

# Evolving<sup>TM</sup> your spirit

A Free Publication  
Celebrating Your  
Evolving Spirit

Issue Fifty Five  
November/December 2012

A Higher  
Awareness

Reflections from  
Within

People You  
Should Know—  
*Pat LaPointe*

The Flip Side  
of Knowing

# *Knowing*

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.

—*Aristotle*





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**Issue FiftyFive | Nov/ Dec 2012**

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The next issue of *Evolving Your Spirit*  
will be available January 15.  
Our theme will be *Play*.

*A complete list of our topics for next year  
are up on our website in the Media Kit.*

*Please write in with your ideas and comments  
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## Check out our Website!

We've got a great *Calendar of Events* up there (you can sign up to receive it monthly as an email!), our new *On-line Professional Directory*, all the past issues of the magazine that you can download, as well as info on how to sign up to have *Evolving Your Spirit* delivered to your home if you like.



## Knowing...

The last issue of 2012! Time moves so fast and the holidays are here again as we get ready to bid farewell to another year together. So much has been said about the end of 2012, and the many prophesies and predictions

this time has received. I know many changes are taking place as we move through these challenging times. I know that it is up to me to stay centered, breathe, and be open to the experiences and insights that form life for me.

Our task here at *Evolving Your Spirit* has been to provide a smorgasbord of points of view for you to savor and enjoy. To partake and discard as you feel satisfied. I hope we are providing a place for you to connect and expand, and I look forward to more years together in whatever interesting ways they play out. There is so much rich and enlightening that is happening in our area, I hope that you take time to meet and get to know some of these other like minded people as we share the unfolding of a new season.

We'll do our best to continue to be a catalyst for connection and awareness. Check out the radio show with Maggie Wilkins and me. You can listen live, or any time on the website just by clicking the link. We've got some really interesting guests that you're sure to enjoy.

Happy holidays to you all, and much joy and peace  
as we enter the space of a new year together.



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# The Power *of Knowing*

*"I am a hole in a flute that the Christ's breath moves through – Listen to this Music."*

—Hafiz

Listen... are you listening? Listening to the music you make. The music that guides your life and that you offer to the world is a personal sound that only you can make. This personal sound joins the sounds of others to become an orchestra, creating music that has the potential to bring great joy and peace to the world.

The core of everything I personally embrace and teach to others is to direct our attention towards listening—to the unique music that lies within us all. It is the music which is expressed from the here and now, and it takes our inner knowing to allow this to unfold.

This inner knowing is the great wisdom we can all tune into whenever we wish, and offers the perfect answer to any life situation. It will guide you above any education, and transcends right and wrong. Inner knowing is the result of coming from a place of being.

When you live fully in the now, the noise of life subsides to create space, like the hole in a flute which is necessary to manifest the most beautiful music. The life force that is behind this music comes from consciousness, which is based in the infinite that always was and always will be.

In my experience, to be in this consciousness is to rest in the stillness, silence and space within, so that we can open up and listen to the infinite wisdom that has always been waiting in the wings and yearning to be heard. When we allow and invite this inner knowing to be revealed, it transforms into a melody that feels perfectly natural and harmonious. To create a life in which this music flows easily every day, we must be aware of the sounds that do not harmonize with our inner knowing. Often sounds of discord come from our ego mind.

Our ego mind is an instrument which has no awareness of this moment. It is only capable of living in the past and future – neither of which are real. The past is gone and the future is not yet here. Only the here and now can manifest our future. Every thought in our mind, word that we speak and action that we take orchestrates the music for our future.

Which instrument are you listening to? Which sounds play out and affect your life? Are the noises of your ego mind shutting out the perfect notes of inner knowing? The hectic pace of



by Maggie Wilkins

modern life often means that this is common. The ego mind is a powerful sound that we share with the world. Its sound is based on actions and achieving, and often also judgement, anger, fear and panic. Sounds from the ego mind can be contracting and create all kinds of pain and sadness.

Getting to know our instrument of inner knowing is the key to tuning out this constant din and clamour. When I tune into stillness, silence and space instead, what I hear has no need for power or fear. It is softer and relaxes my body into a more restful state, accompanied by feelings of joy, and even a rising of childlike energy. I find that my face is smiling rather than frowning. The colors of the world appear brighter and the people around me look more beautiful. I come to realize that I am happy with who I am, just as I am in this moment. The need to be busy dissipates, and negativity ebbs away.

The instrument of inner knowing provides a link between earth and heaven. It creates the unique music of our personal expression and reveals our purpose, which is always in oneness with the universe. Have you ever been in a group singing or doing an OM chanting session where the sounds of each individual came together in harmony, and something happened within you? What is that touched you? In my understanding this is the essence of inner knowing; a state we can open

ourselves up to at any time. Defining this in words seems to restrict its power, which makes music even more powerful. Music is our universal language; it unites and bonds us in grace, beauty and joy, and is our link to the celestial world which came from and will go back to.

Learn to know what instrument you are playing and listening to today. Then consciously tune into your inner knowing, and listen to the harmonious melody of authentic being. Let the real music within you play on....

Namaste, Maggie ✨



*Maggie Wilkins was working for Eckhart Tolle when he first published The Power of Now. She now works and teaches in Chaing Mai in Thai-*

*land, and has started a tour company called Pasada, organizing trips in that region. Her new meditation CD, A Simple Breath and her blog information can be found at [www.maggiwilkins.com](http://www.maggiwilkins.com), info on the trips at [www.pasadatours.com](http://www.pasadatours.com).*

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# A Higher Awareness

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*"He who knows others is learned; He who knows himself is wise." —Lao-tzu*

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When I was a senior in High School, I remember a friend telling me he had spent the previous year living in Iowa with some distant family members. He said he'd gone there to "find himself". I nodded my head politely, but inside wondered what it really meant to find yourself? Had my friend been lost? Was I lost? What did he do in Iowa that helped him to find himself? These questions puzzled me for many years.

It seems that there comes a time in each of our lives when something happens that is big enough or uncomfortable enough to awaken us and point us in the direction of meeting ourselves. When the moment arrives, you are always at choice as to whether or not you will use it for the opportunity that it can be. For, the path of self-exploration isn't always an easy one, although I believe it's quite worth it. I started this journey myself, quite a number of years back when I was still raising my children. At that time I was filled with inner turmoil and frustration and feeling quite stuck living within the challenge of an unhappy marriage. I could not figure out how or why I'd become so unhappy or how my life had taken the turn that it had. Little did I know that the search for answers would take me on a life long quest of getting to know myself. If you'd met me years BACK, I would have told you that the marriage was obviously a mistake. Now, I'm happy to say that I no longer believe that, but clearly see it for the gift that it's been

for me. The tremendous pain that I'd felt at that time actually acted as the guidance system that sent me on my inner journey of self-discovery and reconnection, a path that continues even to this day.

As a therapist, I see people at times when life has challenged them and things become quite uncomfortable. I understand and gladly provide support and guidance in helping them restore balance. But, I go a step beyond that, for I also recognize that whatever the difficulty, at a higher level of awareness, they are also standing at the threshold of an opportunity; to move onto a path of self discovery. The question becomes do we only take this journey to know ourselves more fully if there is some type of painful disruption that pushes us there? Most often that is the case. However, it doesn't need to be. In fact, you can make the conscious choice to begin your journey right now. For when you truly know yourself as who you really are, you hold the key to a happier, healthier, more satisfying and balanced life, one that flows. How do you do that? I want to offer you some steps here. These steps can lead you within to help you start living more authentically

## **1) Take time with yourself.**

It's easy to keep busy these days with so much going on around us. But, keeping overly busy can often become a distraction from connecting with your self. Many people fear the silent times with themselves and

## ...keys to knowing

by Alyse Rynor, LCSW

avoid them at all cost. But, the price of doing so can be high, because it keeps you from truly connecting with yourself. Taking time for your self has been looked at as a luxury in today's world. But, it needn't be. So, carve out some time to slow down to just be with You. Try this: block out an hour in your appointment book and sit quietly in a short meditation or light a candle and write in your journal. If you'd like to move around more, then try some yoga postures while playing quiet music in the background. Take a long walk outside and leave your electronics at home. Notice your surroundings and allow yourself to feel a connection to nature. When you slow down and avoid distractions, you begin to reconnect with yourself. You just may start to hear the whisper of your Soul, giving you wisdom, validation or the care you've been craving for years. When you nourish your self in this way, you restore balance. Nothing is more important than your own relationship with yourself. For, no one can take that away. You'll never lose it. It's guaranteed for life. Create the time to connect with yourself and discover the many benefits that come from doing so.

### 2) You can know yourself through others.

Who is the only person you can't see when you walk into a room? Unless there is a mirror, you can't see yourself. But, you can see yourself through others. It happens every day. It's the very thing that someone else does, that thing which you don't like at all, you know, the one that easily triggers a strong reaction in you, which can help you to see

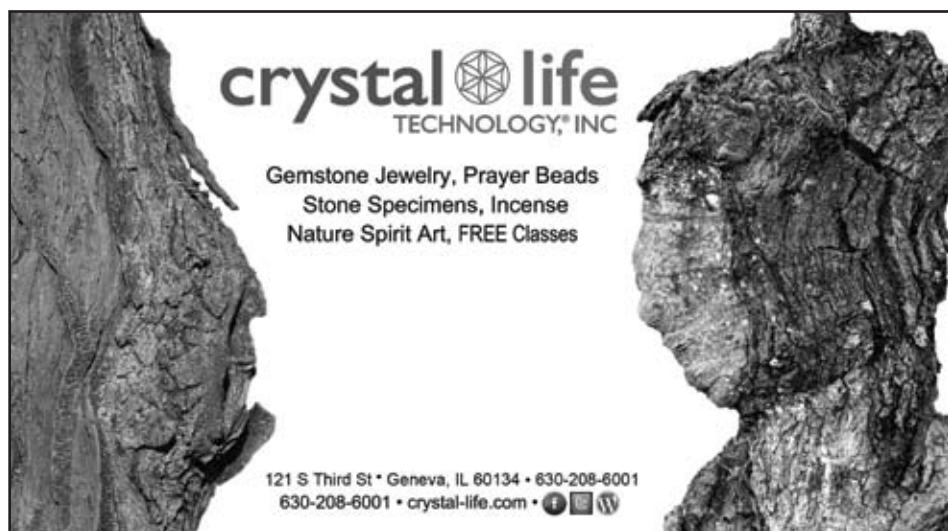
something in yourself that you didn't know was there. This is called projection. It's when we see a characteristic in someone else that we have, but unconsciously don't yet own within ourselves. Some of these characteristics may have been hidden away so deeply inside that we are unaware they even exist. But they do. They can show up in your dislike of some negative or petty trait in another or in someone's shining success. If that trait makes you uncomfortable, then it's probably lying dormant in you. Remember that little phrase, "If you spot it, you got it"? It's all too true.

The Swiss psychologist Carl Jung called these hidden traits your shadows. Recognizing and bringing your shadows into the Light for healing can allow you to become integrated, whole and free. Starting today, watch for that strong reaction coming up when something in another irritates you. This may just be your perfect opportunity to know yourself a little bit better – through them. Because ultimately we really are all connected.

### 3) Make peace with your past.

It's easy to close the door on your past, but it is really what shaped your personality today. Make peace with it. Otherwise, the door keeps popping open and affecting you today. To make peace with your past, try to understand why some of the people may have treated you the way that they did. Take a new perspective and see if you can look at life through their eyes. Of course, if something happened to you, it doesn't make what they did as right. But, it can help if you can find the gifts that may have come out of some tough times. These times have made you who you are. So, give yourself that pat on the back you may not have gotten early on. You have made it to today! I know not everyone's past was easy or even pleasant. But, when you make peace with it, you free yourself from the chains that bind you. When you know yourself better, you can begin to move forward to create the life you really want now.

*continues*



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#### 4) Acceptance

The first step to making any change in your life begins with acceptance. Once you accept yourself and your unique traits, it gives you a starting point from which to take off and move forward. All too often, we look for someone else to accept us. When we do this, we are actually disconnected from ourselves. But, you will quickly discover that when you can accept something about yourself, whether it is your current weight as you start a new plan for yourself, or your difficulty in doing a specific type of task, it will free you up and allow you to move forward. When you think good of yourself, it can offer you the biggest freedom there is in life. To accept your self as you are right now is to know yourself, through Love.

#### 6) Own Your Power

When you are connected with your true self, you are better able to stand

in your own power. Standing in your power grounds you. It allows you to be there for others because you are there for yourself. Owning your power allows you the freedom to live in alignment, taking in all of the wonderful energy available to you from both heaven and earth. It's so common to seek power outside of our selves, through the approval of others, a need for perfection or through addiction to some type of food, person or substance. The more you follow some of the above steps, the better you will know who you are and be able to own your own power. Then you can become happy and at ease with that wonderful person who is you.

When I look at the big picture of life, I see it as a journey – a journey home to your self and filled with opportunities to take you there. Some are wonderful and others not so pleasant, perhaps even challenging.

However, each opportunity can become a gift for you; one that may just bring you closer to you knowing and connecting with who you really are. You have been given this precious life. One thing I believe is that to know your self is to grow yourself. It takes a higher awareness to see life this way. Your path awaits you taking that first step now. ✨



*Alyse Rynor, LCSW is the founder of Soul Choice Counseling, Ltd., a private Mind, Body, Spirit Counseling practice with*

*the goal of empowering you to live life in the flow of your Soul's growth. Individual Psychotherapy & Couples Counseling by appointment. Evanston office. Call for info: 847.840.0884. Email: [alyse.lcswh@gmail.com](mailto:alyse.lcswh@gmail.com). [www.soulchoicecounseling.com](http://www.soulchoicecounseling.com).*

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Within these pages, Anita recounts stories of her childhood in Hong Kong, her challenge to establish her career and find true love, as well as how she eventually ended up in that hospital bed where she defied all medical knowledge.

As part of a traditional Hindu family residing in a largely Chinese and British society, she had been pushed and pulled by cultural and religious customs since she had been a little girl. After years of struggling to forge her own path while trying to meet everyone else's expectations, she had the realization, as a result of her epiphany on the other side, that she had the power to heal herself... and that there are miracles in the Universe that she had never even imagined.

In *Dying to Be Me*, Anita freely shares all she has learned about illness, healing, fear, "being love," and the true magnificence of each and every human being!

This is a book that definitely makes the case that we are spiritual beings having a human experience... and that we are all One!



## You know it *By Julie Murphy Casserly*

Some Eastern philosophies teach that the human body consists of seven major zones of energy, regulated through the seven major chakras. According to these belief systems, enlightenment comes from allowing energy to flow freely through the chakras within you. I believe that toxic emotions can clog the chakras that process emotion, thus causing illness and disease.

The result of all this? Nothing is as clear as it could be. We're investing so much of our energy into combating the effects of our clogged chakras that we can't make clear decisions – especially about our finances. We want a different financial life and we believe it's possible but we can't make movement towards those goals.

### Your financial life

You can believe that something is possible but not know for sure that it can and will materialize in your life. Nowhere is this more present than with our relationship with money. We want to view our finances in a positive light yet we continually find ourselves in a negative balance. The word "budget" is a dirty word – even worse when we don't follow it to the letter! Yet you continue to believe that it will get better...sometimes with no solid results.

You believe you'll buy a home one day, maybe even your dream home. You believe that if you put your mind to it, you will be debt free. And you believe that you could one day walk away from a job

you don't love and start a business you're crazy about.

So many of us believe big financial change is possible. But do you know you will achieve those financial goals? Knowing something will happen requires confidence in your abilities and the drive to back those skills up.

When you know your finances can improve, everything shifts. Perception is no longer just a reality; it's your way of life.

### Your action step

Being uncertain about your choices now makes you fearful for the future – no matter how much you believe things will get better. Instead of making choices cloaked with insecurity, why not choose your financial path confidently. Stop looking to other things for a better understanding of your own financial life. Things begin to fall into place in your life when you reach within yourself for that sense of security you search for out in the world.

This month, take some time to affirm your beliefs. When you're feeling low, tell yourself you know you can change your finances. You know you can take steps in the right direction. ✨



*Julie Murphy Casserly, CFP®, CLU, ChFC, is a 17-year veteran of the financial services industry and founder of JMC Wealth Management in*

*Chicago. Julie helps people understand how their emotional attitudes and behaviors affect how they earn, spend and save. To purchase her award-winning book, "The Emotion Behind Money," sign up for her "Weekly Wisdoms for Wealth" e-newsletter, and to read her blog, please visit <http://www.emotionbehindmoney.com>. Connect with her on Twitter @JulieMcCassly!*

\*The tips above may not be suitable for all people, and JMC Wealth Management advises clients on their investment strategies on an individual basis.



# Inner Knowing vs Following

*Your Inner Knowing is about 986,743 times more powerful than your non-conscious mind. The reason being is because this inner knowing has direct access to harness the infinite powers of the universe to produce results. Some people call this your higher self, your God presence within, your inner CEO, your innate wisdom and a host of other things. The main idea here is there is a power in the universe that created you and everything else. And when you get this power on your side in creating what you want, it becomes easy and almost effortless.*

Friendships are considered a safe place for us to turn to for opinions and feedback – you get a 'read' from them. They know you.

Knowing yourself through life experiences is another way of gathering information about you. The decisions you make can signal to you where your best interest lies. Furthermore, knowing yourself as the spirit you are is where knowing takes on a delicious and validating turn. Here you get to think and sense beyond the limits of everyday world or reason.

Knowing ourselves is actually one of the abilities of the crown chakra. This is the energy center resting on top of the head. It is a major chakra amongst others that we have

as a makeup of our energy system. It contains information of having been who we are for many lifetimes. When filled with anything but our unique energy, such as doubt, it takes away the ability of someone 'knowing' themselves.

Just like when there is a block in your 'clairvoyance' (your ability to see) you can't see clearly. One such block is called the guru game. Not to confuse the definition of 'guru' which is Sanskrit for spiritual teacher, but is the 'syndrome' of someone appearing to know you more than know yourself or you believing that someone has more knowledge than you. I am not talking about someone knowing more than you because of the countless degrees and certifications they have, I am talking about that the divine right to know yourself—which does not and cannot be mediated by someone else. We don't have to buy into the concept that we are not good enough from anyone.

Here is a story that I think has always been a part of our humanity as a whole and how people experience attaining knowledge, as I experienced it. A woman named Jan came to me for some psychic development and really enjoyed a tool on releasing energy that did not resonate or belong to her that I taught her. Over a few months Jan was starting to get the hang of having confidence in herself and she was moving deeper in her meditations. Her awareness was gaining momentum. She also started to recognize that she was a spirit in a body having a human experience. One day something intense surfaced. Many emotions and memories around a former teacher started

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to emerge. This teacher's teachings had had a profound effect on Jan. The awakening she had while working with him was delightful – she had felt like somebody that mattered. He was all she could hope to be and in her words, 'I gave up all my soul to him.' I knew this was a phase however and that only she could resolve. As an outsider it was simple to see the cause of her distress – in her process of self discovery she had gotten seduced by the notion that another could "fix" her. She also needed to get to know her teacher. It was not the first time Jan had given up a part of her allegiance to a spiritual teacher. She had done it for lifetimes. Do you ever feel like you were over something and here it is again?!

Maybe you even have a little self judgement on how you could do this to your self. Maybe it is not just in being a student, but being a spouse, lover, child and more.

It was like that for that for her. All I could do was stand in compassion and understanding.

On a slight parallel, Kim and Steve attended an event with a well known guru, loved by many. He was known for his high vibration and his way of bringing many people to a spiritual place. The couple had a major breakthrough in the midst of a large gathering. This was an uplifting experience for the couple as they were experiencing an 'opening' for the first time. They never knew their inner realms could feel good. Fulfillment was now in reach but only through the teacher. They followed their new teacher to the other side of the world to experience more. Spending weeks in an a solitude of a space of retreat,

they experienced a different living environment in a different culture. When someone goes to another environment, different from their own where the belief systems are different and the senses of the experience is new, the old conditioning has no choice but to come apart. They experienced even more of an opening. As an outsider it was simple to see that amongst others with open hearts, so shall closed hearts open. Have you found it hard to find your heart? Maybe you have felt the need to find new perspective in a different geographical place.

Self forgiveness is a solvent to having let someone else's knowledge become stronger than your own voice. Then to get up and have some fun in getting to know yourself over again.

The collective conscious has the opportunity to have ownership of knowing oneself and to being the creator of one's life. You can do this with developing your own intuition to guide you. You don't have to change religions, countries, parents to gain spiritual knowledge that is pertinent to you. In clairvoyant awareness you can develop the inner sight to work with what you know and go on an adventure. Liking yourself while discovering yourself works great! The best is when you know you are divine and always connected to Source. ॐ

*Zubin Sherring is the Director of the Clairvoyant Center in Evanston. It is a nonprofit spiritual organization for anyone wanting to further their growth through meditation. You can reach her at redrose@clairvoyantcenter.net, or 847-757-2838.*

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# Divine Knowledge

by Debbie Mackall

*True knowledge exists in knowing that you know nothing.* —Socrates



How can I be certain that I know something and that it isn't just a belief that is programmed in like the software on my computer. A product of a lifetime of input through experiences that have created the me that I think I am.

My mind would like an answer, and I "know" this is not possible. I am understanding why the stories of so many zen masters are filled with questions to the questions. The "answers" seem more in line with faith.

So I look to life to give me the answers that help to satisfy my need for validation.

We were driving along and talking. Goals and dreams, challenges and successes— as Val and I like to do when we're together.

Val was talking about her vision of writing a successful book. She has wanted this for some time, and has been working on being clear about her goals, motivations, and inspiration. Recently, she had been having some allergy issues, and my mom mentioned that a good remedy for this is making local honey a part of the diet. I knew of a local shop about 40 miles north of us that had a hive and sold local honey, so this precipitated our drive, a mission to get honey, and an opportunity to talk and enjoy the beautiful leaves and scenery.

It was a beautiful fall day, and starting to rain. Another day we might have felt it was a gloomy scene, but at this time we had just been through a long draught, and the rain was a welcome sight.

So we splashed through the country roads enjoying our time together. We came upon a road I wanted to take a turn on and missed it. So I

went to turn around in the drive of a small Monastery we were passing. We both noticed the sign at the same time... *Local Honey* it said on a small wooden plaque. Val and I looked at each other in disbelief. *No Way*. We were still a good half hour from our destination.

So we followed down to the end of the drive. A woman in nun's clothing was coming toward us from the nearby garage, huddled against the raindrops.

Smiling, she brought us in the back door of the small farmhouse with the large *Honey* sign at the front.

Inside, on a shelf were the bottles of honey they were offering for sale by donation. I couldn't believe my eyes when the sign said "Angel Bottle". I told the kind nun a bit about what Val and I had been talking about, and how we were so shocked and awestruck that the bottles were called Angels. I looked more closely at the bottles, and saw that the actual bottles were angels with praying hands. This beautiful little woman went on to tell me that her name was also Angelica Rose.

Val and I thanked her in stunned silence as she left us to continue her errands. Val had been asking to be surrounded by Angels, and here we were holding these bottles of honey in angel bottles.

We drove home with no doubts that when we ask for support we are heard, and that the divine beings that guide us are willing to provide this amazing validation and support.

I keep the bottle on my kitchen table as a happy reminder of our detour on a rainy day, and the miracles that wait for us to discover them when we least expect it. ✨



# A Reflection from Within: *Knowing your Self*

By Alison Buckman, LCSW

*"Who is that girl I see staring straight back at me? Why is my reflection someone I don't know? Somehow I cannot hide who I am though I've tried. When will my reflection show who I am inside?"*

—Mulan

The main character in the 1998 Disney movie, *Mulan*, sings about the struggle to be her true Self in a world where others have an opposing view of her. After failing to fulfill her duty as a bride, she cuts off her hair and dresses like a man in order to join the army and ends up saving all of China from invasion. Mulan literally fought for her country and for her family, but even more remarkably, she fought for herself... for who she knew her Self to be... despite the expectations that others had placed upon her.

From the moment we are born, others begin attaching expectations and hopes to us about who we will be and what we will do and the places we will go. An image is created that may be in contrast with what we feel on the inside. Yet we often work hard to live up to these expectations, and sometimes our reflection becomes someone we no longer recognize. We become so busy trying to be everything for everybody that we forget what we inherently know is true.

Mulan felt this dichotomy between her true Self and her outer "self," and it caused her to suffer. In order to find peace with the reflection she saw in the mirror, she had to trust herself and look deep within even though it was terrifying. We, too, can look within ourselves and listen to that voice inside that knows. We know who we are but as we grow and learn, we often disconnect from this knowing, thinking that others want us or need us to be someone else. The more we learn to put on masks to please others, the more we forget what we know. We stop seeing our inner reflection and start focusing solely on our outer reflection. We start to believe that we don't know. Sometimes we become so enmeshed in the expectations surrounding us that we can no longer hear the voice within us that knows that we are Love. We are Life. We exist. And our existence matters.

A few years ago I saw the film *Phoebe in Wonderland*, and one scene struck such a chord with me that I paused the movie to write down the profound quotation said by the teacher in the film to her 10-year-old student;

*"At a certain point in your life—*

*probably when too much of it has gone by—you will open your eyes and see yourself for who you are, especially for everything that made you so different from all the awful 'normals,' and you will say to yourself; 'but I am this person.' And in that statement, that correction, there will be a kind of love."*

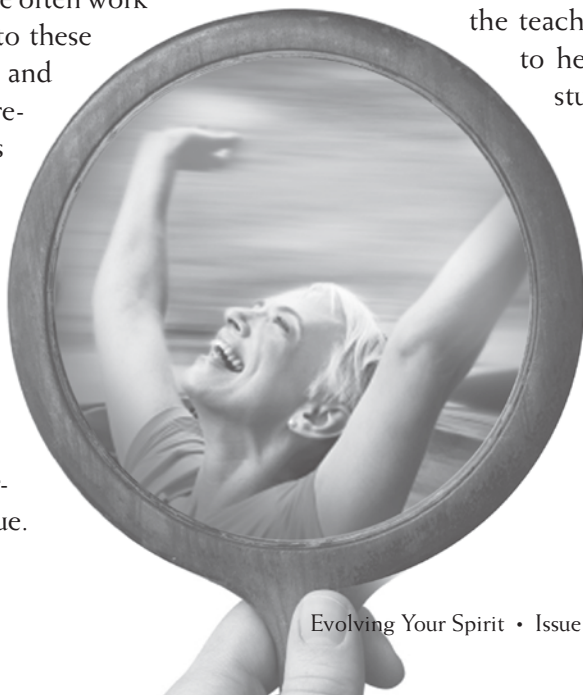
We can choose to open our eyes in this very moment and exclaim, "But I am this person!" We can remember who we are by turning our attention inward instead of focusing on the outward appearance that we so often present to the world. We can start by looking at our reflection in a mirror. What do you see? Look deeper. What do you see now? Stare into your eyes... not just at them, but into them. Do your best to see beyond the image that is in front of you...look beneath the surface of your outer self. Place your hand over your heart and connect to the person that is YOU. Remember. Believe. Accept. Love. Know.

"I am this person!"



Alison Buckman, LCSW is a psychotherapist, Certified LifeLine™ Practitioner and Registered Yoga Teacher. She specializes in eating

disorders/body image, depression/anxiety, trauma, life transitions and LGBT issues and works with adolescents and adults. Ali's goal is to guide and support you on the journey to self-healing, positive change and becoming your authentic self. Evanston Office. 312.286.5353 or Email: [alibuckman@yahoo.com](mailto:alibuckman@yahoo.com)



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## Pema Chödrön: *To Know Yourself is to Forget Yourself*

According to Pema Chödrön, we might think that knowing ourselves is a very ego-centered thing, but by beginning to look clearly and honestly at ourselves, we begin to dissolve the walls that separate us from others.

The journey of awakening happens just at the place where we can't get comfortable. Opening to discomfort is the basis of transmuting our so-called "negative" feelings. We somehow want to get rid of our uncomfortable feelings either by justifying them or by squelching them, but it turns out that this is like throwing the baby out with the bath water. According to the teachings of vajrayana, or tantric, Buddhism, our wisdom and our confusion are so interwoven that it doesn't work to just throw things out.

By trying to get rid of "negativity," by trying to eradicate it, by putting it into a column labelled "bad," we are throwing away our wisdom as well, because everything in us is creative energy—particularly our strong emotions. They are filled with life-force.

There is nothing wrong with negativity per se; the problem is that we never see it, we never honor it, we never look into its heart. We don't taste our negativity, smell it, get to know it. Instead, we are always trying to get rid of it by punching someone in the face, by slandering someone, by punishing ourselves, or by repressing our feelings. In between repression and acting out, however, there is something wise and profound and timeless.

If we just try to get rid of negative feelings, we don't realize that those feelings are our wisdom. The transmutation comes from the willingness to hold our seat with the feeling, to let the words go, to let the justification go. We don't have to have resolution. We can live with a dissonant note; we don't have to play the next key to end the tune.

Curiously enough, this journey of transmutation is one of tremendous joy. We usually seek joy in the wrong places, by trying to avoid feeling whole parts of the human condition. We seek happiness by believing that whole parts of what it is to be human are unacceptable. We feel that something has to change in ourselves. However, unconditional joy comes about through some kind of intelligence in which we allow ourselves to see clearly what we do with great honesty, combined with a tremendous kindness and gentleness. This combination of honesty, or clear-seeing, and kindness is the essence of maitri—unconditional friendship with ourselves.

This is a process of continually stepping into unknown territory. You become willing to step into the unknown territory of your own being. Then you realize that this particular adventure is not only taking you into your own being, it's also taking you out into the whole universe. You can only go into the unknown when you have made friends with yourself. You can only step into those areas "out there" by beginning to explore and have curiosity about this unknown "in here," in yourself.

Dogen Zen-ji said, "To know yourself is to forget yourself." We might think that knowing ourselves is a very ego-centered thing, but by beginning to look so clearly and so honestly at ourselves—at our emotions, at our thoughts, at who we really are—we begin to dissolve the walls that separate us from others. Somehow all of these walls, these ways of feeling separate from everything else and everyone else, are made up of opinions. They are made up of dogma; they are made of prejudice. These walls come from our fear of knowing parts of ourselves.

There is a Tibetan teaching that is often translated as, "Self-cherishing is the root of all suffering." It can be hard for a Western person to hear the term "self-cherishing" without misunderstanding what is being said. I would guess that 85% of us Westerners would interpret it as telling us that we shouldn't care for ourselves—that there is something anti-wakeful about respecting ourselves. But that isn't what it really means. What it is talking about is fixating. "Self-cherishing" refers to how we try to protect ourselves by fixating; how we put up walls so that we won't have to feel discomfort or lack of resolution. That notion of self-cherishing refers to the erroneous belief that there could be only comfort and no discomfort, or the belief that there could be only happiness and no sadness, or the belief that there could be just good and no bad.



**TO FORGET  
YOURSELF  
IS TO BECOME  
ENLIGHTENED  
BY ALL THINGS**

But what the Buddhist teachings point out is that we could take a much bigger perspective, one that is beyond good and evil. Classifications of good and bad come from lack of maitri. We say that something is good if it makes us feel secure and it's bad if it makes us feel insecure. That way we get into hating people who make us feel insecure and hating all kinds of religions or nationalities that make us feel insecure. And we like those who give us ground under our feet.

When we are so involved with trying to protect ourselves, we are unable to see the pain in another person's face. "Self-cherishing" is ego fixating and grasping: it ties our hearts, our shoulders, our head, our stomach, into knots. We can't open. Everything is in a knot. When we begin to open we can see others and we can be there for them. But to the degree that we haven't worked with our own fear, we are going to shut down when others trigger our fear.

So to know yourself is to forget yourself. This is to say that when we make friends with ourselves we no longer have to be so self-involved. It's a curious twist: making friends with ourselves is a way of not being so self-involved anymore. Then Dogen Zen-ji goes on to say, "To forget yourself is to become enlightened by all things." When we are not so self-involved, we begin to realize that the world is speaking to us all of the time. Every plant, every tree, every animal, every person, every car, every airplane is speaking to us, teaching us, awakening us. It's a wonderful world, but we often miss it. It's as if we see the previews of coming attractions and never get to the main feature.

When we feel resentful or judgmental, it hurts us and it hurts others. But if we look into it we might see that behind the resentment there is fear and behind the fear there is a tremendous softness. There is a very big heart and a huge mind—a very awake, basic state of being. To experience this we begin to make a journey, the journey of unconditional friendliness toward the self that we already are. ❧

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I was looking through some messages found in fortune cookies when this one really resonated with me: "Relish the transitions in your life- they will happen anyway." That one pretty much sums up the best way to handle changes in our lives. (to explain why I was going through fortune cookies would take a lot more space).

I think what is implied here is the idea of accepting transitions or change. For most of us, accepting some changes has been difficult. Changes in our health, the health of someone close to us or a family member's death can be particularly difficult for us. Many of us have experienced having a family member with a terminal illness. This requires acceptance of both the illness and its consequence, death. Yet even though we believe that we should have been prepared, often this outcome is most difficult to accept.

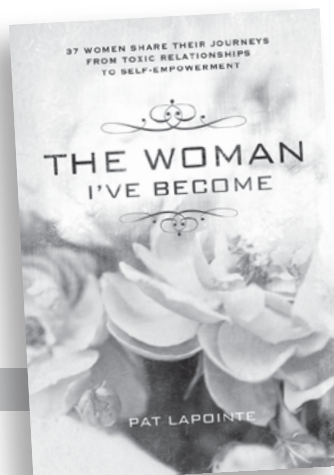
Many of us have been faced with how our lives changed due to a divorce. In some ways this is harder to

accept than death. A person that, at least at one time in our lives, we had bonded with and now he is "gone". But not really. It is more difficult in the sense that he lives on, as do we, just not together. It doesn't matter who wanted to terminate the marriage, both will have to accept the transition from "we" to "me".

Of course there are many other transitions in our lives: job change, retirement, down-sizing our homes. Have you "relished" them as the fortune said? How have you handled them? Are there some that as yet you haven't accepted? If so, why not? What steps will you take toward acceptance?

Be sure to read Pat's new book, featured below. It's a compilation of 37 inspiring personal accounts of women who have overcome abuse and toxic relationships and grow to discover their own strength and resiliency. ✨

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# The Flip Side of Knowing

by Laurie Buchanan

*"Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next."*

— Gilda Radner

## The human brain is amazing!

Divided into two hemispheres, the left side of the brain oversees mental activities such as math and science, while the right side is responsible for creative expression and intuitive functioning. Both sides store information; data retrieval is referred to as knowing.

In a recent conversation, my friend Cassie shared, "I'm working on unknowing what I believe I know." Her comment brought to mind the wisdom of a bumper sticker I saw years ago. It said: "Don't believe everything you think."

The world—especially in this Information Age—places great value on what we know. However, there's a tremendous interaction between knowing and not-knowing, and they're both important. Just as the ability

for knowing can be developed, so can the practice of not-knowing.

In his book, *The Issue at Hand: Essays on Buddhist Mindfulness Practice*, author Gil Fronsdal, writes, "The Zen practice of not-knowing is sometimes referred to as 'beginner's mind'—seeing with fresh, unbiased eyes; not being blinded to new possibilities or by preconceived ideas or judgments."

Adding "I don't know" to our thoughts is a healthy habit that helps us question our line of thinking; helps us examine the validity of our thoughts and tightly held beliefs.

Not-knowing doesn't mean information poverty; it doesn't mean that we're lost, bewildered, or uncertain. Nor does it mean that we have to overlook or ignore our understanding of a situation.

## Not-knowing means not being limited by what we do know.

When we hold the space of not-knowing, the limiting walls of certainty collapse, revealing unlimited potential and possibility.

The practice of not-knowing is a conscious choice. By holding lightly to what we know, we're ready for it to be different. Maybe things are this way; but maybe, just maybe, they're not... ✨



Board Certified with the American Association of Drugless Practitioners, Laurie Buchanan is a holistic health practitioner

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