

SECOND EDITION

MODERN  
PSYCHOLOGY  
AND ANCIENT  
WISDOM

*Psychological Healing Practices  
from the World's Religious Traditions*

EDITED BY SHARON G. MIJARES



# Contents

[\*About the Editor\*](#)

[\*Contributors\*](#)

[\*Foreword to the Second Edition\*](#)

[\*by Stanley Krippner, Ph.D.\*](#)

[\*Foreword to the First Edition\*](#)

[\*by Stephen Gilligan\*](#)

[\*Acknowledgments\*](#)

[\*Copyright Acknowledgments\*](#)

[\*Introduction\*](#)

[\*Examining the Problem\*](#)

[\*The Shadow Side of Neglect\*](#)

[\*Integrating Science and Religion\*](#)

## [\*\*Buddhism\*\*](#)

### [\*\*1 Nurturing the Seeds of Sanity: A Buddhist Approach to\*\*](#)

[\*\*Psychotherapy\*\*](#)

[\*\*KAREN KISSEL WEGELA, PH.D.\*\*](#)

[\*Introduction\*](#)

[\*Experiential Exercise 1: Mindfulness Practice\*](#)

[\*Experiential Exercise 2: Mindlessness Practice\*](#)

[\*Buddhism and Contemplative Psychotherapy Basics\*](#)

[\*Meditative Practices in the Training and On-Going Personal\*](#)

[\*Work of Contemplative Psychotherapists\*](#)

[\*Applying Buddhist Ideas in the Practice of Contemplative\*](#)

## Psychotherapy

### Outcomes

## Christianity

### 2 Rediscovering Christ, the Healer

REVEREND DWIGHT H. JUDY, PH.D.

*Rediscovering Mystical Christianity*

*Contemporary Prayer Experiences*

*Prayer Healing with Scripture Stories*

*Free-Form Prayer Healing*

*An Experience of Prayer Healing*

*A Transpersonal Model of Christian Prayer Healing*

*Mary, the Saints, and Other Wisdom Figures*

*Healing of the Generations—A New Perspective on Purgatory*

*Intercessory Prayer and the Liturgy of Healing*

*Prayer in a Mystical Cosmos*

## Goddess Spirituality

### 3 Tales of the Goddess: Healing Metaphors for Women

SHARON G. MIJARES, PH.D.

*The Splitting of Earth and Sky*

*Embodied Narratives*

*The Cycles of a Woman's Life*

*Reclaiming the Garden of Paradise*

## Judaism

### 4 Kabbalistic Pathways for Growth and Healing

SHELDON Z. KRAMER, PH.D.

*Introduction*

*Clinical Research in Mindfulness Meditation*

[\*The Three Strands of the Soul\*](#)

[\*Healing and the Use of Breath in Kabbalah\*](#)

[\*Integrating Breath Work with Name of G-d\*](#)

[\*Meditating on the Gates of Vowels\*](#)

[\*Breath and Joy\*](#)

[\*Creative Sparks\*](#)

[\*Balancing Yourself on the Tree of Your Life\*](#)

[\*Meditation and the Tree of Life\*](#)

## **Shamanism**

### **5 Indigenous Knowledge and Shamanic Ways: Inner Journeys and Soul Retrieval**

SHARON G. MIJARES, PH.D.

[\*Reawakening to Indigenous Wisdom\*](#)

[\*Soul Journeys\*](#)

[\*Soul Loss and Recovery\*](#)

[\*Shifting Cosmologies through Plant Medicines\*](#)

[\*Politics of Respect\*](#)

[\*Gender\*](#)

[\*Conclusion: A Timely Topic\*](#)

## **Sufism**

### **6 The Key in the Dark: Self and Soul Transformation in the Sufi and Islamic Spiritual Traditions**

NEIL DOUGLAS-KLOTZ, PH.D.

[\*History and Background\*](#)

[\*The Ecology of Mind in Sufi Stories and Poetry\*](#)

[\*Views of the Self and Soul\*](#)

[\*Sufi Practice in a Psychological and Somatic Context\*](#)

[\*Dance and Other Movement\*](#)

*Whirling and the Sema*  
*Dhikr (Remembrance) and Silent Meditation*  
*Twenty-First Century Applications*

## **Taoism**

### **7 Taoist Mind-Body Resources for Psychological Health and Healing**

BENJAMIN R. TONG, PH.D.

*Taoism: The Tao, Ch'i, and Ch'i Gung*  
*"Good-Enough" Health and Wellness*  
*The Path of No-Path: Suchness and Simplicity*  
*"No-Identity Is True Identity"*  
*Illness as "Stuck" or "Attached" Life Energy*  
*Wu Wei: The Ultimate Achievement in Taoist "Wellness"*  
*On Taoist Masters and Students*  
*Conclusion*

## **Yoga and Hinduism**

### **8 The Yoga Path as a Way of Life**

ELEANOR CRISWELL, ED.D. AND KARTIKEYA C. PATEL, PH.D.

*Introduction*  
*Indian Science*  
*Yoga as Somatic Science*  
*Yoga Education*  
*The Goals or Outcomes of Yoga*  
*Yoga and Psychotherapy*  
*Cautions for Yoga Practice*  
*Yoga and the Psychospiritual Client*  
*Yoga as a Way of Life*

## **9 Conclusions**

SHARON G. MIJARES, PH.D.

*Ways of Presenting Spiritual Teachings*

*Ethical Concerns*

*Distinctions and Similarities*

*Healing Self, Healing Culture*

*Index*

## About the Editor

**Sharon G. Mijares**, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist working with psychospiritual and shamanic healing practices. She has authored/edited six books including *The Psychospiritual Clinician's Handbook: Alternative Methods for Understanding and Treating Mental Disorders* (Routledge Mental Health, 2005), and *The Revelation of the Breath: A Tribute to Its Wisdom, Power and Beauty* (State University of New York Press, 2009). Her most recent book is *A Force Such As the World Has Never Known: Women Creating Change* (Inanna Publications, 2013). Sharon is also the creator/editor of a new internet journal, *The International Journal of Gender, Nature and Transformation*. She is a global traveler and has facilitated workshops focused on gender balance, empowering women, and psychospiritual practices in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Mexico, Scotland, Spain, Uganda, United States, and Venezuela. Sharon is a member of Sufi Ruhaniat International promoting the study of all religious and indigenous traditions as well as all efforts toward peace and healthy community, and is a member of the Anthropology of Consciousness, a division of the American Anthropological Association. She has a black belt (Shodan) in Aikido and is a visiting professor for the United Nations University for Peace, Associate Faculty at National University, Core Faculty at the California Institute for Human Science and Adjunct Faculty for Brandman University. She is a mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Her website is [www.psychospiritual.org](http://www.psychospiritual.org).

## Contributors

**Eleanor Criswell**, Ed.D., is a psychology professor emeritus and former chair of the Psychology Department, Sonoma State University. She is the founding director of the Humanistic Psychology Institute (now Saybrook University). Dr. Criswell is editor of *Somatics the Magazine Journal of the Mind/Body Arts and Sciences*, president of the Somatics Society, and director of the Novato Institute for Somatic Research and Training. Her books include *Biofeedback and Somatics: Toward Personal Evolution* (Freeperson, 1995), *How Yoga Works: An Introduction to Somatic Yoga* (Freeperson, 1989), and *Cram's Introduction to Surface Electromyography* (Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2010). Past president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, Division 32—the Humanistic Psychology Division of the American Psychology Association, and the International Association of Yoga Therapists, Dr. Criswell is a California licensed psychologist and somatic educator. A practitioner of yoga psychology and meditation for 45 years, she taught yoga psychology in the Psychology Department of Sonoma State University for approximately 40 years. Dr. Criswell published articles on yoga psychology in magazines and journals during that time. As editor of *Somatics*, she has a strong interest in furthering the awareness of the health and well-being inherent in mind-body integration. To that end she trains teachers of yoga psychology, Hanna Somatic Education, and somatic yoga.

**Neil Douglas-Klotz**, Ph.D., is an independent scholar with a doctorate in psychology and religious studies (with an emphasis in Middle Eastern languages and spirituality). He is



the author of the books *Prayers of the Cosmos* (Harper San Francisco, 1990), *The Hidden Gospel* (Quest, 1999), *The Genesis Meditations* (Quest, 2003), *The Sufi Book of Life* (Penguin, 2005), *The Tent of Abraham* (with Rabbi Arthur Waskow and Sr. Joan Chittister, Beacon Press, 2006), *Blessings of the Cosmos* (Sounds True, 2006), and *Desert Wisdom* (ARC Books, 2011). He is the former chair of the Steering Committee of the Mysticism Group of the American Academy of Religion. Dr. Douglas-Klotz also serves on the advisory committee of the International Association of Sufism and is recognized as a senior guide (murshid) in one of the branches of the Chishtia school of Sufism, called the Sufi Islamia Ruhaniat Society. He founded the International Network for the Dances of Universal Peace in 1982 and teaches internationally through the Abwoon Network ([www.abwoon.org](http://www.abwoon.org)). His most recent psychological research was published in the anthology *Psychosis and Spirituality: Exploring the New Frontier* (Wiley-Blackwell, London, 2010), edited by Isabel Clarke. He currently lives in Scotland and directs the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning.

**Reverend Dwight H. Judy, PhD.**, is Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Formation at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. He is retired minister in The United Methodist Church, licensed as a psychologist in California (inactive status), and is a member of the American association of Pastoral Counselors. He is a past president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology. Formerly, he was an associate professor at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (now Sofia University) in Palo Alto, California. He is author of *A Quiet Pentecost: Inviting the Spirit into Congregational Life* (Upper Room Books, 2013); *Discerning Life Transitions: Listening Together in Spiritual Direction* (Morehouse, 2010); *Christian Meditation and Inner Healing* (OSL Publications, 2010); *Quest for the Mystical Christ: Awakening the Heart of Faith* (OSL Publications, 2003);

*Embracing God: Praying with Teresa of Avila* (Abingdon, 1996); and *Healing the Male Soul: Christianity and the Mythic Journey* (Crossroad, 1992). He leads retreats throughout the nation and offers individual spiritual direction. He and his wife, Ruth, make their home in Indiana. They are parents of two grown sons. Contact him at: <http://www.dwightjudy.com>.

**Sheldon Z. Kramer**, Ph.D., is a licensed Clinical Psychologist. He is voluntary assistant professor of Psychiatry at UCSD School of Medicine and adjunct faculty at the California Institute for Human Science. He is author of numerous articles, chapters, and two books on mind-body medicine, *Transforming the Inner and Outer Family: Humanistic and Spiritual Approaches to Mind-Body Systems Therapy* (Haworth Press, 1995) and *Hidden Faces of the Soul: Ten Secrets for Mind-Body Healing from Kabbalah's Lost Tree of Life* (Adams Media Corporation, 2000). He founded the Institute for Transformations where he teaches and gives workshops to professionals and the general public on integrating individual, couples, and family psychotherapy with mind-body medicine nationally and internationally. Kramer can be reached via email at [skramerphd@aol.com](mailto:skramerphd@aol.com)

**Kartikeya (Kartik) C. Patel**, Ph.D., is an adjunct faculty and former Dean of the Online/Distance Learning Global Programs at Sofia University, USA, and a consultant in private practice. Kartik is a consulting editor for the American Psychological Association journal *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* and serves as a regular reviewer for the *Journal of Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (APA). His recent publications include "Planning, Designing, Implementing, and Managing Social Presence in Online Programs and Online Classes" in *Student-Teacher Interaction in Online Learning Environment*. (Information Science Reference [IGI Global], 2014), and "Eastern traditions, consciousness, and spirituality" in the *Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality* (Oxford

Library of Psychology Series, Oxford University Press, 2012). Since 2005, Kartik has served as a site visit team member for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Senior Colleges and University Commission (WSCUC).

**Benjamin R. Tong**, Ph.D., is a senior professor in the Clinical Psychology Psy.D. program, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco; and is faculty emeritus in Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University. He is a teacher of Tai Ch'i and Qigong (School of Taoist Internal Arts) and a psychotherapist and organizational consultant in private practice. He has conducted workshops, retreats, and symposia on a variety of cross-cultural and East/West mind-body therapy themes in the United States, Canada, and East Asia. Dr. Tong is also on the board of advisors for the International Karen Horney Society, which in recent years has translated the works of Horney into Russian and Chinese. Dr. Tong can be reached via email at [lohfu38@gmail.com](mailto:lohfu38@gmail.com).

**Karen Kissel Wegela**, Ph.D., has studied and practiced Buddhism for more than 35 years. She is a professor at Naropa University in the M.A. Contemplative Counseling Psychology program and is a psychologist in private practice. Dr. Wegela has worked with a variety of psychotherapy clients in a number of different settings. Her most recent book is *Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials: Enriching Your Practice with Buddhist Psychology* (W. W. Norton, 2014). Her earlier books are *What Really Helps* (Shambala, 2011) and *The Courage to Be Present* (Shambala, 2009). She has presented on the integration of Buddhism and psychotherapy at workshops and conferences in the United States and internationally. For more information on Dr. Wegela, visit her website at [www.karenkisselwegela.com](http://www.karenkisselwegela.com) or email her at [kkwegela@indra.com](mailto:kkwegela@indra.com).

## Foreword to the Second Edition

In her introduction to this book, Dr. Sharon Mijares observes that an increasing number of people are hungry for perspectives that offer deeper meaning for their lives. Many of them have found this meaning in fundamentalist spiritual and religious belief systems. For them, there is no doubt as to where the deep meanings of their lives can be found. They find meaning in proselytizing potential “converts,” at best, and in murdering “heretics” at worst. They have sullied spirituality and religion to the extent that the best-selling author Dr. Richard Dawkins, in his film documentary, called religion “the root of all evil.” Other critics do not go that far but, with some justification, point out that mainstream religion has tended to be authoritarian, patriarchal, homophobic, and outof-touch with psychological findings and, as a result, with the rampant dilemmas and crises of the 21st century.

Dr. Mijares, on the other hand, has attempted to rehabilitate the “wisdom traditions” and the teachings of their prophets and seers. The pluralistic world of today poses challenges but it also presents opportunities. She writes, “Ancient knowledge, coupled with the increasing discoveries of psychology, can ... create a better world for all.” For her, spirituality and psychology are not antagonists, but can complement each other. Rather than considering religious belief “pathological,” there is a body of research demonstrating that spiritual practices can be an important adjunct in healing people with physical or emotional challenges. This remarkable book contains chapters that summarize the teachings of various wisdom traditions as well as the psychospiritual practices that can be applied in counseling, psychotherapy, and other forms of healing and health care.

Her chapter authors cover insights from Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Sufism, Yoga and Hinduism, Taoism, the Goddess Religions, and Shamanism. She wisely observes that certain types of therapy work better for some than for others. The same thing could be said for the Wisdom Traditions; some seekers will find meaning in traditions that leave other seekers cold. Dr. Mijares also writes about the “shadow side” of the helping professions. There are too many cases of priests, preachers, gurus, and therapists who have abused their followers and their clients financially, physically, and sexually. People in authority sometimes believe that they are “privileged” to take advantage of what a naïve and trusting supplicant has to offer. The victims who thought they were embarking on a heroic journey end up on a voyage to Lampedusa, the purported Utopia where the companions of Pinocchio sailed to with high expectations. Instead, they were turned into donkeys and sold to a glue factory. All too many devotees of “New Age” movements have ended their quest in a similar dead end, perhaps not as fodder for glue but as statistics from Jonestown, Guyana, or Waco, Texas, dead along with Jim Jones, David Koresh, and other members of the People’s Temple, the Branch David-ians, or similar New Age sewage.

More responsible spiritual leaders of Wisdom Traditions focus on service and compassion. These goals are reached in somewhat different ways. The Abrahamic traditions represented in this book proclaimed God as “King of the universe.” As King, God made laws that the natural world obeys (e.g., the “law of gravity”); the role of science is to discover the laws that govern the behavior of the universe and Western therapy operates within that framework. In the Eastern philosophies, however, the natural world does not follow laws, it simply “is.” Humans can look for regularities and pattern in the flow of nature, but any “laws” thus detected are illusory, the product of human conception, a way of organizing our experiences, and are not the underlying basis of the phenomena being observed.

Both the Western and the Eastern Wisdom Traditions share a concept that a deeper understanding of reality is possible than is

normally available in everyday experience. The approaches differ significantly, however, in how to develop that understanding. The Western approach to a deeper understanding involves the application of symbolic thought (i.e., language and mathematics). In other words, the nature of reality can be discovered by thinking about it the right way. Science relies upon specific thinking processes such as logic and empirical research while faith relies upon thinking in specific thoughts, following a particular dogma and associated sacred texts. In the Eastern approach, thinking moves people away from understanding reality. Because thinking transfers people's attention away from reality to the world of symbols, and an irretrievable difference lies between the symbol and what it represents. The map is not the territory! In the Eastern approach, the nature of reality is discovered by experiencing it directly, without mediation by overt thoughts. This is accomplished through a variety of meditative and contemplative processes. They are evaluated on the basis of their effectiveness, not on how well they have revealed "truth." In some Eastern Traditions there are several divine creators, while in much of Buddhism, the Creator image is de-emphasized.

The Goddess and Shamanic Traditions do not conform to either of these paradigms. There is a belief in a divine Creator (or Creators) but beliefs differ as to his or her identity. These traditions predate both East and West by thousands of years, during which time they have developed complex rituals that are central to their traditions. These rituals have several functions in addition to healing. They purport to retrieve the past (by making contact with the ancestors), honor the present (by protecting the Earth and its inhabitants), and by foretelling the future (which allows them to alter negative consequences or, if this is not possible, prepare for the oncoming crisis). The rituals involve altered consciousness to a greater degree than the more recent paradigms, and elaborate techniques have been developed. These include "journeying" to other dimensions of reality, quests made possible by the judicious use of drums, rattles, dances, lucid dreams, and psychoactive plants.

For these two Wisdom Traditions a community-sanctioned individual (or individuals), such as priestesses and shamans, are the recognized spiritual guides. However, to a greater extent than in the East and West, community members—including women—are listened to if they go on a spontaneous journey and return with something of value to community members. Spiritual experience supersedes spiritual dogma; indeed, the available goddesses and spirits might change as the community moves as a result of seasonal changes or irregularities of climate. The existence of “upper” and “lower” worlds is not questioned, although the nature of these alternate realities varies from era to era and from place to place. Like Western and Eastern Traditions, deceased ancestors are venerated, but unlike the other traditions, these ancestors may continue to play a role in community life.

Counselors, psychotherapists, and health care workers can utilize insights and practices from all of these traditions. They can teach their clients “mindfulness,” being aware of the given moment as an antidote to anxiety. They can help their clients engage in “forgiveness,” and watch the burden of resentment fall off their shoulders. They can suggest that their clients spend time in Nature,<sup>1</sup> learning the lessons that other forms of life manifest daily. This book is replete with many other procedures and applications from the Wisdom Traditions. As was previously mentioned, these traditions were not free of superstitions, pogroms, inquisitions, jihads, and holy wars. But like all human constructs, there are positives as well as negatives, pluses as well as minuses, and functional as well as dysfunctional ways of being. This marvelous book accentuates the positive, and its readers will be the beneficiaries of wisdom that has been revived for their benefit.

Stanley Krippner, Ph.D.

# Foreword to the First Edition

As the saying goes, the road narrows with time. As we grow older, we pay for our mistakes more dearly. A loss is more costly; the stakes are higher; the room for error is much less. This applies not only to individuals but to the whole of humanity. We neglect our environment at the risk of destroying it. We ignore our traditions at the risk of losing them. We deal violently with differences at the risk of mutual annihilation. Today's world is so interconnected, so technologically powerful, so intimately small that truly, as the example in chaos theory poetically suggests, the flapping wings of a butterfly in Asia can affect weather patterns over Europe.

In such times, two challenges are especially immense. The first is recognizing and cultivating traditions that make us more compassionate, more aware, and perhaps a bit more wise. With so much stress in an uncertain, rapidly changing world, we must find ways to center, to breathe, to listen deeper, and to love more clearly. Because there are many paths for doing this, none inherently superior to the others, we face a second challenge of dealing with these differences. You're a Jew, and I'm not. You wear those funny clothes, and I don't. You don't believe or practice what I "know" to be the Truth, and that disturbs me.

So these two challenges—cultivating spiritual traditions that resonate with contemporary consciousness and forging new ways of creatively dealing with how differences bump up against one another—require both a connection to the past and its ancestral knowledge and an openness to a future that allows transtraditional (you might say "world beat") consciousness. Sharon Mijares has addressed both these challenges in assembling this wonderful book on religious and psychological approaches. As I read it, I had the



feeling of sitting raptly at a weaving ritual of multitudinous dimensions. Each chapter evokes a particular type of reverence, a special type of vibration, a unique feeling of wisdom and hope. When held together, they create a textured symphony of enlightened consciousness. You cannot help but feel hopeful about a future that allows all these different voices to be spoken in concert.

In the present challenging times, this book is a great gift. It shares historical roots, provides general frameworks, and offers specific and practical techniques by which we can both heal psychological woundedness and deepen spiritual awareness. I hope and trust that others will benefit from it as I have.

Stephen Gilligan  
Psychologist and Author  
Encinitas, California

# Acknowledgments

I want to express my appreciation to the contributing authors for their contributions. Each chapter is a precious gem of wisdom. This work would not have been possible without their contributions. Stanley Krippner's excellent Foreword to this revised edition is much appreciated as well as his friendship. Stanley is a treasured friend.

I also want to take this opportunity to particularly thank the significant teachers in my life whose influences have provided the foundation for this book. First, I'd like to thank Michael Wolk, MD, for believing in me. His authentic caring, wisdom, and support allowed me to move from psychological distress to spiritual awakening. He was the one who helped me open the first door and I will always be grateful to him. Next, I'd like to thank the Reverend Flower A. Newhouse. Through her influence I recognized the importance of balancing spiritual beliefs and practices with psychological experience and behaviors. Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz is not only a treasured friend, but also my guide on the Sufi path. My life has been and continues to be deeply blessed by his influence. He has been with me throughout my academic, professional, and spiritual development. I'd also like to thank my psychotherapy mentor, Stephen Gilligan. Steve has significantly enriched my understanding of meaningful psychotherapy. His theory of self-relations psychotherapy has melded well with my spiritual training and enriched my work with clients. I also thank my sensei, Coryl Crane, for all that she, the dojo, and the practice of aikido have provided in my life. The regular practice of aikido has helped me maintain a needed balance in the midst of the many hours spent in front of a computer.

In the first edition of this book I expressed my appreciation to the North County Women's Circle as our gatherings empowered my chapter on the healing effects of goddess stories for women. Cass Dalglish's friendship, editorial suggestions, and expertise in Sumerian literature were priceless resources. Even though his own life was very full, the late Pir Moineddin Jablonski (1942–2001), made time to assist me with editorial suggestions. I will always be grateful to him for his kindness, love, wisdom, and practical knowledge. I also want to acknowledge my appreciation for Nicolee Miller and Dania Brett's editorial comments. Theirs was truly a labor of love. Beatrice Ring put in many hours to help me find the religious symbols placed at the beginning of each chapter. This was not an easy task, and I am very appreciative of her friendship, diligence, and support. Patti Kizzar and Kiersten Payne's help with the original work on the index is acknowledged with heartfelt appreciation.

This revised edition has new influences, such as the many women around the world working to create a better world for all. Friends from the Anthropology of Consciousness group as well as medicine healer Celina de Leon have deepened my understanding of Mother Earth and the importance of working for a better future for all life.

My experience with Routledge is and has been great! First, Anna Moore supported this new edition. One can count on a same day response with any questions or needs. She combines professionalism, talent, and warmth in her work. Next, Elizabeth Graber received the revised chapters and went immediately to work. All details were quite clear and I received supportive, friendly, and immediate feedback to any detail or question. It has been wonderful working with these women as well as all Routledge staff including Deepti Agarwal who helped with the final touches and Routledge publishing throughout this journey.

And, of course, I want to thank and acknowledge all of my clients. Their courage, dedication, creativity, and beauty will always inspire me.

# Copyright Acknowledgments

Excerpt from pages 83–84 of *The Sufis* by Idries Shah, ©ISF Publishing 2014. Reprinted by permission of ISF Publishing.

Excerpt from *A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism As a Spiritual Practice* by Michael Strassfeld, copyright © 2002 by Michael Strassfeld. Used by permission of Schocken Books, an imprint of Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

Excerpt from *Chang Tzu: Inner Chapters* by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, copyright. Translation copyright ©2014 by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. Used by permission of Hay House, Inc.

Excerpt from *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tsu, translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, copyright ©1997 by Jane English. Copyright ©1972 by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.

Excerpt from *Delicious Laughter: Rambunctious Teaching Stories from the Mathnawi of J̄elaluddin Rumi* by Coleman Barks, 1990. Athens, GA: Maypop Books. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Excerpt from *Feeling the Shoulder of the Lion: Selected Poetry and Teaching Stories from the Mathnawi of J̄elaluddin Rumi* by Coleman Barks, 1991. Putney, VT: Threshold Books. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Excerpt from *Birdsong* by Coleman Barks, 1993. Athens, GA: Maypop Books. Reprinted with permission of the author.

# Introduction

We have entered a new era in human experience. It is one of the most tumultuous and yet promising times of human history. On the positive side we are rapidly progressing in psychological understanding and expanding our knowledge of human motivations and behaviors in many ways. For example, quantum mind-body medicine (Chopra, 1990; Wayne, 2001; Schroll, 2014; Schroll & Viggiano, 2014; Yanick, 2003), relates consciousness and spirituality to scientific principles of quantum mechanics theory. Epigenetics (Carey, 2013; Lipton, 2008, 2014; Weissmann, 2012) is providing new evidence of the ways that organisms can change gene expression. Neuropsychology (Walach, Schmidt, & Jonas, 2011) offers a new understanding about the relationship of the brain, consciousness, and spirituality; whereas ecopsychologists are providing increasing research on our relationship with Nature and the healing this can bring on both psychological and spiritual levels (Metzner, 1999; Schroll & Hartelius, 2011; Schroll, 2013). From a negative perspective it can be seen that stressful conditions are quickly increasing throughout this planet, therefore, it is important to provide more effective and holistic healing models.

Although there are many different theories and practices of psychotherapy at this time, why is there so much discontent with self, broken relationships, and violent social unrest? Despite the vast scientific research into human behavior and its influence on modern psychology, many people today lack a sound sense of direction in their lives due to the increasing stress of economic, environmental, relational stress and rapid change. Great numbers of people live in isolation—people whose lives frequently touch the depths of despair. Psychology has worked diligently to understand and treat behaviors that negatively affect individuals and those surrounding them. Its

theories and findings have been implemented in individual, relational, and educational realms, yet much of humanity keeps declining. What is lacking?

Increasing numbers of people are hungry for perspectives that offer deeper meaning in life, for ways to live that reveal the soul. This hunger is evidenced in the manifold varieties of addictive behaviors affecting humanity. Why are so many people motivated to alter their consciousness? What are they seeking? They long for something more than their mundane and circumscribed lives. Many professionals have long recognized that the spiritual element has been missing in psychotherapy and that humanity will never be content until we experience our inherent unity with the Divine Presence from which all life manifests. In our search for ways to help those who are suffering, we have neglected to include thousands of years of well-researched healing processes and knowledge gleaned from the world's wisdom and spiritual traditions. Psychotherapists and religious practitioners need to work together to provide an integrative approach to enhance our psychological and spiritual development. Even though psychology has contributed a great deal to understanding human behavior, it has generally operated within a limited paradigm.

The teaching of the wisdom and spiritual traditions and the great prophets are now readily available, for the first time in history, to those who seek them. During the previous century spiritual teachers from many parts of the world came to the West to share their wisdom. More recently, shamans and medicine healers are sharing ancient ways of healing. As a result, we have been blessed with teachings and perspectives from around the globe to help through this time of challenge. The realization that we live in a pluralistic world also has the potential to heal the divisiveness continuing to plague humanity. It is time to apply what we have been given in every realm. This ancient knowledge, coupled with the increasing discoveries of psychology, can empower the healing of individuals, families, and communities, and in so doing create a better world for all.

After centuries of separation and antagonism, psychology and religion are at long last entering into a meaningful dialogue.

Whereas psychology is a science that addresses mental, emotional, somatic, and relational dynamics, spirituality illuminates the inherent mystery of life itself. Each approach provides a perspective that completes the other. We need to listen to this shared conversation, for it affords new understandings for healing and advancing our psychological and spiritual development.

A strengthened dialogue, even a communion, between psychology and religion is needed. When we examine the following historical contributions, statistics, resulting problems, and suggested resolutions, we will find that there is a great need for this new paradigm of psychospirituality. For example, according to the Pew Research Center,

Worldwide, more than eight-in-ten people identify with a religious group. A comprehensive demographic study of more than 230 countries and territories conducted by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life estimates that there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe, representing 84% of the 2010 world population of 6.9 billion.

(para. 1, 2012)

This represents a very significant percentage, and encompasses major religious groups as well as pagan, folk, and indigenous traditions, yet the field of psychology has tended to focus primarily on problems and pathological states while ignoring obvious and plentiful healing resources from the field of spirituality. Because of this limited perspective, psychotherapists have by and large received an unfortunately restricted education. The result is that many fail to listen to the deeper needs of their clients and to affirm their clients' subtle and spiritual experiences as evidenced in the following story:

During my postdoctoral training in a psychiatric hospital unit, I met a very lovely, creative, and troubled woman. She had been in and out of psychiatric care since early adulthood. As with many other persons, her childhood had been very difficult. Her father had been terrifying and oppressive. He had often misconstrued the Bible by using it to support this abusive behavior. As a young child, violence, confusion, and fear had threatened her.

Yet a light became visible in the midst of this darkness. This Archangel

Michael appeared to her to reassure her that she was not alone, that angels were watching over her. She was given directions to write the story of her life. As she grew into a young woman she remained faithful to this experience into adulthood. It provided inner strength and conviction. She soon experienced a breakdown due to the buildup of anxiety and fear from her childhood experiences. When she sought psychiatric help, she told them of St. Michael's guidance.

Now, "hearing voices" is not acceptable in Western culture. It is considered to be a sign of pathology. Despite the fact that she did not report a "voice keeping up a running commentary", she was given a diagnosis of schizophrenia. But she remained faithful to her early guidance and refused to accept it as a "delusional" state.

She could not trust her caretakers as a child and she was unable to trust the professionals who could have helped her as a young woman. Although there was considerable experiential support for her paranoia, it was viewed as further evidence for the diagnosis of schizophrenia. Perhaps the result would have been different if the professionals treating her had not negated her experience. Instead of insisting that she acknowledge her "symptoms", simple listening and acceptance could have opened the door to her soul. It would have encouraged trust in the therapeutic relationship.

Her boyfriend was abusive; domestic violence was suspected. Due to her mistrust of psychotherapeutic assistance, she rejected their advice and remained with him. In the spring of 1997, the local newspapers reported her murder and her partner's suicide. A few months before her death, she asked in a group therapy session if "a mental health patient ever had any credibility in this society". Perhaps she would be alive today if the professionals had listened to and accepted her experience.

Carl Jung might have called the woman's visitation an archetypal experience. It would be a profound act of creative power for a child to evoke the warrior Archangel Michael from the depths of the collective unconscious to support her in a time of need. Was this experience a sign of psychopathology, or did it bear witness to the depth and resourcefulness of the soul?

Sacred texts such as the Bible, Torah, and Qu'ran acknowledge and affirm personal visitations from angels. Many popular books describe encounters with angels experienced by a broad range of human beings. At that time, a 1996 Gallup poll had reported that approximately 72 percent of the U.S. population believe in angels, 11 percent were unsure, 1 percent had no opinion, and 16 percent



denied the existence of them (1997). It is significant that the belief in angels has remained strong despite the emphasis on scientific proof and cognitive development as later research noted in the *Washington Times* states that one-half of the U.S. population believes in angels (Duin, 2008). Most likely, psychiatric training has not included this information in training programs.

Conversely, it is also true that some persons are drawn toward alternative beliefs or seek religious experiences rather than acknowledge that they have psychological problems. This is known as spiritual bypass. Although supernatural presences and nonordinary experiences are acknowledged by a multitude of people, these experiential realms present a clinical problem when persons use them to avoid unresolved pain hidden in the recesses of the psyche. Defenses such as repression, denial, rationalization, and projection protect the fragile ego but limit the untapped inner and outer potential. Traditionally, religion has emphasized denial of the human body and its wants and needs in preference for a more saint-like or transcendent ideal. This imbalanced presentation has activated repression, denial, and other defense mechanisms in many people. We believed that if we had sufficient faith, served others, sacrificed, meditated, prayed, and performed enough spiritual practices we would ultimately avoid the pitfalls of human experience and find God. Instead, many spiritual leaders, practitioners, and devotees find themselves continuously—and uncomfortably—being reminded of their own unresolved childhood and developmental issues.

Destructive patterns affecting meaningful relationships with both self and others continue to manifest in our lives despite our spiritual beliefs and practices. As a result, increasing numbers of ministers, rabbis, sheikhs, priests, and other spiritual guides are coming to the realization that they must understand and use psychological principles to facilitate personal and spiritual development in themselves and in those they serve.

Psychologists are likewise moving away from previously held theories that religious beliefs are “pathological.” Researchers now confirm that spiritual conviction and practice are important factors in psychological healing. For example, recent psychological research

projects have validated the healing influence of “faith in a compassionate deity.” There has been an increasing amount of research supporting the beneficial effects of prayer, breathing techniques, and mantric sound practices upon the body and mind. Religious devotees and students have been practicing these exercises for thousands of years. This represents a substantive body of quantitative, qualitative, and phenomenological research. Yet, rarely, if ever, is this ancient research acknowledged in training programs for psychotherapists.

As noted in the opening paragraph, epigenetics as well as neuropsychology are evidencing significant mind and body changes with more positive attitudes and practice (Carey, 2013; Chopra, 1990; Lipton, 2008, 2014; Walach, Schmidt, & Jonas, 2011; Schroll & Viggiano, 2014; Wayne, 2001; Weissmann, 2012; Yanick, 2003). The knowledge that we can create profound changes as opposed to being a victim of one’s heredity facilitates positive psychospiritual development. The healthy feelings and relaxed mental states when engaged in a felt connection with Nature also promote more positive healing attitudes. When psychology focuses exclusively on symptoms and problems, it fails to include the numerous healing methodologies based upon ancient wisdom that can awaken people to their inherent value and purpose as human beings. Many people lack a sense of their intrinsic self-worth. Although psychological theories and methodologies have contributed in a general way to health, education, industry, and other social aspects of life, something deeper is missing. More and more, major studies are showing that the spiritual dimension is essential for human balance and well-being.

## [Examining the Problem](#)

In its attempt to resolve problems related to violence, addiction, and crime, governments generally increase regulations and controls over their populations. In the United States, as well as many other nations, legislatures pass laws to enlarge police forces and to build

new prisons, yet history has not demonstrated that excessive governmental controls result in any lessening of human dysfunction. Certainly, the “war on drugs” (2011 report) has not reduced drug use or had an impact on addiction. Addictive behaviors still abound.

The disintegration of family life and high divorce rates seriously affect the security and well-being of children. People’s daily lives include rushing from one responsibility to another, economic stress, continuous stimulation by freeway noise, television, cellular phones, and various social media. In the midst of the chaos, our children suffer. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)’s website page on ADHD states that “According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, as of 2007, about 9.5 percent of children 4 to 17 years old have at one time been diagnosed with ADHD” (para. 5). They note the primary treatment to be medicating the symptoms. But as DeGrande wisely pointed out in his book *Ritalin Nation* (1998), these children represent our fast-paced modern society. The society itself is scattered, fast-paced, and due to the bombardment of various stimuli, desperately needing a felt connection to Nature. Kuo and Faber Taylor (2004) conducted a nation-wide research project with inner-city children diagnosed with ADHD. The conclusions were that “Green outdoor settings appear to reduce ADHD symptoms in children across a wide range of individual, residential, and case characteristics” (p. 1580). Yet, little attention has been given to our relationship with Nature to be a healing force.

The advent of managed care and large health management organizations (HMOs) has seriously affected the way we treat both psychological and medical needs. These powerful organizations, ever faithful to the bottom line, want quick fixes. They reflect the current psychic state of the American population. The negative impact of these organizations on psychological healing is serious. The roots of psychological problems are deeply embedded in the nervous system and may not be resolved in five to ten sessions, or any specific number set by HMOs.

Our responses to life circumstances are influenced by biological, psychological, religious, and cultural conditioning. We engage in a shared social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) that includes ideas of perfection and imperfection, more often focusing

on the latter. The field of psychology, and, in particular, the diagnostic categories and references included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders have profoundly influenced the way we interpret and ultimately react to distressing conditions. Many psychiatrists readily prescribe psychotropic drugs. It is not a secret that Big Pharm has a large influence on the psychiatric diagnostic system. Also, people take prescriptions hoping for a quick fix, but will these psycho-pharmaceutical drugs resolve their current problems? Is the prevailing biologically based medical model wrong or a social construction?

Existential anxiety has intensified, and medications, while often helpful in the short term, are not an absolute solution. People need to know that they are more than a problem needing to be fixed or a diagnosis to be treated. Psychotropic medications are helpful for those who experience extreme states of anxiety, psychosis, and depression, but far too many physicians view these drugs as important methods for controlling the symptoms, and take little time or interest in the “circumstances” impacting their clients’ feeling states.

The biological-medical model of psychiatric illness encourages its practitioners to blame the body for serious psychological difficulties and to control this condition through the use of psychotropic medications. Television ads, especially in the United States, include numerous ads for psychiatric drugs, especially the ad for Abilify. This drug is to be included in one’s medical regimen when the current medication for depression, mood swings, etc., is not working. The current TV ad is also listed on the [abilify.com](http://abilify.com) website, and runs approximately one minute and 16 seconds. The first 24 seconds discuss symptoms and give reasons for taking the medication. This is followed by an 80 second description of various side effects, some that can lead to death. During this 80 second portion, there is a smiling doctor writing out a prescription. He smiles as he opens the door for her (the patient) to leave. She is then seen at home with family as she watches children play a soccer game. The visual message (which is pleasant) does not match the audio message (which is seriously unpleasant) at all. How does the brain assimilate this? Or is it the simple 12 second ending that goes

directly from the long list of side effects to the words “since adding Abilify I feel better ...” that has the lasting effect?

People are not using their innate capacities for discernment. The darkness that accompanies uncomfortable feelings, disturbing thoughts, and intimations of entering new life stages is avoided at all costs. The developmental journey of learning how to deal with problems and difficult emotional states is halted; signs promising psychospiritual growth are ignored; and a weaker state is enhanced. At a time when anxiety and trauma are increasing at an alarming rate, it is important to have a healthier belief system that empowers rather than defeats. It is not compassionate to medicate people in ways that prevent human development.

There is a Sufi story of the wise “fool of God,” Mulla Nasrudin, that illustrates this danger (Shah, 2014, pp. 83–48):

One day the Mulla was thinking aloud. “How do I know whether I am dead or alive?”

“Don’t be such a fool,” his wife said: “if you were dead your limbs would be cold.”

Shortly afterwards Nasrudin was in the forest cutting wood.

It was midwinter. Suddenly he realized that his hand and feet were cold. “I am undoubtedly dead,” he thought; “so I must stop working, because corpses do not work.” And, because corpses do not walk about, he lay down on the grass.

Soon a pack of wolves appeared and started to attack Nasrudin’s donkey, which was tethered to a tree. “Yes, carry on, take advantage of a dead man,” said Nasrudin from his prone position; “but if I had been alive I would not have allowed you to take liberties with my donkey.”<sup>2</sup>

Nasrudin’s parable can be applied to the current medical model. Life narratives that involve struggles and initiatory processes necessary for individuation have been overlooked and neatly swept under the rug. These biomedical paradigms choose to ignore the many integrative healing approaches available through a variety of psychospiritual traditions—traditions that contain the potential to

reunite body, mind, and spirit, for example, Buddhist-influenced mindfulness-based treatments for depression are having significant success (Barnhofer, Crane, Hargus, Amarasinghe, Winder, & Williams, 2009).

In many indigenous cultures, a symptom of psychospiritual disturbance is often perceived as an indication that something greater is about to occur in the individual's life. Illness or psychic distresses are signs that some challenge needs to be met or an ordeal undertaken—a shamanic journey into healing. It could simply be a wake-up call!

Life crises often force us into a new dimension of learning and experience. A call to individuation urges us to set upon a path of living life more fully, a path on which our personal despair offers intimations of victory and transformation. The heroic journey begins: a door opens and we enter the dark terrain of the personal and collective unconscious. If we embark upon this journey we will discover nonordinary states of consciousness and intimations of something more fulfilling than anything we have yet encountered in our ordinary egoic consciousness. A crisis of despair suddenly takes on a new meaning, and limiting self-narratives are reframed as the journey unfolds. The symptoms of distress become signposts along the journey. Depression, loneliness, and fear can be evidence of our longing for spiritual unity.

Existential psychologists emphasize finding “meaning” in our anxiety, difficult emotional states, and life circumstances. Each moment is a valid part of the human experience. Archetypal psychologists also suggest that feelings of depression, sorrow, and rage are soulful expressions to be lived with and appreciated—their poetical force can enrich consciousness. Learning to be a friend to feelings deepens the character, gives soul to the personality, and opens us to frequencies and experiences outside of the egoic-cognitive mind (Gilligan, 1997; Moore, 2014a, 2014b).

When an individual experiences depression or psychic crisis in psycho-spiritually oriented community, he or she is not placed in a diagnostic category based upon a pathological view of human experience. Instead, difficult psychospiritual experiences are believed to be passages associated with spiritual awakening, rebirth,

and transformation, and are tended as such by the community.

Psychological symptoms can be viewed as signposts reminding us of unfinished personal work. Perhaps we have not paid proper attention to those parts of ourselves that dwell below the threshold of consciousness. These often conflicted and unheard voices demand attention. Clearly, our external relationships mirror our intrapsychic world. Our psychospiritual work includes listening to, learning from, and healing our wounded, unresolved, and incomplete feelings.

What is the meaning of our human existence? It is not about living on the surface of life. Creation itself allows for us to become the truest, most authentic human being possible. This is where spirituality and psychology meet. The “sacred marriage” of psychology and spirituality encourages us to experience healing across a wider spectrum and deeper range than that afforded by either discipline alone. Psychospirituality is a holistic paradigm patterned upon principles of universality and inclusion. As we integrate psychology and spirituality, our perspective shifts from one of trying to repair a dysfunctional machine to one of recognizing the inherent value of human nature and all of its varied experience.

This book illustrates many of the integrative healing practices found in the world’s religious and spiritual traditions. It is intended for practitioners of psychotherapy, religious counselors, and students of religious studies. It is not a book about dogma, nor is it intended to promote one religion over another. In the field of psychology we learn that certain types of therapies work better for some than for others. A good psychotherapist recognizes this and is able to change his or her therapeutic approach, or to refer a client to a more appropriate psychotherapist. Each human being is a unique creation influenced by a combination of varied life experiences. It doesn’t make sense that one method should apply to all equally. Humanistic schools of psychotherapy teach their practitioners to listen—truly listen—to their clients. When we learn to listen for the nuances and depths in people, we can respond appropriately, compassionately, and effectively.

The practitioner of psychospirituality does not need to use his or her own religious beliefs to unduly influence persons seeking help. If