



Going Within

A Guide for Inner Transformation

Shirley MacLaine

**IF WE ARE NOT IN HARMONY WITH OURSELVES, HOW CAN WE POSSIBLY BE IN HARMONY WITH THE
WORLD WE INHABIT?**

I am learning that it is my choice to perceive the world in a more optimistic and positive light because it is also my choice to perceive myself that way. Every single day is a lesson in the old adage that the transformation of the world we see begins with the transformation of how we see ourselves. Everything begins at home and the choices we make within the Self.

I am shifting from feelings of helplessness about having any effect in helping to change the world to a position that recognizes the power within me. A great awakening is taking place. Individuals all across the world are tapping in to their internal power to elevate their lives to a higher octave of happiness and productivity. Sharing the search, and the techniques of searching, is only a part of the help we can give one another. *Going Within* offers keys for enlightening one's inner perceptions. It is a kind of personal road map to achieving spiritual clarity.

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DANCING IN THE LIGHT

“DON’T FALL OFF THE MOUNTAIN”

GOING WITHIN

IT’S ALL IN THE PLAYING

OUT ON A LIMB

YOU CAN GET THERE FROM HERE

DANCE WHILE YOU CAN

MY LUCKY STARS

Going Within



A GUIDE FOR INNER TRANSFORMATION

Shirley MacLaine



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For

Sachi

Mother

Kathleen

And

Bella

and all the other women *and* men who seek
the spiritual feminine in themselves

And for

Ian and Betty Ballantine,

who were there from the beginning

*One should start with oneself
But never end with oneself.*

Contents

Author's Preface

- 1 The Seminar
 - 2 The Ancient New Age
 - 3 Dealing with the "Reality" of Stress
 - 4 Meditate and Ye Shall Find
 - 5 Superconsciousness and the Higher Self
 - 6 The New Age and Rational Thought
 - 7 A Rainbow of Expression
 - 8 Meditating on the Chakras
 - 9 Crystals
 - 10 Sound Meditation
 - 11 Sex and the Chakras
 - 12 All Time at Once
 - 13 Spiritual Adventures
 - 14 Light from Within
 - 15 My Body as Ultimate Atoms of Awareness
 - 16 Childlike Pursuit
- CODA Science and God?

Author's Preface

I have been having an extraordinary adventure for the past seven years. Some would call it an adventure in cosmic consciousness, and while I would agree with that, I would also agree that it is an adventure which enjoys the advantage of extremely pragmatic, down-to-earth application in real life.

I am learning that it is my choice to perceive the world in a more optimistic and positive light because I am learning that it is also my choice to perceive myself that way. Every single day is a lesson in the old adage that the transformation of the world we see begins with the transformation of how we see ourselves. Everything begins at home and the choices we make within the Self.

I used to hear these words and privately feel that this was simple “selfishness” or even dangerously self-centered fantasy. No longer. To me, this concept has become a giant truth: “Know thyself”—and everything else follows. In fact I now realize that it is impossible for me to understand anything of the world, its inhabitants, their suffering, their conflicts or the full potential of life itself until I am in touch with these same currents and truths inside myself. To understand and love others begins with understanding and loving oneself.

These are issues of the spirit, not of the mind and body. When I began the investigation of understanding the spiritual aspect of my nature *and* that of everyone else, the missing piece of the puzzle of the human condition began to fall into place.

The study took work, discipline, and a concentrated effort in unraveling the ancient techniques of what I call spiritual technology. The more I applied the tools of what I investigated, the more I found my own experience, my own attitudes, and my own perceptions transforming my life into a more positive and peaceful adventure.

As the millenium approaches and a new century beckons, the complications of living are becoming more challenging. Millions of people all over the world are seeking to transform and improve their lives. They are painfully aware that the answers for a changed world are not coming from sources outside of themselves. The answers lie within.

That is what this book is about. GOING WITHIN offers keys for enlightening one's inner perceptions. It is a kind of personal roadmap for achieving spiritual clarity that can make the transformation in inner attitude improve outer reality. Hopefully my own search, with its methods, techniques, and new approaches, can be helpful to those who are also seeking to reduce conflict, anger, confusion and stress in their lives.

This book grew out of the year I spent crisscrossing the country conducting seminars on inner transformation. Never before had I spent such quality time with so many people engaged in their own desire for improvement. The intense, face-to-face contact and sharing of deep, powerful and honest emotional struggles in our dangerously complicated world helped me articulate and shape the journey I was making myself. Together we became more skilled in the techniques of meditation and visualization. Together we deepened our understanding

of our intuitive gifts and of the body's esoteric centers of energy and their role in both physical and emotional healing. Together we strengthened our belief that each one of us has the responsibility to create the world in which we choose to live.

I don't expect that any of us will succeed in transforming ourselves into a state of peaceful bliss in this lifetime. But each one of us *can* help to leave a better world fit for our children to live in, a world that is more trusting in the belief that inside each of us is a wealth of power to learn how to love and to change.

This is indeed a difficult and sometimes threatening time for all of us. But it is also an astonishing opportunity for growth if we choose to look at it that way. The very urgency of the need for change will accelerate the metamorphosis required to proceed into the new century and the next millenium.

The longest journey begins with the first step. Perhaps the longest journey is the journey within. It is never too late to begin.

The Seminar



The person who knows how to laugh at himself will never cease to be amused.

I walked into the Grand Ballroom, down the center aisle, lightly touched the wireless microphone nestled neatly into my sweater at the throat, cleared my voice, braced my shoulders, and climbed onto the makeshift stage.

I turned around and looked out into the faces of fifteen hundred people who had come to experience a weekend of spiritual investigation with me.

I would be standing on this stage for about eighteen hours, with no real idea of the emotional and spiritual needs and questions of the crowd until they spontaneously expressed themselves. Knowing from professional experience that every audience is different, I was still aware that this was no ordinary audience. This was a collective of individuals, every single one of whom had a story and a prior life and a particular need that had brought him or her to this place at this time. It was anybody's guess what would happen. I stood before them wondering what they would do.

As I looked out over the crowd I was suddenly stunned at the fact that my life had brought me to this point. In a timeless moment I flashed back to myself as a small girl of three wearing a four-leaf-clover hat, with an apple clutched firmly in hand as I faced an audience singing "An Apple for the Teacher." Had I begun as a performer even then in order to perfect the craft of communication so that fifty years later I could attempt to make simple sense of complicated concepts of spirituality? Had it all been leading to this? I took a deep breath.



I've always known that I am basically a communicating performer—that is, someone more challenged on a stage than in the safe environment of a movie studio. I need personal contact with others. I need to know how I am doing. And now I needed to "feel" others who were on the same path as I was. The letters, phone calls, and interviews that had resulted from my books and my *Out on a Limb* miniseries were not sufficient now. I needed to go deeper, myself as well as with others who also wanted to explore within themselves. I was hungry for an exchange that would be mutually helpful.

I studied their faces and reflected upon what had brought us all here. I was about to conduct a series of weekend seminars all across America, having chosen this method of communication because it was personal and because I wanted to give back some of the knowledge I had been privileged to gain from others much more evolved and educated than myself. I wanted to be with people who were working seriously on their own searches. I also secretly wanted to find out if it was really possible to communicate such esoteric concepts in a structured manner that would make pragmatic and logical sense. Could we, among us, bring spiritual questions down to Earth?

This very question has been responsible for my doubts, even fear, of having to give up my professional approach to presentation. By that I mean I always needed to feel prepared and well rehearsed before I appeared in front of people. I needed to learn a prepared text when I made a speech; I needed to know my lines before I sang a song or acted a scene. I had always carefully prepared my shows, with an orchestra, backup dancers, and all the highly skilled hoopla of costumes and lighting that are the building blocks of such a show. And even though invariably, extemporaneous material arose out of the varying reactions of each audience,

was comfortable with ad-libbing in that situation because the spontaneity arose out of knowing what I was doing.

But here I would be on a bare stage with nothing to present but myself, the knowledge had gleaned over the years, and my thoughts on esoteric, far-out concepts, based on strong personal experience.



And now, here I stood. I felt naked and vulnerable before the crowd of people, except for the twenty-five-page security blanket of a speech clutched in my hands. I looked out at them and they settled and hushed. Suddenly I knew I would lose this audience if I referred to the speech even once.

So I made a decision. After acknowledging their applause, I put the speech down on the table behind me. I took another deep breath, and stood, waiting. The room became very still, currents of silent energy hovering, waiting. With my eyes wide open, I meditated, asking for help. I knew I had guides and teachers. They might reside in an unseen dimension but they were nevertheless very real to me. I allowed myself to believe that I was aligning, with the earth and with a spiritual dimension that could see me through whatever was required to make a pragmatic sense to everyone in the audience.

Many, many thoughts went through my mind in what was, in fact, a very brief time, but at that time, power seemed to flow into me and through me. I began to feel imbued with confidence. It was a glorious feeling. Not arrogant but richly confident.

Feeling relaxed, centered, and certain, somewhere in my being, that nothing could go wrong, I knew I would be able to keep a hard-edged grip on the esoteric material. I actually began to experience a new vibration of harmony in my body as well. My sense of urgency left me. With the relaxation came a feeling of humor, a lightness of heart. I felt no worry, no tension, as though I was floating in the warmth of friends. I thought of other situations in my life when I had been tense, anxious, and even downright terrified. If only I had known about meditating for help from a dimension of spirituality. It would have been so much easier and more productive.

More than anything else, I felt no sense of time, as though I would be living the entire weekend as a whole, that the clock would not matter at all, that I would be experiencing an inner time. Yet, I was aware that I would cover each area of material within reasonable time parameters, that I would call lunch breaks (and kidney breaks) at appropriate intervals, that I would pace myself and the people with me so that we would all gain from the experience. In short, I felt a new professional trust.

I would be able to extend the joy of live communication to include the mysteries of the spiritual realms. Together we would pursue those dimensions and trust that our motivations were based on that ever-deepening quest to know self.

There have been a few times in my acting and performing career when I have felt such a keen sense of harmonious elation. These were times when the energy flow was so rich, so full, so *total*, that I could simply “go” with the security of what was happening, and completely surrender to the sheer joy of what I was doing.

That is exactly what happened at that first seminar, and, with variations, continued to happen through the year of seminars that followed.



Something else happened. I realized that people were coming because each person wanted to connect with his or her own higher power and they felt there was more to their potential for this connection than they had been able to reach alone. They knew that working together with large groups could accelerate the process because the energy in the room was intensified. Thus I became aware that there was a new movement growing; that people wanted to work together, share together, investigate together, and heal themselves together. For far too long they had felt isolated in their conflicts. If we were going to improve ourselves and the world, we would have to learn to love, respect, and work together in order to achieve that goal.

As I traveled the country I found that thousands of people were opening up and surrendering to their own internal spiritual power, the power that lay waiting for them to access and enjoy in each other.

People had grown wary of giving their power to outside gurus and teachers and were ready to reassume their own internal authority, to work within themselves.

They knew *they* were going to have to do the work, that I was not a guru or a teacher, that I could only share experience, gently lead and suggest, relate what I had done and what I had gained from it, in the hope that that would help them to find their own strengths. They knew that I was attempting to find, my way just as they were finding theirs.

Never in all my years of public life had I met such intelligent and courageous people. People from all walks of life—doctors, scientists, psychiatrists, home-makers, business executives, even politicians. All were stretching their vistas of truth. They had come undaunted by raised eyebrows, snickers, and sometimes downright ridicule—each one seemed to have experienced the colorful family dramas that apparently accompany every self-search. They seemed glad, indeed delighted, to be able to talk freely about their beliefs, their doubts, their traumas, their questions, and their triumphs. One man said he was learning to fly an airplane because he was taking himself more lightly!

Each of the seminars produced hundreds of stories, each a real-life drama, nor were any feelings held back. I was amazed, and I felt gifted, and grateful for the trust we were able to exchange.

We laughed together about the reactions of friends and family, some of whom did not always understand, and soon it was clear that nothing demeaning or tragic could really happen, other than serving as a catalyst for a very rich vein of metaphysical humor to be mined by Johnny Carson and comics everywhere. We did not care. The world needed some fresh laughs anyway.

People came bearing crystals, books, handmade presents, candy, carrot cake, even frankincense and myrrh, a wonderful combined incense. Gifts, for me and for each other. At first I had a problem accepting such gifts, feeling that the people were giving their power to me, but one of the great lessons was not only to learn to accept love and expressions of

even from strangers, but to look at how arrogant it was of me to believe that my power was in danger of usurping theirs!

In company with a thousand strangers, people openly trusted in spiritual sharing and talked freely about their heretofore closely guarded secrets. They knew no trust would be betrayed. We meditated together. On inner personal levels we contacted departed loved ones together. We talked about fear, evil, how to learn to love more unconditionally—and always there was the trust in ourselves and one another.

They came with pillows to use when sitting on the floor, with notepaper, and with open hearts. We learned early on to understand the theory of power present when three or more people gathered in the name of universal Divine Energy. Perhaps it was the cosmic triad—one for mind, one for body, one for spirit. In any case, the more people there were, the more each person's inner power was increased. Sometimes the energy in the room was so intense it could actually be seen by the "sensitives" attending. If there were one thousand individual souls working with nonfragmented, focused intention in the same room, the power of the collective-soul energy became one colossal vibration.

There were many beginners who had never meditated or visualized in their lives. The more advanced people often learned a great deal from the beginners because they were so pure and uneducated about metaphysics. One can become as intellectually arrogant about spirituality as about empirical science.

So everyone worked together to allow themselves to let go. I discouraged note-taking, and tape recorders were not allowed, not only because it disturbed others but because such techniques blocked the process of absorbing the information through the heart and the feelings. These devices focused on the mind instead, which was in direct opposition to what we were attempting to achieve—a wholeness of concentration that included body, mind, and spirit. At first I'd notice a momentary expression of panic when people had to put down the pads and pencils, but soon their faces became less strained, more relaxed, and ultimately full of wonder about what they were feeling in themselves.

After a question-and-answer period during which people realized they had many problems in common and which allowed them to get to know one another, I guided a collective meditation, using natural sound effects of birds, bubbly flowing streams, soft breezes, crystal gently tinkling, and music that promoted a feeling of well-being and peace.

These collective meditations, some lasting as long as two hours, were often deeply cathartic for many people (including myself), because we were making contact with a very personal essence that I can only describe as being connected to the Divine. When the connection is felt, the result opens floodgates of insight and well-being. Emotional catharsis is in itself a practical aid to solving personal problems and reducing stress.

The study of spirituality and metaphysics, therefore, is motivated by extremely pragmatic considerations, particularly with respect to improving one's performance in life, and hence one's feeling of well-being. Emotional catharsis can also create a climate for clarity of thought, enabling one to confront complex problems, both internal and external, allowing priorities to emerge that can then be resolved, or at least put into perspective. Such a study is not at all an exercise in fantasy—at least not in my experience. Going within, touching one's inner self, holds solutions for many people for whom nothing else seems to work. And going

within in a collective environment carries with it an extraordinary power, because everyone is working and meditating with the same intention; there is no fragmentation of focus. Each individual in the room trusts that there is a higher power in himself or herself as well as everyone else. As a result, the process of connecting with that power is accelerated.

There we'd be, in the Grand Ballroom of some hotel in a large city, at the center of urban plastic and concrete. Next door the Shriners might be having a convention.

We were so silent that often someone from outside would open a door and peer in wondering if the Grand Ballroom was indeed occupied. In meditation, our people were absorbed, enthralled in the exploration of themselves, coming to terms with and clearing out whatever they needed to in their lives.

I'd ask them to picture themselves with someone they felt had hurt them more than any other, then to go deep into the soul level of communication and ask that person why the hurt had been necessary. Nearly everyone got an "answer." And apparently the answers were of such significance that most people allowed themselves to weep openly about that hurtful experience for the first time in their lives. On some soul level they were talking to the person in question. People thus confronted their own anger, their feelings of abandonment, rejection and loneliness. And through the courage of confrontation they became more illumined, clearer about their personal motivations.

They all wanted to talk, to share their internal experiences. Problems held in common with others opened up areas for animated discussions with one another. (Indeed, many friendships were sparked by these seminars, and later cemented into lasting relationships.)

The stories that people related were astonishing in their frankness. One woman told the group she had understood and forgiven a man who had raped her. A man understood why his father had beaten him. A young woman understood and forgave her mother for abandoning her at the age of seven. The stories and personal dramas were touching, alarming, funny—and the resolutions infinitely satisfying. People trusted the concept that they could indeed clear out their emotional pain by going within themselves. They trusted the idea that on the same deep soul level they could connect with the soul of another human being. Soon they saw that the clearing had everything to do with how *they* perceived the problem and nothing to do with the person whom they had previously perceived to have inflicted pain upon them.

Sometimes, while guiding the meditations, I would proceed involuntarily to clear out some of my own pain. Whenever that happened, I found myself crying, having lost my control of the collective experience. I had as much to clear as everybody else and it was temptingly easy to flow into the collective energy because it was so powerfully accessible. But I could not afford to lose myself without losing the group. So I found that I needed to do my own clearing privately, alone, either in my room during lunch break or at night when I was finished with the seminar.

The seminars were continuously productive of insights, humor, warmly touching experiences with thousands of people—a constant ebb and flow of energy that was always rewarding. What was most interesting was that I was *never* tired. As a matter of fact, the residue of the weekend-seminar energy stayed with me until Wednesday of each week whereupon the dissipation left me bereft and I longed for the next weekend to come sooner. A description of the "energy" is difficult. I can only say it had something to do with feeling

was inside a “spiritual, God-source vibration.” I knew we were collectively accessing the spiritual realms when we meditated together, but it was as though we each acknowledged that our guides and teachers were present and helping us in a way more gently powerful than we had previously had the nerve to admit.



Before embarking on the seminars I was concerned about conducting them without benefit of a degree or a license of some kind. There wasn't much I could do about it, however, because there are no degrees or credentials in spirituality or metaphysics, which is interesting in itself. Actually, some courses in philosophy, physics, mathematics, and transpersonal psychology come close—which is also interesting. I remember how my father talked about discussing “unseen truths” when he was a student and a professor of psychology and philosophy at Johns Hopkins University. “We all respected traditional education along the lines,” he would say, “but we also *knew* there was something more.”

Just before the seminars began, my father passed on. He had been a teacher all his life. I considered canceling the first few dates but I knew he would have wanted me to carry on.

So I found myself, by no small coincidence, in Virginia Beach, staying in the same hotel in which my father had brought us on vacation during a summer that provided a self-conscious twelve-year-old with a traumatic experience. It had to do with public humiliation.

I was swimming in the Atlantic, having developed a crush on the lifeguard, when a surging wave knocked me over and the top of my two-piece bathing suit came apart and was washed away. I climbed to my knees sputtering but glad to be alive, until I looked down and saw that I was exposed to the lifeguard in all my teenage splendor. I was so embarrassed I wanted to die. He smiled, which made it even worse. I ran back to the hotel. For years, Virginia Beach and a pounding surf were a combination that made me inwardly cringe.

As I stood looking out at the same beach, the same surf, from the same hotel, I realized I would, as an adult, be dealing with the same issue—potential public humiliation.

It was all tied in with my father somehow. He had been an innovative teacher but had also been concerned with what people thought. In fact, “social appropriateness” had deterred his growth and blunted his courage. I wasn't going to let that happen to me. I wanted to be myself regardless of what anybody thought. I turned away from the window and went down to the hotel ballroom. The seminar was a great success. All the time, I felt that my father was with me, helping me from the other side as I embarked on a new form of audience participation. There were moments when I felt him guide me as to what to say next, how to make a transition, how to express my thoughts. It was as though, from his vantage point, he now realized there was no point in worrying about what others thought. He was telling me to be true to myself. At the end of the weekend, Virginia Beach was snowed in and as a result no one could get out of town. Mini-seminars sprang up in hallways and restaurants. I stood by my hotel window looking out at the windswept beach where I had been mortified at losing my bathing-suit top. I felt my father beside me. “So much for humiliation,” I said to myself. He felt him nod in agreement.

Each city had its own “feeling,” its own rhythms, its own pace—and its own peculiarities.

In San Diego my own people wouldn't let me into the ballroom because I wasn't wearing an ID badge.

In Seattle a woman swooned with ecstasy during a meditation, whereupon one of our Facilitators called the paramedics, who brought the police. TV cameras were outside waiting for any bit of cosmic scandal, but Midge Costanza, my able administrative assistant, put herself in front of the door and said, "You'll go in there and ruin the meditation in progress over my dead body." She didn't need to die. They left.

In San Francisco we were at the Moscone Center and someone put up flags flying outside that correctly matched the order of the chakra colors we visualized as an exercise. "Cosmic patriotism," someone said. After the first chanting meditation, my driver, who sat in on the seminar, remarked, "You know, I believe Om is where the heart is."

I, in the meantime, was experiencing the rigors and discomfort of a temporary bridge that had fallen out of my mouth (times for visits to my dentist were few and far between). A local dentist from San Francisco showed up in my hotel room. He was gay, but was wearing rubber gloves. That night I spoke at an AIDS dinner (trying to hold in my bridge as I spoke) associating and interrelating with many people who were suffering from AIDS. San Francisco provided me with an opportunity to test my own spirituality and trust that there was nothing to fear and that my teeth would stay in besides.

In Boston we had union problems with workers who wouldn't set up the room in time. They said it shouldn't matter to us because we could just levitate through the day. A reporter who was attending from New York City wrote that his experience in connecting with his Higher Self had been intriguing, since it occurred at two-thirty in the afternoon and he hadn't yet had lunch. His Higher Self turned out to be a thick steak and some french fries.

Along with the other problems we had a group of "Future Citizens of America" in a convention room next to our meditating spiritual seekers. They were young adults (whatever that means) and thought it was amusing to rap on the doors of our ballroom and try to crack our concentration. "We thought you'd be out of your bodies and wouldn't hear us," said one future CIA operative. I told him maybe I was out of my body, but he was out of his mind. He ceased and desisted.

In Albuquerque I forgot all my notes. I left them on the airplane. Even though I hadn't used them, they were there for me to refer to as support and preparation. I panicked and became very depressed until I finally got myself together and realized I must have forgotten them purposely, for a good reason. From then on I worked *entirely* spontaneously and found it a very pleasurable experience and the people responded even more.

In Chicago there were so many people (nearly fifteen hundred) that we couldn't seat them all in festival fashion on the floor. There was a jovial Bar Mitzvah going on next door and the celebrating and music filtered through the walls. I didn't think anything would work. I suggested that everyone go into a meditation and ask for help. The music immediately stopped and somehow there was room for everybody to either sit on the floor or find chairs along walls. Judeo-Christian guidance, you might say.

In Los Angeles there were many journalists attending who were there not for reporting but for personal learning. One of them, from the *Los Angeles Times*, stood up and said, "Since I've been working with my higher power I've changed my life and my journalistic work has improved." She added, "So I think newspaper editors would do well to rely more on the Source rather than their sources!" She got a big hand.

New York City (both times) was the most serious and committed group. It was always the largest and the most quiet. Bella Abzug and some of her political staff were there, the press following them around saying, "You believe all this stuff now?" She responded by saying, "Shirley's my friend and I always consider seriously whatever she does." Several journalists wrote good, well-informed pieces.

In Dallas something incredible (even from my viewpoint) occurred. The water in the Fairmont Hotel was cut off due to a break in a water main. Water was gushing out into the street. I suggested to my crowd that we do a meditation visualizing the water backing up so that the workers could find the break. Right after that collective visualization the electrical power went out. I had no microphone, the air conditioner shut down, and there were no lights. Since I was running late anyway, I brought that day's seminar to a close and went outside to see what was wrong. On the street in front of the hotel the workers said, "The strangest thing just happened. The water out here suddenly stopped flowing, then it backed up and flooded the basement of the hotel until it covered the electrical transformer, which caused the power blackout." I nodded and said it was all too bad. To me this was an example of the power of collective visualization. I was careful, after that, about how I used it.

The following week, in another Los Angeles seminar, every time I came near an elevator the power went out. I kept the crowd waiting fifteen minutes because I couldn't get into an elevator that worked! I do not know why this happened and continues to happen to me on some level with electrical equipment. In fact, the night I saw *Phantom of the Opera* in London the chandelier that was supposed to "fall" over the audience and crash onto the stage didn't work! The manager of the theater said that had never happened before.

On reflection, I think that every time electronic equipment fails around me it is because I am feeling distorted and out of alignment. I *am* developing my power but I also have a long way to go. Hence, developing one's inner power requires the responsibility to go all the way. Each of the times electronic equipment became distorted was a time when I felt out of "sync." I was either anxious or nervous or worried.

In Washington, D.C., I sat in my hotel room with Senator Claiborne Pell (chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee), the Duke of Liechtenstein, Bella Abzug, and several other people from Congress as we listened to Whitley Streiber (*Communion*) and Bud Hopkins (*The Intruders*) talk about their experiences with UFOs. Hopkins had brought a girl with him who claimed that she had been impregnated invisibly by an extraterrestrial. She said she had brought the baby to term, only to have it dematerialized by the ETs before she could see it. The doctors were as shocked as she because the fetus *had* been there and disappeared. However, they weren't as shocked as the politicians listening to the story, who were perhaps beginning to realize that there was an entirely separate reality occurring in America that

could somehow impact on the political system. I was amused as we sat there listening to the story of a disappearing fetus. "I wonder how Phyllis Schafly would handle that," said Bell. She added, "Congress was never like this."



During the seminars, I was learning to work with my feminine spiritual energy, learning to trust it more than I ever had. And I knew the experience would profoundly affect my approach to my profession as an actress and performer. The feminine energy was that of allowance, trust, and tolerance. I was *letting* myself trust that everything would go well if I just got out of my own way. I consciously caught myself feeling anxiety and stress, and *stopped*. That meant giving up old professional approaches to public appearances. As a result, I had a love affair with the "moment." I had read so much about living in the moment—appreciating the NOW. I finally challenged myself to understand what that was all about. And I loved it. Life itself was all about NOW, I came to realize, not about the past or future. If I worried about what I might have done in the past, or what I might do in the future, the NOW suffered. So I set about expanding my concept and boundaries of NOW. Because of this perspective, I never got tired. Exhaustion was foreign to me. I could have gone on for hours. Of course I loved the material and never lost interest in it, because of the deep concentration on what was happening in the moment and because it was such a loving involvement. Many business executives told me that their therapists had encouraged them to attend because meditation itself was so helpful in reducing stress in their lives. Allowing themselves the fulfillment of the moment helped them to relax and become more productive.

As the seminars drew to a close, I was amazed at how many people had been willing to look at the multi-dimensionality of themselves. It was as though the old concepts of self didn't work anymore. Those concepts were too limited. On a fundamental level people *knew* that they were more than they seemed or had been taught. I was proud to have contributed to that knowledge. But the truth of it is, every one of those people was a teacher for me. They had taught me to channel my own spiritual power, and I had only begun.

One month after the seminars ended, I went back to work as an actress. And I used some of my spiritual techniques from the seminars in my acting. I found an epic character in a picture called *Madame Sousatzka*, directed by John Schlesinger. Madame Sousatzka was a part and half: a domineering teacher of classical piano; commanding, manipulative, outrageous, funny, vulnerable, and, in the end, uplifting. Whatever my character Aurora Greenway might have been in *Terms of Endearment*, Madame Sousatzka made her look like a quiet day at the beach. As I hadn't worked since *Terms* (aside from playing myself in *Out on a Limb*), I was excited at the prospect of trying a new way of working.

I proceeded to sculpt, with Schlesinger's help, what Sousatzka looked like, what she wore, how her hair was styled, what jewelry clanked on her wrists, how she walked, talked, ate, breathed, laughed, and cried. Then I molded and refined her in my mind. She became a composite of reality; a real, living, breathing character fashioned from our creativity. After I finished my composition of thought, I let her go. I threw her up to the universe and said, "Now you play yourself through me."

I had seen so many channels and mediums over the past few years, I decided I would app

the same thing to show business. I simply put my conscious ego aside, got out of my own way, and channeled a character that we had created and I absolutely adored. We actors are continually looking for techniques to inhabit the character we are asked to play. This time allowed the character to inhabit me. Instead of trying to become Sousatzka and wait for the inspiration of the artistic impulse to happen, I just let her play herself through me. She was a compulsive eater, so I gained fifteen pounds. She was not a woman to whom time had been kind. As I watched the dailies, my face reflected *her* ravages. I wondered if I'd ever play leading ladies again. Perhaps I would enjoy playing character parts for the rest of my life. Sousatzka had a bad back; *my* back gave me pain when I went into a scene. Sousatzka had been a great concert pianist; I found that I could learn the music after only a few hearings because *she* knew how to direct my fingers to the right keys on the piano! I trusted that the magic would work if I allowed it to and simply *let* Sousatzka live through me. The character created had become real—channeling and inspiration had become one and the same.

So my experience of channeling spiritual energy in the seminars had translated to practical film acting. Reel life and real life had merged. And both were contributing to an ever-expanding reality for me.

The Ancient New Age



Recognize all the parts that make the whole, for you are the maker.

Before going into some of the techniques of what we might call spiritual technology, I would like to address myself to the thinking that is fundamental to the process of “going within.” This thinking stems from what is being described as the “New Age.” Much has been written about the New Age, much argued, for and against. The New Age in all its manifestations has been the rich source of many, many jokes, much conjecture, concern, and even fear.

What I find most interesting about New Age perceptions—that is, how the New Age is perceived—are the enormously fragmented points of view that it seems to generate. This argues for a lack of understanding, or, at best, fragmented forms of understanding.

I hope I can help clarify the confusion.

First of all, there’s nothing new about the New Age. It is, as has been correctly reported, a compilation of many ancient spiritual points of view relating to belief, the nature of reality, the practice of living, ritual, and truth, all predominantly originating in cultures other than those of the West. To dismiss these points of view as occult or bizarre, or to have the panicky reaction that they are “satanic,” is to define the degree of one’s own ignorance of highly developed spiritual cultures in the Near, Middle, and Far East.

The word *occult* simply means “hidden.” Much of Eastern thinking has been hidden from our view. Now that some of this knowledge is being brought to light, it appears to be speaking to a New Age—but only in the view of us Westerners. It is not so much that we are backward, but that we have a different approach, and/or that we have *forgotten* some of our own early teachings.

So let’s go back a bit to New Age origins.

Christian Gnostics operated with New Age knowledge and thinking for hundreds of years after the death of Christ. In fact, *gnosis* means “knowledge.” But the Gnostics eventually separated from the authority of what had become a ritualized Christian Church because they believed that man’s destiny was an individual matter between himself and God, not a matter for the authority of the Church to decide.

Personal responsibility is an awesome load for an individual to assume. It is obviously far easier to leave matters of conscience, God, faith, moral behavior, lifestyle, and even life-and-death decisions to some vaguely authorized power of church or government. However, though easier, clearly such a state of dependence is not a healthy one, particularly when the values and moral behavior of those in authority are as questionable as we all know they are today.

Many people these days are finding that life has become confused, tense, anxiety-ridden, and somehow lacking in purpose, because they are not using their own internal strengths to solve their problems. People speak of stress as being unbearable. They are beginning to claim that material wealth, success, fame, and the accepted avenues of over-achievement are no longer fulfilling, indeed are not worth the stress they engender. *There has to be something more* is a refrain, all too often echoed.

Intelligent and well-intentioned people look around and see an agglomeration of undeclared wars being bloodily fought, the virulence of nuclear power competition, a drug

ridden world, the horrifying spectacle of millions of malnourished and even more millions of illiterates in the richest nation in the world, vaulting rates of violent crime and fatal diseases, the insane poisoning of our environment—a veritable litany of disaster and self-destruction—and ask, not unnaturally, what the hell is happening to the human race? Why are people doing this?

If those same intelligent questioners would go just a little bit further, and ask, “Why are we doing this *to ourselves*?” they would be thinking in New Age terms.

Because the New Age is all about self-responsibility. New Age thinking asks that each person take responsibility for everything that happens in life because everything in life is connected. But the very first responsibility has to be personal—in a totally real sense, care for one’s Self.

This is not easy. It requires self-reflection and self-confrontation of the first order. It means looking in the mirror and forgiving oneself for *not* acknowledging that out of love for oneself can come love for others and ultimately love for the world we live in. From that loving self-realization can come solutions to the horrific problems we have created.

Critics point out that the New Age is a movement focused on the optimum development of one’s own potential while the rest of the world and its problems lie unattended; that in the success of the New Age we risk losing some of society’s best and brightest to the seduction of self. One wonders what we should lose such individuals to—high-tech warfare research, for instance? The *point* is that a great many of the horrors we live among exist precisely because we have neglected to recognize and celebrate and utilize the positive strengths within ourselves—we have neglected self-love. And the truth is that positive self-fulfillment is expressed most strongly in relation to others. What we literally cannot do is become productively involved with the rest of the world unless and until we learn to like ourselves. This then increases our ability to like and love others, which in turn augments the possibility to create change. So it is fortunate indeed that New Agers include some of the best and the brightest.

They are individuals who are profoundly concerned with what is happening to our planet and *all* the life residing on it. New Agers include antiwar activists, pro-environmentalists, antinukers, peaceniks, feminists, ecologists, bankers, psychologists, doctors, physicists, blue- and white-collar workers, and even no-collar workers, and many, many more—so there are apparently millions of people who advocate the “selfish” view of wanting to save our planet from destruction by beginning with themselves.

The person who is wound up in self-hatred, self-denigration, self-doubt, and self-contempt is suffocated, bound by a negative self-image that does not permit time or energy to really care about anyone else. Such feelings feed on themselves, generating more and more hatred, anger, and resentment, which will almost inevitably spill over onto others.

There is no question that modern-day psychologists are deeply concerned by the degree of violence vibrating under the surface behavior of most human beings—and increasing violence emerging as expressed violence and self-destructiveness. They claim that the only way to solve the conflicts that pressurize our culture is to help people confront the underlying cause of their violence. When one understands the real cause for feelings of hatred and anger, one can change the feelings, or even let them go. That involves taking responsibility for what we

feel. It means we have to stop blaming others for our *own* problems. It means accepting our own contribution to conflicts and unhappinesses, and becoming more consciously aware of why we feel what we do.

In doing so, we are expanding our conscious awareness, which means, to use a New Age term, that we are “raising” our consciousness about our unconscious perceptions of who we are and how we are behaving. We are learning surprising things about ourselves.

The only source is ourselves.

The so-called “cult of self” then becomes the pursuit of knowledge of self so that, upon resolution of conflicts, we can become more contributive to the society we live in.

I believe it is time to begin to heal ourselves and in so doing to help heal others in our society. The responsibility does not lie only in systems of authority like the church, the state, or the schools. The responsibility lies also in each and every one of us.

The family is the unit in which we begin the investigation of Self. We pick up more of our parents’ attitudes on self-investigation than we think we do. Our basic orientation on self-reflection comes from the family. If our parents or caretakers didn’t want to look at themselves, this can affect us deeply. Conversely, if our parents were self-reflective, we are likely to be, too. But the family unit is the synthesis for society and it is up to us to improve our own vision of ourselves within the family before we can function with a full vision outside of it. And if we are young enough, perhaps we can achieve that vision before we start our own families, and hence improve matters for the next generation.

Speaking personally, I now know that I related to my parents as I *perceived* them to be. When I began to see them as being not all-powerful but as fallible, as human beings in their own right, as *persons* with needs of their own, separate from myself—when, in short, I learned to allow them to be themselves—they no longer troubled me so much. My daughter is learning to do the same with me, and I with her. *To release others from the expectations we have of them is to really love them.* We are free of our loved ones when we care enough to let them go. And the anomaly, or so it seems, then becomes that the love bonds grow stronger. So we can honor our parents, and our selves, by growing up, by not getting stuck in some infantilized phase of blind expectation and demand, becoming frustrated, bitter, angry, and hating because the demands seem unfulfilled. In growing up, we accept responsibility for ourselves by having the courage to look at who we are and what we really want out of this life.

Whenever I ask people what they want for themselves and for the world, the answer is almost always the same—peace.

I believe peace for the world cannot be achieved without peace within our individual selves.

It seems to me that the dilemma of war, of destructiveness in all its forms, always returns to self. Personal conflict deters peace, engenders external conflict. It is impossible to feel like a complete human being as long as the fragmentation of conflict exists. Again, who creates the conflict? Again, *we* do. We are angry at those who mirror to us the unresolved aspects we possess in ourselves.

To me, this basic principle appears to be at work throughout the world. If we are not

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