

ESCAPING the CHRYSALIS

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TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMATION INTO DIVINE WHOLENESS

"If I have lost confidence in myself, I have the Universe against me." Ralph Waldo Emerson

CHAPTER ONE

THE MIND BODY SPIRIT CONNECTION & SELF ESTEEM

Any book designated as the enlightened marriage of Gestalt school of thought with the New Age, self-help genre of spiritual connection must include a brief overview of the roots and history of *Gestalt Therapy*, as per the life work of Dr. Frederick (Fritz) Perls, and his wife Laura. Considered *humanistic*, the Gestalt approach is a result of studies in human behavior. Based on the theory that, when freed of internalized emotional blocks, any person has an increased chance of creating a fulfilled, purposeful life, the intention of Gestalt therapy is equilibrium by way of concentrated self-awareness. When one steps back from his or her possibly jaded memories and closely examines psychological, emotionally charged obstructions to moving forward, he or she can make a conscious decision to release the obstruction with expressed appreciation, and is then at liberty to *choose to be* happy and productive, and well-balanced. Living in holistic equilibrium is the human organism's natural and preferred state. With that concept in mind, Gestalt works toward the end consequence of assisting humans to enjoy a stable, balanced center of *Being*.

Gestalt is a word of German origin that translated means "whole" or "form." Human infants are born whole and complete, and are then systematically taught to disown great portions of the self. Before they are even pushed from the womb into Western Civilization, unborn boys are categorized as "blue" and girls are "pink." As the boys grow to be young men, lessons instruct that purely as a duty of *maleness* they will have to disown nurturing tendencies, and will have to rescue the helpless, less intelligent female. The inept female, as the standard goes, is required to disown her strength and wait passively, helplessly for her hero to come along and save her from life. In any case this separation from self has a detrimental impact on the psyche.

When parts of the self are unacknowledged, human nature will seek to replace those perceived missing portions. The result becomes one of going through life in a neurotic search for someone to fill the void, to replace whatever has been taught is missing. Although little boys generally learn to disown nurturing tendencies, and little girls are taught to disown competencies and power, the truth is, there is nothing missing from anyone. Nothing exists in anyone else that is not contained within each individual. The danger in disowning portions of the self lies in the fact that all too often the self-perceived empty hole is an alluring attractor for abusers. Looking for the missing half makes one a vulnerable target for victimization, and with no shortage of available victimizers, ill-fated matches happen often. Going through life feeling half-empty is the definitive, disempowering, self-sabotaging behavior. In truth, no one else completes you. In contrast to searching for fulfillment through another, Gestalt's thrust into awareness, realizing one's wholeness, means no longer seeking external validation, nor being either prey or predator.

Merriam Webster defines *integrity* as, *soundness, incorruptibility, and completeness*. The synonym is *honesty*. Integrity is the whole human self: mind, body, and spirit in undamaged condition. It is authenticity built of an individual's sum total. The goal of Gestalt is to reunite the valuable disowned pieces into a unified, cohesive whole. Uniting spiritual balance with the holistic qualities of Gestalt, allows for a further, faster launch into expanded awareness, thus, the patent opportunity to return to the original condition of wholeness. Practitioners consciously *remember*, re-connect with the abandoned sections of themselves. If there is a developed pattern of helplessness, Gestalt provides the awareness and the tools to assist in breaking the habit of looking for someone to do what can be done for oneself. If there is a tendency towards brute

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control, that too can be remedied. Getting in touch with the parts of the self that have been long ago forgotten is the empowering experience of Gestalt *whole-self* equilibrium/homeostasis.

Precisely how can Gestalt be useful for the average person? Spiced throughout the chapters are examples of how Gestalt techniques may be used to enrich and balance the lives of anyone, bringing mainstream possibilities to the potent instrument once reserved for psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists. Realizing the “me benefit” of Gestalt is possible merely by reading, participating, and comparing personal experiences to provided examples. With consistently practiced awareness, Gestalt promises to deliver the keys to an enlightened, fulfilling life. Actively and sincerely taking time to complete the suggested exercises such as journaling, dream interpretations, meditation, affirmations, written goals, and enhanced consciousness, allows for rapid, advantageous, transformational results. Effectively empowering the masses, one by one, with simple awareness of the birthright to *wholeness* brings about a sea of potential global wellness. When *integrity* is at the core of human interactions honesty is the way we live. There’s something terribly powerful in the pure, undiluted, authentic behavior of humans. Universally, we all benefit.

The Mind Body Connection

Gestalt’s premise is that humans are born as naturally whole integrated forms. Energetic separation between the mind, body, and spirit is a process beginning at birth and continuing throughout life until and/or unless one understands the split and *re-members*, *re-owns* the whole set of emotions. Experiencing the self as having missing pieces fertilizes neuroses, personality disorders, and diseases that originate from the source of *dis-ease*. In the Gestalt concept, to experience holistic wellness, requires the mind, body, and spirit be consciously aligned, reunited and returned to the original optimal, connected condition. Born complete, and then fractured, we must come full circle back to the gestalt/whole-integration of total *beingness*. To avoid this truth is to suffer the disastrous personal consequences of separation between body, mind, and spirit.

Beginning with René Descartes,¹ philosopher and founding father of medicine, mind and body separation has become the scientific model. Monsieur Descartes needed cadaver bodies for dissection as learning tools, and had to request permission from the Pope. An agreement was reached, in that Descartes could have only the bodies, but the Church would keep their souls. And so it was established: The Western medical model did not include any non-measurable, *unscientific* components such as emotion, thoughts, or spirit. The mind-body separation model of medical science was decreed by official pact.

Fast-forward into the twenty-first century where labels of psychosomatic causes of diseases are weapons for chastising, and existent symptoms are cast aside as being mental/emotional disturbances. It is unfortunate that throughout history, the label of psychosomatic illnesses was bastardized to connote a mental illness in which disease is artificially manufactured in make-believe land. In truth, *psycho* comes from the Greek word meaning brain, and *soma* also Greek, means body of an organism; the literal meaning then is *connecting both the brain and the body*. “It’s all in the head,” may actually not be such a bad thing after all. Connections between the body, mind, and spirit are finally at the zenith’s edge of neuroscience. Science, including a large portion of the medical field, now acknowledges the mind and body connection. The antiquated paradigm of separation is shifting. Although some

¹ René Descartes (1596–1650) French philosopher and mathematician considered *father of modern philosophy*.

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verdicts are still out as to the existence of spirit, today there is a measurable, empirical foundation to support the mind-body connection.

Neural studies in the activities of molecules as they interconnect to emotions reveal, through isolating cells in the brain, that the receptors on the outside of the cells play the role in directly affecting moods. This *physical* molecular basis of *emotions* is the recipe that determines moods, wellness, and physiology, and proves a mind-body connection.

For simplicity sake, imagine the brain cell, the *neuron*, as being an individual ballroom floor covered with millions of colorfully dressed dancing receptors. These dancing receptors are rooted far below the floor, as they sway and vibrate in surrounding fluid, moving to the chord. As they rock, these receptors are scanning their surroundings. They are specific, quite picky about their potentials for binding (that's neuroscientific code for something akin to having molecular sex). These receptors don't just bind with the first message-carrying *ligand* that comes along. The ligands, in turn, are cruising, and they are looking to be picked up, to *bind* with a suitably fitting receptor. The receptors are not open to advances of any old ligand. They wait for the perfect match, for the right fit, for the key that opens them to the message carried by the special ligand. Specific ligands fit into each receptor, (it's all about the right vibration) and when they do...yowza! The result of the binding is a disturbance that opens the receptor and allows the messages to penetrate the cell, altering the cellular makeup, causing it to divide, triggering emotions, and instigating behaviors. Binding of the ligand into the receptor affects the physical and the nonphysical nature of the organism at a molecular level. There is no separation then, between emotional (mind) and physical (body).

Another visual way to think of cell receptors and ligands is to envision a heart-shaped balloon tethered from a line that anchors deep within the nucleus of a cell. At the 'V' between the heart's two sides, is the receptor. Now imagine an inverted triangle perfectly cut to fit into that 'V' space. As the triangle (the ligand) slips into place, the door is opened and the message is allowed in through the line and deep into the cell. This is the way of communication between the cell receptor and the ligand.

There are three types of ligands, each type serving a different particular purpose. The first discovered are the neurotransmitters. Acetylcholine, dopamine, GABA, glycine, histamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin fall into this category. Their function is to send electrical messages across the gaps between neurons. Akin to fundamental Morse code and computer language, they are basic electrical charges of *on* and *off*.

The second group of ligands is the steroid family. The sex hormones of estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone belong in this category. Steroids start out as cholesterol, but are biologically transformed into various hormones. Cortisol is one such steroid hormone. It is created under times of stress and is secreted by the adrenal gland. Pretty much anyone over or near the age of consent is well aware of the impact of hormones on emotions.

The final group of ligands is the peptide group. This is the largest group, and circulates through the blood, and through spinal fluid. Peptides are in charge of control and regulation of just about everything, and cause complex changes to occur in cells, and in emotions. It remains unclear as to if each particular emotion is attached to a specific peptide. Regardless, peptide-carrying ligands are the bringers of emotional memories that bind to receptors. It may be that memories remain in the ligands that bind in receptors; this would explain how emotions are stored in the body as cellular memories.

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Memories are affected by our moods. When one is experiencing a depressed state, memory runs in a resonating low channel. Mental reruns focus on what was wrong, fine-tuning the negative aspects of past events. Conversely, when experiencing emotions of happiness, memories are recalled as joyful times and wonderfully memorable events.

The hormone, adrenaline, deeply etches details in the memory under the swift hand of trauma. An occurrence that contains mega doses of adrenaline, such as the assassination of President John Kennedy, results in deeply engraved memories. As a more current example, anyone over the age of five or six years old at the time of the infamous events of September 11, 2001, can provide a specific account of exactly where they were, and what they were doing at the time the Twin Towers in New York crumbled. Most of the time, processes that affect our mind-body *beingness* take place at a subconscious level; however, transformation can be implemented instantly with conscious intent, or with profound events.

Modifying emotional states, and reworking cellular and muscle memories is possible even after decades of habitually ingraining a particular, bothersome activity. The collective tools of Gestalt's workbench are instrumental in the process of identifying and efficiently altering thoughts and behaviors that are rooted in ineffectual, internalized beliefs. Visualization, affirmations, and meditation are core tools of spiritual gestalt, and when combined, offer perhaps the most operative path to generating dramatic, rapid, and lasting changes.

Merely visualizing increased blood flow to the particular part of the brain or body where the emotion originates has been shown to exhibit measurable change. Indeed, when addressing broken bones, there is documented evidence that the physical body heals faster with visualized increased blood flow. Meditating on improvement and affirming the existence of the new productive emotional state brings whole change to fruition.

Human potential is raised through awareness of both mind and body, while complimentary effects to positive growth spill over, endlessly improving the human condition. Whole balanced people are rare. When one exudes equilibrium, others take note. They notice that you've got something special, and they want some of that special essence for themselves. You're a role model for success. Positive change is endless.

The time is long ago past when humans could be seen as reactionary; victims at the mercy of circumstances, controlled puppets manipulated exclusively by external factors. Biologically speaking, peptide secretion is the physical component to the way we humans experience our vivid and wide range of emotions. Consciously altering the physiological components to moods, addiction, and habits of dysfunction will result in changes in affect, and in emotions, and in the physical well-being. There can be no separation between mind and body as long as the binding process continues. The proof is in the chemistry; we are all complete, whole and connected at even the most fundamental state of being.

Self-Esteem

What is this feeling that drapes, sometimes low hung and heavy, and flying high and free at others? Humans may be at one moment confident, courageous and proud, yet are at the next instant, wrought with insecurities, and too petrified to make a move. Some become stuck like a seed in the craw, endlessly complaining or withdrawing from life. Where does emotion come from, and what force determines the headwinds or the tail winds as we push against or are propelled forward? Perhaps there is a cosmic puppeteer, a sort of 'God-Oz' pulling the strings as

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we dance or fall in front of universal audiences, and we are the dummies, entertaining the masses. The theatre then houses comedy, drama, and an inspirational production, but the individual's internal character performs all the roles in his or her subjective theatrical program. The theatre is rarely dark.

The means to authentic personal discovery entails taking an in depth look at the plethora of emotional, behavioral, and spiritual medleys, and then learning to either accept and embrace, or consciously discard, finally integrating all the chosen pieces into a whole (gestalt) being.

Life circumstances may have caused fractures, leaving one to pick up the pieces and re-assemble shattered ids and egos. Developing a heightened awareness of the source of the chinks in personality, and mindfully determining the damage can be transcended, and integrity restored, is instrumental in spiritual gestalt's focus towards wholeness. For better or worse, *every* experience works either to either integrate, or to fracture, and in either case is a result of choices made. And every choice is colored by self-perception, that is, *self-esteem*.

Whether choices impair or support us in our human form is determined by only one of two options. From an energy standpoint, choices originate from the emotion of either *fear* or *love*. This is an essential concept to fully understand. Decisions originating from dark, desperate *fear-based* viewpoints taint potential outcomes with dense energy. Feelings originating from a dark self-image are transferred, are *projected* onto the end product. The negative emotions carry an expectancy of failure that soon becomes a self-fulfilling prophetic reality. Each time a decision is made from that base of fear, the detrimental fear-based emotional cycle is reinforced. Without awareness of these energetic influences, true personal growth is not possible.

On that same train of thought, healthy self-esteem makes for nurturing choices and projections that are securely rooted in the high vibrational frequency of love. Positive reciprocal end results of these love-based transmissions support personal growth. Gestalt builds upon the empowering principles of affirmative self-image, self-love, and self-awareness, and the sum of these traits is an increased self-esteem. Positive self-esteem makes for an enhanced life, and as broadcast, for a happy rippling cosmos.

Why should you personally care about this thing called *self-esteem*? It matters because when you've thoroughly grasped the impact of your internalized core beliefs as they affect every aspect of your life, you will be freed to consciously participate in structuring your life to your decided specifications. The fascinating expedition into the expansive process that increases the whole *you*, requires clarifying *why you* would want to learn to rely upon Gestalt as a method for enhancing your life and assisting you in reaching your grandest aspirations. To fully answer these questions calls for an intimate knowledge of "self-esteem."

Whether poor or intact, self-esteem is universal. Degrees range between a pitiable self-image on the low end of the range, to an unyielding, securely intact sense of self on the other. As a means of categorization, and mainly for billing purposes, self-esteem is a term coined by therapists to define a person's overall evaluation of his or her personally deduced value. In other words, self-esteem defines one's personal worth and competency as the sum total of subjective features as judged by the individual. How one responds in social settings both in groups or one on one, whether there is an authentic level of pride or ego that supports the whole self-image and the experience of self-satisfaction versus self-denigration are measurements of self-esteem. The compilation takes into consideration a person's appraisal of internalized beliefs in personal levels of competency and confidence and also considers future possibilities and the particular skills of the person as that person judges himself or herself to be. Considering oneself to be gifted in one

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vocation and not feel so secure about other abilities is human. There are myriad avenues of self-expression, and to my knowledge no one has ever mastered every possible talent, nor is it likely that any single individual would show an interest in every available selection at the smorgasbord of life. Feeling competent in even one specialized area is enough to satisfy most of us. Self-esteem then is an *overall* scale of the whole personal self-perception and skills set as it pertains to the ability to function in any life situation. The definition of self-esteem is most crucial when clarifying the focus that, as a condition for enhancing balanced wholeness, gestalt depends upon expanding one's confidence level, and increasing one's positive aspects of personal self-image for resultant manifesting of personal fulfillment.

Have you ever asked yourself if your life experience is unique to that of others? In your opinion, is the way you occasionally doubt your powers, or are the radiant emotional highs of your proudest moments, varied from others' emotional highs and lows? To be human is to be touched with intermittent emotional jabs and caresses, while the spectrum of possibilities is infinite, and constant. We seem never to run out of, or to be successful in outrunning emotions. We can however, take a closer look at where our triggers are located and determine who planted them, where and when they were learned, and if they are helpful and worth keeping, or best discarded.

Our mind is our powerful ally when making choices of acceptance or rejection of beliefs that affect our self-esteem, thus, our successes. You alone are responsible for leading your life. Use your mind and personal empowerment to lead, and not follow the old worn-out messages that do nothing to bolster your fulfillment. Others' reptilian perspectives of how you should and shouldn't be, and learned messages of who you are, no longer carry weight when identified as an outdated suit that no longer fits.

When I was an all-knowing adolescent, I used to think about how no one person ever truly knows another human being. I alone knew my innermost private thoughts, my longings, my funny bone, my secrets and complaints. No one else was privy to the 'me' in my head. My belief was that I could ponder and covet and think and go down intellectual holes or into ruts of nothingness, and no one knew the difference. My mind was my own, but that also meant that no one could ever truly know the real me.

Feeling as though all my emotions and thoughts were created in my personal vacuum, I experienced the freedom of unguided independence and cherished periods of divine solitude, even paradoxically, as it clashed against profound feelings of separateness from others. It was as if I solely created all my thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors in the busy little factory of my head. This is, of course not true. Unfortunately, what is accurate is that feelings of separateness are all too typical to the human race as a whole. And also real, is that for everyone, the predominant cultures, societal mores, and familial traditions and biases are all threads in individual social fabrics. As is true for everyone, my self-image was embellished with pieces of expectations, with economic and social trends, with politics, and fashions. Where I attended school, which dynamic friendships were entwined, and even the subjects taught, influenced the sectors of the whole me. The resultant glob of varied energies infused me with ideas, beliefs, and biases that I supposed, for the longest time, were of my own making. My self-esteem was steeped in environmental messages that were eventually internalized, and owned as mine, and they were owned without ever questioning or considering *why*. Erroneously, I believed I had created these biases.

Having since discovered the truths and the gifts of being raised by, with tongue-in-cheek humor, those I'll refer to as the *Wolf* family, I'll share some things I've figured out about self-

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esteem. Foremost, now that you are an adult, it is preferable that you begin to form your own ideas and beliefs about what healthy self-esteem means to you when no other is there to input ideas and opinions about *how* and *who* you "should be." Determine what it is that helps create a feeling of overall personal joyfulness. What does it take to reinforce your confidence? Conversely, what destroys your feelings of positive self-worth? What is of utmost importance to you? What values would you defend to the brink of your death? Begin to observe old internalized messages that do nothing to boost your confidence or enhance your feelings of self-worth. Consciously choose to release the harmful thoughts. Send them into the universal garbage dump for unwanted labels. These sticky issues are no longer a part of your perfect vision of yourself. Wad them up, tacky side in, and toss them into the negative vibrations incinerator. The negative shame-based lessons will never help you to get where you want to be. The emotions attached to the messages are perpetuating, are fear-based, and will stop you from attracting your deserved goodness. It is opportune time that critical self-talk and less than self-supportive behaviors surrender to a monstrously rewarding makeover of self-esteem.

Whether due to habit, apathy, or inertia, you may have allowed your dreams and aspirations, and your *self* to become unimportant, neglected, bottom drawer. It is time to begin the process of falling deeply into unconditional love with you. From this day forward, and every single day until you die, you are on a specific journey to build your self-esteem, to better yourself and thus the planet, and to enjoy an optimal life. This matters because your inner self-image comes out in almost everything you do. You matter, and your fears, and your tendency to discount your self-worth and disown your magnificence, have blocked the flow of the wondrous bounty the Universe has wanted to deliver. It matters because you've been missing huge chunks of your wholeness. Now, you will take back your life, and step onto the path to your blessed, innate power. You were born whole. Before all the fractures and armor, there was you, whole, balanced and splendid. This is *you* in your most perfect human form as nature intended. This is the "I AM" in you. This is the infinite you.

Spiritual Gestalt training recognizes awareness, specifically, *self-awareness*, as the primary life-skills tool in the hardware department. Awareness is empowering. Whether attuning to the language of internal dialog, to behaviors, attitudes, reactions, and sensations, or to the actions and feelings of the whole physical senses and body, there is much information inside of you. Once identified, your enlightened awareness brings mammoth amounts of personal power thru this newly alerted consciousness.

To transform your circumstances requires detailed information about your thoughts, habits, behaviors, and beliefs. Until acknowledged, ineffectual behaviors and coping mechanisms remain unchanged, or grow into personality disorders or a neurosis that most certainly stagnates, and fails to develop human potential. By placing fears, attitudes, and life situation under the microscope of self-awareness, one can see the current level of daily functioning, level of doubt, and tendency or ability to interact or to disengage. First discovering, and then consciously choosing *who you are*, as opposed to going through life as who 'they' think you *should* be, is empowering and liberating. It starts with heightened personal observation of how you respond, of how you use your innate human tools of intuition and discernment, of how you interact with yourself and with others, and with focus on what is happening physiologically with your body at any moment in your life adventure.

How few humans have never felt a twinge of insecurity, of doubt, of hesitation as they enter into the unknown? You may be outgoing and secure at home or around close friends, and

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then painfully misfit on the streets, and in new social settings. Which persona is the authentic representation? How does one determine perceived personal worth? Is self-esteem something we are born into, or is it developed through life experiences? In “nature versus nurture” discussions, there will likely never be an answer that satisfies everyone. Through the use of gestalt techniques, however, we all begin to recognize our self-assurances, and our own insecurities. Through conscious creation, we can then choose which traits to own, and which to discard.

In spite of, or in addition to genetic influences, you have free agency to choose the events and the reactions or interpretations to experiences. Your personal power is contained in the action of *choice*. You can choose to define your own identity, to alter your image, to decide what is true or false based upon unbiased observations and clarity. When you realize that you alone are in charge of your experience of being human, you can begin to respond accordingly. As you learn the source and value of your spirit energy, *that which is you*, you will connect universally at a higher vibrational level and will attract resonating events, opportunities, and people. While you polish your awareness skills, you will recognize gifts where previously you saw only pain.

Right Here. Right Now.

In every facet of your life, change for the better is possible. It does not take an abundance of time, money, or energy to improve your circumstances. It takes a developed acute awareness. *Gestalt* is here with you, beginning at the point where you are right this exact split second in time. In fact, there is no other moment. Unless there is an interest in re-defining and releasing an experience left unresolved, there is no need to re-visit the past. The past does not need to be the deciding factor for how you live in the future, or in the present. Today is your day to begin to change what isn't working, to bring your dreams to fruition, no matter where you've been. From the instant you choose to do so, you will move forward into your life of divinely inspired success, beginning with your present self. Your mind will shift, and like a once blown up balloon, will never again revert to the shape it held before this expanded knowingness enhanced your intelligence and your life conditions.

Along the way on this very personal journey, with guidance from tools in this book and tools from your honed instinctive intuitive nature, you will find goldmines beneath memories. You will embrace tigers, and will uncover the truths below the masks that are worn. By learning to let go of limiting beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors, you will discover your authentic self, complete with the magnificence of royalty. You are not lesser than any other soul. There is nothing of substance that eludes your grasp when you awaken your potential. As you progress and your wholeness begins to solidify, your limitless potential expands. YOU are expanding to realize previously undreamed of possibilities! Let go of the anchors and let Gestalt open you to your divine calling. Everybody has one. With Gestalt you will figure out what that calling is.

Gestalt is an existential practice that allows for full immersion into any given experience. In any situation, walk into a room, and however subtle, the scents, tastes, textures, and sights engage our physical senses. The sense of sight alone uses a quarter of the brain's processes as eyes scan surroundings and other senses perform their purposes. In fact, eyes have discreet mechanisms that detect at a subconscious level, gathering valuable information so that the brain can make decisions. Actually, we *see* more as a result of our brain function than as an effect of eye function. Equally significant to the information gathering systems, the intuitive portion of the

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brain is busy sorting and determining the safety and comfort of the environment. Together, all these senses provide data to the brain.

Signals and neural pathways are formed through repetitive use, and continue forming networks over a lifetime of interpreted, gathered data. Based on our internalized perceptions, we tweak facts to fit our values and beliefs, and somewhere along the way, we've learned to deny portions of the lesson and of our *selves*. We have been taught to ignore, and to categorize; therefore, we accept limited finite bits of information as we go through the days. With defensive guards up we interact with each other at mostly superficial levels. All the while, unnoticed clues and signposts are here to guide our way, right now if only we are aware enough to *see* and heed.

Communication or Avoidance of Intimacy?

It is starkly ironic that in this purported communications age, humans have face-to-face interactions less than ever before. There is a lot of high-speed texting, emailing, twitting, and chatting going on, and very little genuine and intimate communicating taking place. Much of what passes as conversation is nothing more than a cryptic phone call made to a message-censoring voice mail system, or a witty-repartee posted on a cyber-wall. With the advent of technology, human touch and authentic connections are a fading condition of humanness. Sans touch and connections, as a species and at individual levels, we cease to thrive; we die unattended as an abandoned garden withers. As a step in enhanced self-awareness, first realize that at the very least, self-esteem is not to be measured by the number of friends on one's social site page. Self-esteem is an inside-out job.

Now that your awareness level is elevated, as you approach others throughout the day, whether strangers, associates, or loved ones, answer the following questions with full awareness of *your* physical and emotional self. With keen attentiveness, notice what is going on in your body and in your emotions. How are you feeling in your gut? Are you looking at the approaching person or are your eyes diverted? Are your eyes sizing up the opponent? Do you use your eyes as deflectors, pretending that if you don't look at them you won't be seen? What thoughts are surfacing in your mind as others approach? Keep your awareness on your *feelings*. Do you feel safe or intimidated? Does the connection feel authentic? Forced? Threatening? Supportive?

As you pay attention to your own feelings, see if you can determine whom you are emulating. Where did you learn to experience and interpret your feelings? Do you sense one of your parents peeking out through your emotions? Have you felt the presence of a caregiver's bias in your thoughts? Is there a time from your childhood when you learned how to feel a particular emotion, or how to respond to a circumstance? Are your palms sweating? What is your breathing doing? Just continue to notice. There is no right or wrong here, just notice. How do you *feel*?

As you remain focused on your whole self, simultaneously see others. How are others reacting to your presence? Are they disarmed? Are they disarming? Do they seem to openly engage you or are they guarded? Stay focused on how you are feeling, both physically and emotionally. Is your heart beating steadily or is it erratic? What is your temperature? Are you calm or nervous? Do others appear calm or nervous? Are you sensing any projections from either side? Have you discovered any similarities in posture? What is your posture now? Are you bent or are you straight and proud? Are you making eye contact? Do you feel authentic?

It was suggested at the book's beginning that before beginning this journey of self-exploration you invest in a personal journal for recording your private experiences. In your day

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journal, write about your feelings now. Although it's not imperative that you write every answer and observation, please be mindfully alert to the messages you are receiving from your body and your mind and your spirit as you interact with your surroundings.

Be simultaneously aware of the broadcasts you are transmitting and receiving as you go through this life. What energy do you typically bring into the scene? Without judgment or categorization begin to be aware of your personal energy transmissions. No right or wrong, just focus awareness onto what is. Notice how your energy affects others, and how your closest acquaintances affect you with their energies. Write about it.

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As obvious informational gatherers, these questions and answers are too often ignored:

- What is being transmitted?
- What is being heard?
- How does it feel?
- What is the body doing?
- Are the eyes averted or direct?
- What purpose do eyes have in any scenario?
- What are the hands doing?
- Are the fingers loose, or is the fist clenched?
- Is the heart pace steady?
- Is the mouth dry?
- Are the armpits damp?
- What of the elusive sense, intuition?
- Is intuition really a sense?
- Do men have intuition?
- Are mother's better at being in tuned with a sixth-sense?
- What part does instinct play in an initial meeting with strangers?
- Does our posture depend upon the setting or the stranger?
- What purpose does the body serve in any given situation?
- What signals does the brain send?
- Where were all those internalized messages of self-worth developed?
- Are actions and reactions learned responses to stimuli?
- What effect does genetics have on my success?
- What gifts are hidden in my experiences?
- Will it hurt to be whole?

Your rewarding journey begins by being aware of your whole self. Ask the preceding questions as you enter into new situations, as you meet people, and as you engage in activities with family and friends. When you walk through the local mall or grocery store pay attention to your body. Notice how is it *feeling*. How is it responding to the stimuli in the setting? What are *you* experiencing? There is an enormous amount of self-awareness to be gathered thru mastery of consciously, logically paying attention to physical and emotional sensations. It may entertain you to discover the ways in which you interact, or avoid, others. Be sure to journal your captivating enlightenments as they occur, while the events are fresh on your mind. The first step on your journey to personal empowerment thru Gestalt is in present awareness. You are beginning to align with your inner truth. It is imperative to be consciously in the *now*. Nothing else is real. The past is gone and is tainted by projections and untrustworthy memories; the future is fantasy. The present is the only reality. If you watch your mind wander to times of before and after, gently bring your focus back to the immediate now-ness of your life. Stay present.

Your cells and your spirit have memories, and contain a cavernous fount of informational awareness awaiting the empty ladle. What are you experiencing while reading this text? What does it all mean? Begin to pay attention, to be aware of your body's posture and physical sensations, and to your emotional states. Be mindful of your thoughts, and when an unproductive memory or thought comes to mind, release it and replace it with a new personally affirming

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belief in the moment. The connection between your body, mind, and spirit contains a gold mine of information, and information translates into power. This treasure-trove has been awaiting discovery by you, has known that one day you would awaken to the truth buried beneath the rubble of ages. Your mind, body, and spirit are ecstatic that you have begun to understand how integration via gestalt techniques will personally improve your life on a daily basis.

Facilitating rapid transformation demands an arsenal of gear, including clarity of how you have affirmed your life into being. Throughout the text, explanations are provided as to why *all affirmations attract*. Exactly what one is affirming will be demonstrated so you can discover how to get the most favorable results. We are constantly manifesting with our thoughts, so being cognizant of one's thoughts is key to attracting positive life events. Beginning to hear inner thoughts is enlightening. What are you creating, currently? Changing your life starts from within the chambers of your mind. To change your life you are going to change your mind. Be fearless, and trust yourself to expand into your magnificence.

Humans generally learn quickest by experiencing an event firsthand. Experiential learning employs the whole set of educational corridors for each individual person. Combining the five physical senses with the nonphysical spiritual senses of faith, intuition, and innate knowing, permits you to engage completely into any situation. Using these combined physical and intuitive senses allows for a rapid, more extensive awareness, with resultant personal empowerment. Imagine the power on this little blue globe if all Earth's inhabitants were secure, felt complete equilibrium, and had no reason to doubt themselves or others. When humans are busy being present as they are meant to live, there is peace. Being a balanced human does not include behaviors of infringing on the rights of others, nor of being a victim or slave to any other.

To enhance self-esteem through repetitive exercises, each chapter herein offers opportunities to learn by example, and also provides prompts for encouraging thought. If you have read to this point, you understand that gestalt is focused on the person as a whole entity. For the purpose of allowing you to return to specific desired sections for specific reinforcements, each chapter is designed to stand on its own. For instance, the chapter on dream interpretation provides multiple means with which to glean important information from dreams. You may wish to return to this chapter often, while learning to unearth hidden messages in nightly journeys. As with any technique, the more often the tools are used, the greater the skill becomes. With practice, and with consistent dream journaling, it's as if a magic passageway is opened with a world full of pleasure and resolution just inside the door. You need never again have a dream you do not completely understand, and from which you do not benefit. Your mind is sending you important signals. Pay attention, and reap the rewards of polished self-awareness.

While realizing one's wholeness as it pertains to self-esteem issues, consciously consider influences coming from external sources. In addition to factors of genetics and cellular memories, stimulus comes as a result of zeitgeists, due to patterns replicated by the morphogenetic field,² and as products of environmental expectations and affects. Add to the list of possible influences the account of the *Hundredth Monkey*,³ knowing instinctively the skills that took years of evolution to bring forth, knowledge that may have originally exhibited at a remote location. We are dealing with much more than we can simply see with our physical sense

² Chapter two, *The Mystery of Thought*, clarifies the morphogenetic field as an invisible field that replicates nonphysical forms allowing resonating species to know what others in the same species have learned.

³ *The Hundredth Monkey*, Ken Keyes, Jr. ISBN-10: 094202401X. The Hundredth Monkey is explained as a phenomenon of intelligence distribution.

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of eyesight at first glimpse. In a universe of energies that support us and our every whim, we are engaging in the whole, the gestalt, of all physical and non-physical senses, behaviors, conversations, attitudes, internalized beliefs, old memorized recordings of how things *should be*, of whom we *should be*, and endless streams of input. We are working with the entirety of humanness, as if it is malleable, singular, and tangible putty awaiting our molding skills. It is, and we are!

Gestalt encompasses all aspects of humanness and includes knowledge about the importance of whole foods, the benefits of learned breathing techniques, of the value of consistent involvement in a practice of movement and exercise, and of participation in rewarding and enjoyable hobby and career choices. Most of all, Gestalt incorporates you. Your self-esteem, your unique sense of self, and everything you think, say, do, and dream is interwoven into the fabric that makes up your interpreted experiences. Gestalt gives you back your personal power, boosts your sense of worth, and provides you the instruments with which to redesign your life.

Realizing your merit, and consciously treating all others with respect, raises the bar on relationships, both personal and professional. Make no excuses; you are complete, and are completely in charge of your life. Making conscious choices that positively impact your well-being ensures your planned success. Your every single decision ripples the effects of those actions outward. Planning to be a success means defining clear goals, which are your dreams, and moving towards them within a determined deadline. Your commitment is to yourself; it is not to the goal, per se. Your goal is fueled with the desire to achieve. It is, as you are, organic, and malleable. Tweak and improve your plan often.

Without a plan, by error of default, you are in fact planning on stagnation. Having great ideas and dreams is only half the equation. The goal line will never be reached if it isn't identified, and once identified, clearly targeted, and then consistently moved toward. Unless watching endless hours of reruns is the endgame, lounging on the sofa with the chips and beer isn't going to take you anywhere except perhaps prematurely to the morgue.

Commit to no more living life by default. Break the stagnation habit. Apathy and inertia will kill you, or at very least, will prevent you from experiencing a full and inspired life. There's a whole Universe of exciting possibilities to explore! Vow to consciously create your personal definition of success as you wish it to be. Take some quiet time alone to get very clear on your dreams and aspirations, and then purposefully take necessary action every day. Take the first steps with absolute faith and certainty in the secure womb of the future. Gestalt will enhance your life in ways yet unimaginable. If you are prepared to shift on your axis, if you are ready and willing and eager to grow, and if you mindfully choose to do so, let go of oppressive anchors, and let Gestalt show you how to enrich your experience of being human.

Thought Prompt:

Despite the fact that you have internalized outside information from parents, friends, teachers, classmates, society, etc., and have made it your own, you have now learned to recognize that every occurrence in your adult life is the direct result of choices you've made, however consciously or not, and every experience is based predominantly on your feelings of self-worth. In conjunction with this new awareness, you now take total responsibility for your life experiences whether from the past, the future, or most importantly, presently. Recognizing

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that every life choice is made either from an energy standpoint of fear or love, what will you do differently, starting today, to ensure you attract positive happenings? Write your thoughts about this new awareness in your journal.

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Twelve Steps to Self Esteem

- Step One: Meet the monster. Meeting the monster starts with looking in the mirror and saying hello to the guy or gal looking back.
- Step Two: Describe the monster. Begin descriptively defining the monster incorporated into your psyche, and hear your words as you describe the monster.
- Step Three: Disembowel the monster. Silly monster turns out to be just a worthless old fear you've fed with your thoughts and behaviors.
- Step Four: Embrace the monster. Express gratitude for the gift hidden beneath the dung.
- Step Five: Release the monster. Say good by to the deflated monster. Consciously release the memories.
- Step Six: Fill the void (empowerment). Acknowledge your personal power.
- Step Seven: Determine your calling. Make decisions; decide on the path you will take to freedom.
- Step Eight: Activate the path. Energetically activate your calling by writing down your goals with intent.
- Step Nine: Change your brain. Reinforce the neural pathways in your mind using affirmations, visualizations, and meditation.
- Step Ten: Enjoy the process. Each day, take at least one step forward intending joyfulness in your experience at every moment.
- Step Eleven: Grow younger as your cells heal. Grow younger daily as your cells and psyche heal and thrive.
- Step Twelve: Celebrate YOU. At the beginning and end of each day, and as often as the urge compels you, express gratitude for *being* you. You are divine. You are whole.