDS Unit at Nassau County Medical Center.

TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

The Buddha (né Prince Siddhartha), who was neither pessimistic nor joyless, proclaimed the bad news first: Existence

is suffering. And the good news followed: There is a path that leads beyond (meaningless) suffering to wisdom and compassion, but you can't get there if you begin anywhere other than suffering.

Let's unpack this disconcerting idea to see if we can trust its promised balm.

Compassion begins with the acknowledgment of the single inescapable truth that is the foundation for the possibility of love between human beings—an awareness of the tragic sense of life. In that final surrender that marks the ego's defeat in the hard-fought battle to defend its illusions, we are forced to confront the implications of our mortality. Many small differences separate us one from another, but one large thing unites us. We are all citizens of the earth household, destined to dwell together in the democracy of death, in which there are no distinctions of race, color, creed, class, or gender. Without our consent we are formed by the iron laws of corrosive time, prey to decay and disease, and haunted during our brief days by the anxious knowledge that we are like the grass of the field. The syllogism—all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal—places you and me in the same community as Socrates, my son Gifford, and his friend John.

Compassion is literally feeling-with, or being-with. We are first and foremost fellow-humans. *Mitsein*. Kinfolk. Kindred flesh. It is this radical fellow-feeling that creates the impulse that flowers into kindness.

Indeed, our compassion is not limited to our fellow-humans. Today I find myself uttering the Buddhist vow to be compassionate to all sentient beings. As I write these words, our year old Jack Russell terrier sits in her bed beside me. Three days ago a rattlesnake bit her. Her head is still so swollen, she looks like a guinea pig. She sits in silent incomprehension, suffering from the effect of a cause she does not relate to playing with a snake. My heart goes out to her.

In the degree that we are moved by compassion, romantic love may be transformed into abiding care. Romance begins when we conspire to create an image of an ideal creature who is unmarked by ugliness, disease, time, or having to die. Being in love, we cultivate the illusion that by joining with the beloved we can "live happily ever after." In place of romance, compassion introduces us to the necessary suffering of love and therefore to abiding passion. To feel others' pleasure, I must be able to feel their pain. Only those who recognize each other as fellow-strangers-in-the-night can forge the bonds of true kinship and learn to be kind. And kindness, not wild abandon, is the essence of abiding passion.

Sam Keen holds two degrees from Harvard Divinity School as well as a Ph.D. in Religion from Princeton. The selection above as well as the quotes attributed to him throughout this issue were reprinted with permission from To Love and Be Loved by Sam Keen. Bantam Books. A Division of Random House, Inc. Copyright © 1997 by Sam Keen.

*The problem of
the meaning of life
is solved by
the mystery of love.*

Sam Keen

Our thanks to William Blake, eighteenth century artist, poet and mystic, whose art graces our pages.

Wanting Memories

Chorus #1

*I am sitting here wanting
Memories to teach me—
To see the beauty in the world
Through my eyes.
I am sitting here wanting
Memories to teach me—
To see the beauty in the world
Through my own eyes.*

You used to rock me in the cradle of your arms
You said you'd hold me till
the pains of life were gone
You said you'd comfort me in times like these—
And now I need you.
Now I need you, and you are gone

Chorus:

*I am sitting here wanting
Memories to teach me—
To see the beauty in the world
Through my own eyes.
Since you've gone and left me,
There's been so little beauty—
But I know I saw it clearly through your eyes.*

Now the world outside
Is such a cold and bitter place
Here inside I have few things that will console
And when I try to hear your voice
Above the storms of life
Then I remember all the things that I was told.

Repeat Chorus #1

I think on the things that made me feel
So wonderful when I was young
I think on the things that made me laugh,
Made me dance, made me sing
I think on the things that made me
Grow into a being full of pride
I think on these things, for they are truth.

Chorus:

*I am sitting here wanting
Memories to teach me—
To see the beauty in the world
Through my own eyes.
I thought you were gone,
But now I know you're with me
You are the voice that whispers
All I need to hear.*

I know a please, a thank you
And a smile will take me far
I know that I am you and
You are me and we are one
I know that who I am
Is numbered in each grain of sand
I know that I've been blessed
Again and over again.

Ysaye Barnwell, the lyricist and composer of "Wanting Memories," is perhaps best known for her over twenty-year collaboration with the vocal quartet *Sweet Honey in the Rock*. Last February, I had the unforgettable experience of taking a daylong workshop with her—*Singing Through Our Grief*—where within our first hour together she had a group of sixty virtually untrained singers singing four-part harmony and actually making music together. The night before the workshop, in a public conversation with Frank Ostaseki, founding director of the Zen Hospice Project, Dr Barnwell talked about the power of music to heal, both physically and spiritually. Speaking about the genesis of "Wanting Memories" in particular, she described how although she had initially written it for a close friend, she had discovered after the loss of her parents several years later, the song's deeper meaning and abiding solace.

You can experience the joy of the music in performance on the CD Sweet Honey in the Rock: Still on the Journey, EarthBeat Records. DA

Lyrics & Music: Ysaye Maria Barnwell
©1992 Barnwell's Notes (BMI)



Tears Of Joy

I can see the trace that sorrow
has left upon your face
And being realistic
I know that there are some things
that time just won't erase
But still I'm coming to you gently
and there's one promise I can make
Beside every tear that sorrow has left you
tears of joy will take their place

Tears of joy
Wash you clean
Come on and let them set you free

Sometimes I know life can make you feel
like you don't know what to do
But there comes a time when you must settle down
and feel the presence of the one who loves you
Oh yes I'm coming to you gently
And there's one promise I can make
Beside every tear that sorrow has left you
tears of joy will take their place

Tears of joy
Wash you clean
Come on and let them set you free

If I could fly I'd fly straight to you
Surround you with my love

You'll be crying
Tears of joy
Wash you clean
Come on and let them set you free

*Lyrics by Patricia Cathcart Andress and
William Charles Andress*

Is there a piece of music that you know of that can bring you to your knees?

I have been a fan of jazz duo Tuck and Patti for about ten years. Patti's voice reaches my heart in such a way that I feel better every time I hear their music. Her husband and music partner, Tuck Andress, plays acoustic guitar alongside her. Beyond all of the amazing technique there is something I learned recently that made sense when I heard about it.

When asked, who do you play for when you are performing, Tuck's straightforward response was that he was playing for Patti and that by doing that he was playing for God. If love could have a voice, it would sound like Tuck and Patti. Their messages are powerful in their reverence for life, love and beauty. I would recommend this for those who need life-affirming hope-infused music. **TTP**

THE SURVIVAL
VALUE OF LOVE

The doctors were puzzled. The young man's T-cell count (indicator of the status of his immune system) kept rising and rising, instilling hope. Yet there was no medical explanation. No change in regimen. What the doctors had overlooked was the young man was in love.

My good friend Linda's son was one of some twenty thousand hemophiliacs who contracted the HIV virus from blood transfusions before donors were tested. When Kevin was twenty-four, he met a courageous young female doctor on a sea-kayaking trip. They fell in love and his condition "miraculously" improved.

It is a well established fact that the body creates something known as endorphins and that these endorphins bolster the immune system. We also know that endorphins are produced by such things as exercise and the state of being in love.

Further evidence suggests that simply being connected with others in a meaningful and supportive way may have similar benefits. There is the landmark study of Dr. David Siegel at Stanford University which revealed that women with metastatic breast cancer who participated in support groups lived twice as long.

While working at Commonweal I read of a small town in Pennsylvania which had a statistically significant absence of cancer. When researchers analyzed the town demographically, they discovered that the entire town resembled a large, deeply interconnected Italian family.

Also while at Commonweal I heard Larry LeShan speak of further anecdotal evidence that even a sense of common purpose could have such an effect. It appears that Great Britain had a statistically significant decrease in cancer during World War II. While neighboring neutral Ireland had no such relief. Following the war Britain experienced a resurgence of the disease.

What are we to do with this information? First, a cautionary note. By no means is disease caused by an absence of love, nor can disease be miraculously cured by love.

What we do know beyond a doubt is that the best thing we can do for ourselves and others is to live purposeful, loving, interconnected lives. And when we experience the major loss of a loved one, to replace that loss with a sense of purpose serving humanity in a loving way. **KS**

THE ALCHEMY OF LOVE:
TRANSFORMING LOSS

What can be done with unbearable loss? How can unspeakable pain be transformed with courage and vision, into an exquisite gift to the world?

We recently read of a woman who had lost her two children to a rare degenerative nerve disorder. Her response was to create a website for children with serious illness—Brave Kids.org—as well as support their grieving parents.

On a recent trip to Denver to explore options for my teenage son, I met an extraordinary young man, Daniel Conroy. With his intense warmth and infectious good humor, I liked him immediately. But ours was to be a stronger and deeper connection. When he asked me what our nonprofit did, a strange thing happened. I answered with words I have never used before or since: "We help people die."

Immediately Daniel's demeanor changed. In a hushed and reverent voice he shared his story with me: "We lost our first baby. It was absolutely horrible. She lived sixteen days. We watched her go from the most beautiful baby in the world to a shriveled and lifeless form. Seeing the life literally drain out of her. For sixteen days we held her and tried to comfort her in the most cold and impersonal surroundings. I hated the hospital! How could my beautiful baby die in such an ugly place! I even brought pieces of beautiful silk in to beautify and dignify her environment."



Overcome with grief, Daniel and his wife Mae started a foundation in memory of their daughter McLaine. Joining forces with Children's Hospital and Centura Home Care and Hospice, they helped fund The Butterfly Program—a beautiful gift to dying children and their parents. The Butterfly Program's mission is to create healing environments for those who must suffer the pain of such excruciating loss—and to transform that loss into a healing transition—for parents and their children. Daniel and Mae want no other parents to suffer as they suffered.

For further information about The Butterfly Program call 303-561-5601



A few months ago I received a beautiful journal in the mail. It came from a woman who had turned the unbearable and inexplicable death of her best friend into a gift for us all.

Out of the shadows of the accompanying article's newsprint gazed a hauntingly beautiful woman, Trici (pronounced Trish), who had lost her baby girl to sudden death at the age of eighteen months. She and her husband went on to have two sons. But when they were only three and seven, a blood clot in her lungs caused a fatal heart attack. Trici's best friend Lynne was beside herself. How could such sorrow be endured by one young family? And how would the boys carry the memory of their beautiful mother?

Lynne marshalled her courage and created a beautiful journal in which grieving friends and family could write loving memories as a tribute to Trici to treasured by her boys.

Now she has made a similar journal, replete with heartening quotes and heirloom quality paper available to all.

In this creative and courageous act, Lynne transformed her unbearable grief into a gift to the world. Medieval alchemists struggled for centuries to transform lead into gold. With courage and vision today those of us who have suffered may transform our leaden pain into a golden gift to the world—healing our pain by honoring our loved ones. **KS**

The Tribute Journal may be ordered from Lynne McCollum Staley, P.O. Box 9046, Naperville IL 60567 (630-922-4134) or from www.tributejournal.com

I realized that there are things that every person is sent to earth to learn. For instance, to share more love, to be more loving toward one another. To discover that the most important thing is human relationships and love and not materialistic things.

quoted by Sogyal Rinpoche as told to Kenneth Ring from *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*

St. Exupéry once said: "Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward in the same direction." I know of no greater example of the fusion of passion and purpose than the love story of Pierce and Marie.

When that Swissair flight went down off the coast of Halifax in the fall of 1998, it took with it one of the world's last heroes. The highest ranking U.N. official on the plane, Pierce Gerety was one of five passengers whom *The New York Times* chose to eulogize. Pierce was every bit as daring and dashing as any fictitious hero.

I first met Pierce twenty years ago in Paris where he was assigned to work with my former husband to reform the French criminal justice system. Witty, wry and cynically idealistic, Pierce would be the last to take credit for anything he did. A lawyer by training, at a young age he established a system of free legal services for all of the prisoners of New York State.

He had come to Paris in his early twenties to become a priest, but had fallen in love with a passionate French aristocrat, Marie de la Soudière. Everything that is best in French women, Marie had an intensity and vitality that made Americans pale by comparison. It was to be a love story of epic proportions.

Soon after marrying in 1965, Pierce and Marie went to work in India for Catholic Charities, where Marie had a baby, mastered the art of Indian dance, and helped Mother Teresa's Sisters administer to the lepers. Somewhere early on the two lost their faith in God, but remained dedicated to humanity with a passion that can only be called saintly.

Pierce's father had been put in charge of relocating European refugees in the U.S. after World War II. Pierce was to carry on the tradition of service and selflessness. He and Marie reunited Cambodian refugee children with their parents in the refugee camps of Thailand. Later on, Marie championed the welfare of Bosnian women and children.

Their lives were constantly fraught with danger. Flying relief supplies into the Sudan, both the plane before and the plane after Marie's were shot out of the sky. Pierce once strode into a Somali warlord's camp where U.N.

staff were being held captive. Fearless, alone and unarmed, he successfully demanded their release.

Struggling to resolve the Rwandan refugee crisis, Marie and Pierce flew to the depths of the Congolese forest where over 100,000 desperate refugees were fleeing for their lives. As the rebel forces were closing in, Pierce had no choice but to order the few remaining U.N. personnel to evacuate. Twenty-four hours later tens of thousands were massacred. Marie said it was one of the only times she saw Pierce cry.

The parents of three children themselves, Marie and Pierce often discussed the possibility of death. As *The New York Times* reported, the great irony was that this man, who fearlessly flew into the world's greatest combat zones, died on one of the world's safest airlines.

Their love was so great for each other that even *The New York Times* spoke of their passionate devotion to one another. Wherever Pierce was in the world, he called Marie three times a day on his cell phone. The morning of their last day together, Pierce and Marie held one another close, as they often did in awe of the blessing of their love. When Pierce's plane went down, Marie did, not think, "Why me?," but rather because of the abundance of human suffering they both had seen, she simply said, "Now it's our turn." Marie told me that even well after Pierce died, when the phone would ring in the middle of the night, she would forget he was gone and reach for it expecting to hear his voice.

How can we make sense of such a tragic and senseless death? By telling their story.

The world desperately needs to be given back a sense of meaning and purpose. Young people today need a sense of mission. We have lost sight of the wisdom that true happiness is to be had in service rather than self indulgence. That the greatest love stories entwine passion with purpose. **KS**



*When love beckons to you
follow him,*

*Though his ways are hard
and steep.*

*And when his wings enfold
you yield to him,*

*Though the sword hidden
among his pinions may
wound you.*

*And when he speaks to you
believe in him,*

*Though his voice may shatter
your dreams as the north wind
lays waste the garden.*

*For even as love crowns you
so shall he crucify you. Even
as he is for your growth so is he
for your pruning.*

*Even as he ascends to your
height and caresses your tenderest
branches that quiver in the sun,*

*So shall he descend to your
roots and shake them in their
clinging to the earth.*

*Like sheaves of corn he gathers
you unto himself.*

*He threshes you to make you
naked.*

*He sifts you to free you from
your husks.*

He grinds you to whiteness.

*He kneads you until you
are pliant;*

*And then he assigns you to
his sacred fire, that you may
become sacred bread for God's
sacred feast.*

*All these things shall love do
unto you that you may know the
secrets of your heart, and in that
knowledge become a fragment
of Life's heart.*

*The polestar that will guide
you into a more loving future is
already shining bright in the
night sky of your soul. But to see
it, you must accustom your eyes
to the fertile darkness you have
tried to avoid. Look deeply into
your disappointments, examine
your heartache, interrogate your
longing, probe your loneliness,
meditate honestly on the elements
of love of which you are still
ignorant, and you will discover
that the void within you is
already filled with the desire for
fulfillment. Your yearning itself
is an internal guidance system
that is moving you to become
a lover.*

From *To Love and Be Loved*
by Sam Keen

from *The Prophet*
by Kahlil Gibran

ONLY CONNECT

I have just collected the day's mail at Healing Environments and I am as elated as a child on Christmas morning. Today's mail seems a special treasure.

There is a thank you from a retiring doctor in Tokyo and another thank you from Francis' parents just outside of Paris. A woman from Hawaii has sent a generous donation in memory of a dancer. Names to be put on the mailing list have arrived from California, Nebraska, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania. There are requests for information and cards of encouragement from Connecticut, New Jersey and Tennessee.

As I've grown older I've become more introverted. As I respond to our mail by hand and alone, I liken myself to a cloistered nun. Divorced for ten years, I do not count romantic love as

one of my blessings. But when that mail arrives I pinch myself in disbelief at the joy of having such meaningful work, and through it, such a profound connection with others.

In this issue we address the healing balm of our lives: connection. It is the dynamic of connection which underlies compassion, love, and the transformation of loss into service to humanity. Nothing creates suffering more than a sense of isolation, and connection is the golden antidote which promotes healing. Whether we have been blessed to find a soulmate or blessed to serve others with compassion, connection gives life its central meaning and helps us transcend tragedy. As E.M. Forster stated on the frontispiece of his novel, *Howard's End*, "Only connect!"

For we are one.

Kate

TOGETHER
WE
WILL
COMFORT
THE
SUFFERING

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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.

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH
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A LIBRARY, WAITING ROOM OR RESOURCE CENTER.