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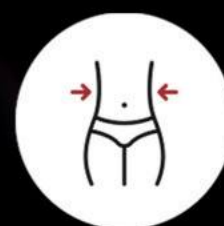
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The Dental Cliff: The Dentistry You Avoid Today May Be Much Harder to Manage Tomorrow

Most of us procrastinate about something. Dentistry may be one of the easiest things to put off. A tooth does not hurt. A crown is “still hanging in there.” The gums bleed occasionally, but they have for years. An old filling is beginning to break down, but it is not bothering you. So we wait. We kick the can down the road. The problem is that eventually, there may not be much road left.

There is a concept in healthy aging that we should prepare today for the physical challenges we may face later in life. Somewhere around our seventies, many of us begin approaching an invisible “cliff.” There is nothing magical about age 75, and everyone ages differently. But healing, strength and our ability to tolerate complicated medical and dental procedures can change significantly as we get older. **Your mouth deserves the same long-term planning as the rest of your body.**

At Integrative Dental Specialists of Long Island, Dr. Jeffrey Etes and his team believe dentistry should not simply solve today’s problem. It should anticipate tomorrow’s. Consider a compromised tooth in a healthy 60-year-old. Perhaps it needs a root canal and crown or periodontal treatment. Maybe the tooth truly cannot be saved and an implant

is the best solution. Addressing the problem today may be relatively straightforward. Now imagine postponing that decision for *one year. Two years. Five years.* A small fracture can become catastrophic. Decay can progress deeper. Periodontal disease can result in additional bone loss. A chronic infection can enlarge. A tooth that could once have been predictably restored may no longer be salvageable.

Sometimes delay can even compromise the treatment option you assumed would always be available. A fractured tooth can lead to infection and significant destruction of the surrounding bone. By the time the tooth is removed, the bone needed to support a dental implant may no longer be adequate. What might once have been a straightforward implant can now require bone grafting, additional surgery and months of healing. In more severe cases, bone loss or changes in the surrounding anatomy may make implant placement significantly more difficult—or eliminate it as a predictable option.

Waiting does not simply allow the problem to get worse. Sometimes waiting allows your options to disappear. At the same time, the

patient can change too. New medications may be prescribed. Medical conditions can develop. Healing capacity may change. This is why “nothing hurts” is not always a good reason to do nothing. Dental disease can be remarkably quiet. Decay, periodontal bone loss, failing restorations and even infections can progress with surprisingly few symptoms.

But preparing for the dental cliff does **not** mean treating every imperfection simply because it exists. Quite the opposite. Great dentistry means knowing what should be treated, what should be preserved and what can safely be watched. The key is making those decisions intentionally, based on diagnosis and long-term risk, rather than allowing procrastination to make the decision for you.

This is where a comprehensive **team approach** becomes invaluable. At Integrative Dental Specialists of Long Island, treatment planning brings together restorative dentistry, endodontics, periodontics, implant dentistry, hygiene, prevention and biologically focused care. Dr. Jeffrey Etes approaches complex cases from multiple perspectives as an endodontic specialist, implant surgeon and restorative dentist, working alongside an

experienced clinical team to determine not simply what *can* be done, but what *should* be done.

Sometimes the answer is treatment. Sometimes it is preservation. And sometimes the best dentistry is careful observation. That is **Unrivaled Dental Care**. It is not about doing more dentistry. It is about doing the **right dentistry at the right time**, understanding how today’s decisions may affect your health one year, five years, ten years or decades from now.

The goal is simple: arrive in the later decades of life with a mouth that is stable, comfortable, functional and as easy to maintain as possible. Do not wait for retirement to discover that the dentistry you postponed has become more extensive, more expensive or more difficult to tolerate. Do not wait for pain to make the decision for you. And do not assume that because a dental problem can wait today, it will remain simple tomorrow. *The best time to prepare for the dental cliff is before you reach it.*

At Integrative Dental Specialists of Long Island, Dr. Jeffrey Etes and his team combine advanced diagnostics and biologically focused treatment planning with one fundamental objective: preserve what can and should be preserved while preparing your mouth for a lifetime of health, function and confidence. **Integrative Dental Specialists: Unrivaled Dental Care!**

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TALKING OUR WALK

When I lived in Huntington, NY, I (Andrea) regularly taught yoga at Inner Spirit Yoga in East Northport. Along with my classes, I led workshops on the chakras, EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), chanting, and sound healing using quartz crystal bowls, toning, and guided meditation. Each monthly sound healing session focused on a different theme and meditation.

During one particular workshop, a middle-aged man arrived about fifteen minutes late. Our group was small—just five of us that day—and we welcomed him warmly. It soon became clear that he had been drinking. Though his emotions occasionally erupted into bursts of anger and bitterness, he stayed, and allowed himself to engage in the process.

One of our exercises involved choosing a “Receiver”—someone who would lie comfortably on a mat in the center of the room while the rest of us, the “Givers,” sat around them. Before closing their eyes, the Receiver shared their childhood name or nickname. Then, one by one, the group softly repeated that name and offered loving affirmations: words of kindness, gratitude, and worthiness. We reminded them that they were loved, that they mattered, and that the world was better because they existed.

It is a profoundly moving experience to hear your own name spoken in loving tones. For many, names are tied to shame or punishment from childhood. When those same names are wrapped in compassion and kindness, something shifts. Many participants weep as that simple act begins to heal old wounds. When it was our latecomer’s turn to receive, his sobs came quickly and deeply. We gave him time and space to release.

Afterward, we ended the workshop with a guided meditation and sound bath. When the group dispersed, he stayed behind. I sensed there was more beneath the surface, so I introduced him to EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), that uses tapping on specific acupressure points to help release trauma and trapped emotions. He agreed to try.



As I guided him through the process, he began to share his story. Drafted as a teenager, he had been sent to Vietnam. What he witnessed there—friends maimed or killed before his eyes, destruction beyond comprehension—

had haunted him for decades. Pain, guilt, and horror became his constant companions.

What surprised me was how much anguish he carried from his return home. At that time, PTSD was not recognized; veterans were told to “get on with life.” He tried, but his memories would not rest. To make matters worse, as reports emerged about atrocities in Vietnam, he and others like him were vilified. Instead of being welcomed home as heroes, they were branded as monsters. There was no safe place, no light, no love. He turned to alcohol for relief, but it dulled only the surface. What he truly needed was to be seen, heard, and understood. As we continued tapping, I simply repeated his words back to him, allowing him to hear his truth reflected. Each time I did, he said things like, “No one ever said that before,” or “No one ever understood.” Hearing his pain acknowledged out loud seemed to offer him the validation and compassion he had been denied for years.

We worked together for an hour. He cried, released anger, and softened. When we finished, he thanked me and we embraced. I never saw him again, but the awe of this encounter stayed with me. That day, I witnessed the transformational power of empathy, presence, and unconditional love. Sometimes, healing begins not with advice or treatment, but with simply holding space for another person’s truth. Wherever he is, I pray that his burden has lifted and that he has found peace.

Please see the song lyrics, inspired by this event, on the Poetry page.

Peace All-ways,

Neil & Andrea



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Can We Get Better at Navigating Loss?

by Sue Deagle, Northern VA

There are so many things we can lose:

– A job

– An opportunity

– Our home

– Our health

– A relationship

– A dream

– A loved one

– Ourselves

But we don't group them all together and think about "our losses." We'd prefer to think they are one-offs, exceptions to the rule. We want to hope like crazy that our last loss will be exactly that — our last loss. But that's not how this works.

Types of Loss

Many of us have experienced a **life-altering loss**, the most 'straightforward' form of loss. A loss that hits us directly and painfully. But loss comes in many forms, with different qualities and characteristics. And this is where it can get a little more complicated.

Some losses don't have clear endings. Researcher Pauline Boss calls this **ambiguous loss**. The baby you tried for years to have. The relationship you fought hard to save but still couldn't. The parent whose body is right there across from you, but their mind has gone somewhere you can't reach. These losses leave you hanging. How do you grieve something that was never fully there or never fully gone?

Then there is what I call **anticipated loss** — events you see coming from far away, but they still knock you flat. The empty nest. Retirement. Even the merciful end of a loved one's suffering. You think being prepared will make it easier. Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

Second-hand loss is when you haven't experienced the loss directly but are still deeply affected by it. When your spouse loses their best friend. When a coworker loses their job, while you keep yours. This view from the sidelines can bring on guilt or shame, with questions like "why them and not me?" or "why am I so upset when I'm not directly affected?"

We've all been part of **collective loss**, when our social circles, communities, or nations are impacted by a tragedy. Think 9/11 in New York and DC, Grenfell Tower in London, the Australian wildfires, the global pandemic. Our connections sustain and support us in good



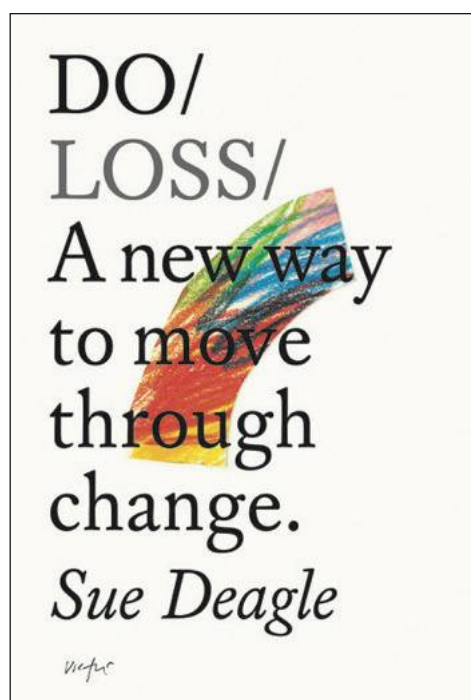
times, and we grieve together when loss is shared.

And sometimes loss shows up as the price of something good — these are **bittersweet losses**. You get your dream job but have to move away from your best friend. You finally leave that loveless marriage but miss being part of a couple. These losses come wrapped in relief and guilt all mixed together. I love how Susan Cain frames it in her book *Bittersweet* — we're constantly holding joy and sorrow at the same time. That's not confusion, that's being human.

How Loss Behaves

I've spent a lot of time thinking about how loss actually works. Not just from my own experience, but from watching friends, reading books, studying the science, exploring the philosophers, and paying attention to the real-life patterns of loss in everyday living. Here's what I found:

• **Loss is inevitable.** It's going to happen to you, to me, to every person I've ever met. It's not a matter of *if*, it's a matter of *when*. And it's not just going to happen once.



• **Loss is cyclical.** It has its own rhythm. Sometimes you're in a peaceful stretch, sometimes you're getting hit hard. You're not losing all the time. It ebbs and flows.

• **Loss is unpredictable.** It sneaks up on you. Sure, some losses we see coming from a long way away, but most are unplanned and unexpected. But even when we do expect it, how we actually feel about it can still blindside us.

• And here's the odd one: **loss is universal.** I say odd because every single time we lose something, we feel completely alone in that loss. Like we're the only person experiencing it. But actually? We're sharing this common outcome of being human with everyone who's ever lived.

Loss = Change

"I just want things to get back to normal." This universal plea echoes through hospital waiting rooms, law-firm conference rooms, and single seats at the local bar. **But loss functions less like a detour (after which we return to our original route) and more like a fork in the road — sending us in a new direction.** We have to make way for a new normal.

While our loss is creating a change in our environment — a new family structure, neighborhood, or commute to work — it also creates a change in us. Neurologist Dr. Lisa Shulman taught me something fascinating — loss literally rewires our brains. We form new neural connections in order to compensate for the shake-up, to deal with the change. Our brain is wired to adapt.

So our go-to fear — that loss only makes us less than — is not the entire story. When we navigate it consciously, amid the pain, loss can also bring additional kinds of change: *Perspective to our life we couldn't have received any other way. Deeper empathy, clearer priorities, greater appreciation for what remains, and, sometimes, a purpose we never imagined finding.*

Not because of some saccharine "everything happens for a reason" platitude, but because humans possess what researcher Dr. Ann Masten refers to as "ordinary magic" — our natural ability to adapt. Masten's research shows this isn't some rare gift. It's a capacity we all have that blooms when we have the right support. In her Grawemeyer Awards acceptance speech she said, "Resilience doesn't depend on special qualities but on a capacity to adapt that we develop over time as we are nurtured, learn, and gain experience."

Understanding some of these truths about loss doesn't magically eliminate the pain. Knowledge alone doesn't heal us. But it does

provide something essential that can help: context for our experience, language to discuss it, and a foundation for dealing with it.

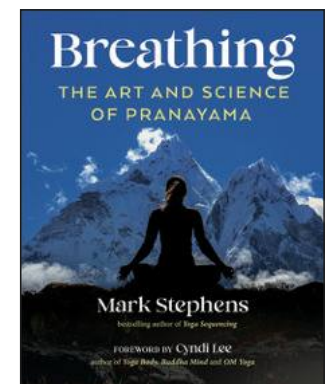
By zooming out and looking at loss through this lens — from a neutral perspective — we can start to question our beliefs about loss. ✨

*Excerpted with permission from **Do Loss: A new way to move through change** by Sue Deagle*

Do Books. Find it on Amazon: <https://a.co/d/00N8p0F4>

Sue Deagle is a writer, speaker and widow. Her story has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, and she blogs weekly on her *Substack*, *The Luminist*. She is a proud product of Pennsylvania steel country and a three-decade veteran of corporate America. The best job she ever had was working around the globe with veterans and active duty military who taught her life-changing lessons about resilience and community. Sue writes and speaks internationally on the art of thriving amid uncertainty, and how to trust our own capacity for change when life demands it. She lives in a modern-day treehouse with her two young adult children.

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A Lesson in Impermanence

by Ann Tashi Slater,
Tokyo

The *Bardo Thödol* was written in Tibet in the 8th century and published in the West in 1927 as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. A guide to navigating *bardo* “between-states,” or times of transition, the book is meant to help the dead travel between death and rebirth, and to guide us, the living, on our journey between birth and death, including liminal periods like accident or illness.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead tells us that by accepting *impermanence*—the uncertainty, change, and endings that life inevitably brings—we can find greater happiness. I gained a deeper understanding of what this means when I became very ill about 15 years ago.

On a fall morning at home in Tokyo, I woke up with a fever of 103, violent chills, and excruciating joint pain. I was admitted to the hospital and the doctors discovered that I’d contracted endocarditis, a rare, life-threatening infection of the heart lining. Bacteria had gotten into my bloodstream, attached to the lining of my mitral valve, and formed a mass, or vegetation.

They started me on intravenous antibiotics but soon part of the vegetation broke off



and traveled from my heart to my brain, causing a large abscess, or pocket of infection, to form. If the abscess cut off blood flow to the surrounding tissue, the doctors told me, I could become paralyzed, suffer cognitive impairment, or die.

Having studied *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* for decades, I’d thought I understood impermanence. But now I was really feeling it. I was no longer learning the bardo principles in lovely monasteries in India or in my Tibetan grandmother’s cozy Darjeeling living room or in my peaceful study. Instead, I’d been launched into a tunnel of pain and fear.

Lying in the hospital day after day, I yearned for my former existence as a wife, mother, writer, and literature professor,

unwilling to accept that my end might be approaching.

The privacy curtain around my bed was always kept closed and I felt cut off from the world of the living. Gradually, though, as I was wheeled down the hallway for another MRI, another CT scan, and caught sight through doorways of people suffering, of other lives and fears, I realized that I wasn’t alone: I was navigating bardo alongside fellow travelers. What’s more, I understood that, as the Buddha taught, no one is immune to old age, sickness, and death. This realization helped me accept my predicament and feel less afraid.

My journey through the bardo of illness continued for six weeks. Thanks to antibiotics and high-dose dexamethasone steroid therapy, the vegetation in my mitral valve shrank and the abscess scarred over. My temperature returned to normal, and the chills and joint pain subsided.

On a golden October day, my husband David came to take me home.

We gave the nurses a tin of chocolate chip cookies our children had baked and a note they’d written, since they were at school:

Thank you for taking care of our mother.

Sincerely,

Sophie and Henry

My doctors stopped in to say goodbye, and after lots of “thank-yous” and bowing all around, David and I left. We dropped my things at home, where our little Westie leaped into my arms, barking with joy, and then we went to lunch at a neighborhood trattoria.

In a famous Buddhist parable, a woman named Kisa Gotami loses her young son and, anguished, begs the Buddha to return him to her. The Buddha agrees on the condition that she bring him a mustard seed from a home in her village where no one has been touched by death. Gotami hurries from door to door but, unable to find any such household, understands the wisdom the Buddha wishes to share: death is part of life for us all. Liberated from the grief caused by her unwillingness to accept the loss of her child, uplifted by her new awareness of community, Gotami dedicates herself to the teachings of the Buddha.

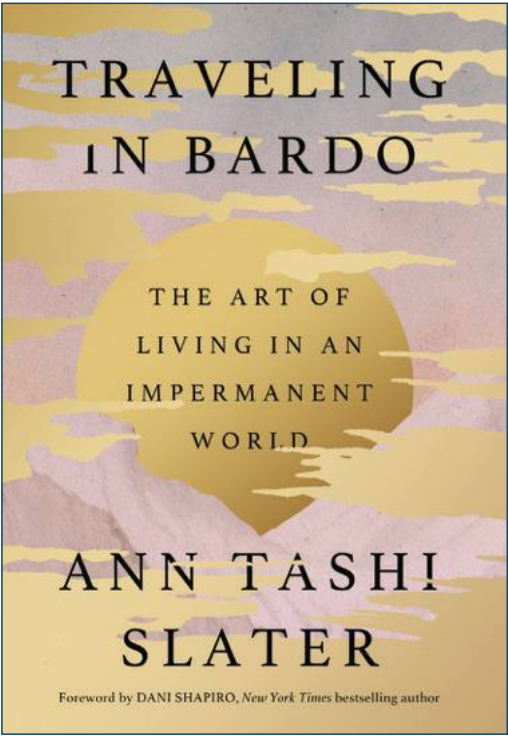
As a happily-ever-after story, this parable speaks to our desire for permanence,

though not in the way we might imagine. Think about what “happily ever after” means to you. A lifelong partnership? Financial security? Our notions of contentment tend to revolve around freedom from uncertainty and loss, but more impermanence always awaits.

I’d felt sure that if I survived endocarditis I would live happily ever after, but within months of my recovery, the 3/11 earthquake devastated northeastern Japan and threw David and me into crisis. As powerful aftershocks rattled Tokyo and the damaged nuclear reactors melted down, we agonized over how to keep our family safe.

The following year, my father died. A few months later, my mother suffered a brain bleed, coming so close to death that she saw loved ones who’d passed on beckoning to her from across a great abyss.

Impermanence, I now understood, is the way of the world. We can live happily ever after not by struggling against it, but by accepting it as we journey through life, travelers together in bardo. ✧



Ann Tashi Slater is the author of *Traveling in Bardo: The Art of Living in an Impermanent World* (Balance/Hachette), a Next Big Idea Club “Must-Read.” She has written for *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Paris Review*, *Oprah Daily*, and many others. She presents and teaches workshops at Princeton, Columbia, Oxford, Asia Society, and The American University of Paris. Learn more at anntashislater.com.



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Death — You Gotta Love It

How Embracing the One Thing We Fear Most Can Teach Us How to Truly Live

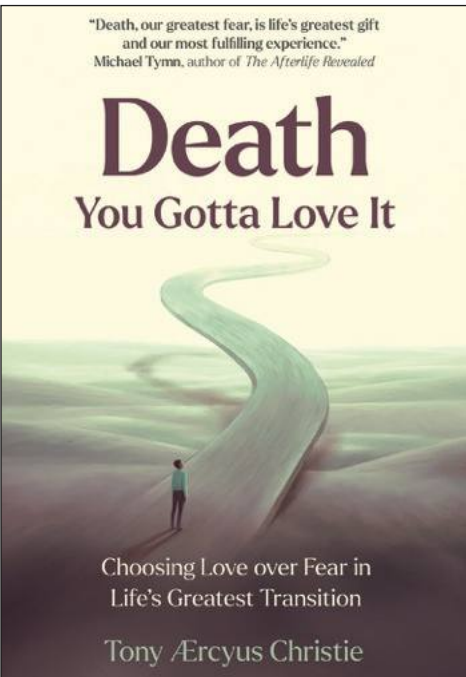
by Tony Ærcyus Christie,
Cork, Ireland

Love death? It sounds outrageous—until you discover that embracing death may be the key to living life more fully. Most of us spend a lifetime ignoring it, denying it, or avoiding it. Turning away from death does not make it disappear—it only leaves us unprepared for life’s greatest certainty.

Despite death being inevitable, it is seldom discussed. We are not taught about death at school, and many families avoid conversations about it. Throughout life, death remains the subject we know is coming but rarely prepare for. Yet when we encounter loss or face our own mortality, we are expected to know how to respond.

This may be because we have learned to see death as a failure rather than a natural part of life. Society celebrates youth, seeks to extend life whenever possible, and often treats death as something to defeat. When death arrives, it can feel like the ultimate loss. If our relationship with death leaves us fearful and unprepared, the problem may not be death itself. Perhaps it is the way we see it.

What if death has a purpose?



We often see death as the end of life; it may be better understood as a transition. Just as birth is our entrance into this physical world, death is our departure from it. The body completes its role, while consciousness continues. From this perspective, **death is not the opposite of life but is part of the continuity of life.**

Life and death are part of a much larger journey of consciousness. The challenges we face, the different paths we walk, and even life’s apparent injustices can be viewed as part of that journey. If consciousness experiences many lifetimes, then each life becomes one chapter in an unfolding story. We come here to learn, to grow, to love, and to share our unique gifts. When that purpose has been fulfilled, death is not an interruption but a passage into another form of existence.

Even with this deeper understanding of death, anxiety may still arise. The emotions surrounding death are often rooted in fear. The fear of death is not one single fear; it is a collection of fears that quietly shapes how we think, the choices we make, and how fully we live. We may fear pain and suffering, leaving loved ones behind, not having lived a meaningful life, or what happens after death. For some, the greatest fear is judgement; for others, it is the possibility that nothing exists beyond physical life.

The first step in overcoming fear is to take action. When it comes to death, this means becoming curious and educating ourselves about all aspects of what death involves. Much of our fear comes from the unknown. Exploring accounts of near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, meditation, and other altered states of consciousness can provide insights into possibilities beyond our ordinary understanding. Learning about death is a form of preparation.

Death preparation is not about becoming obsessed with dying; it is about becoming more familiar with something that is part of the great unfolding of existence. **When we become more acquainted with death, our relationship with life often begins to change.**

Seeing life as part of something greater changes the questions we ask. Instead of asking, “Why is this happening to me?” we can ask, “What is this moment inviting me to learn?” Every situation offers an opportunity to choose how we respond. We may not be able to control everything that happens, but we can choose whether we meet life from fear or from love.

One of the greatest shifts we can make is to change how we see ourselves. We often become completely identified with the physical body and treat it as something that must be preserved forever. The body is temporary. It is the vehicle through which consciousness manifests during this lifetime.

Many traditions describe this consciousness as the soul, spirit, or life force. From this viewpoint, we are not merely physical beings having a brief existence—we are consciousness expressing itself through human form. We see ourselves as individuals because individuality allows us to learn and evolve. Yet as our awareness expands, we begin to recognise our deeper connection with others and with all of existence.

One of death’s teachings is that everything is connected. Those who have had profound

experiences beyond ordinary consciousness often share a common message: life is an opportunity to learn to love more deeply and to choose love in every situation. Perhaps death offers our greatest challenge—and our greatest opportunity—to choose love.

If love is the lesson we are here to learn, then embracing even death with love becomes part of that unfolding. Instead of fearing death, we can begin to celebrate it. We can see it not as an ending, but as a magnificent transition. Celebrating death is liberating because it frees us from the belief that our existence is limited to the physical body alone.

This shift in perspective changes the way we live. If you ignore death, you may leave this life without understanding one of its most profound mysteries. If you deny death, you deny an essential part of the human experience. When you embrace death, you gain a deeper appreciation for life itself. Rather than be a victim of death, you can become a conscious participant in your death experience. Death is not a moment at the end of life, but a moment within life. When death is held in love, life becomes more precious. ✨

Tony Ærcyus Christie, Messenger of Oneness, Mystic, and Spiritual Teacher. Author of *Death — You Gotta Love It*, *Labyrinth: Your Path to Self Discovery* and *Labyrinth Wisdom Cards*. Website: www.tonymchristie.com.

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What If Our Problem Isn't What We Believe, But How Firmly We Believe It?

by Joshua Pritikin, Ph.D.,
White City, OR

Much has been said about what to believe or disbelieve. Far less attention has been paid to a more fundamental question: how tightly should we hold any belief at all?

Most of us treat our beliefs like load-bearing walls. Remove one and the whole structure might collapse. So we defend them—and in doing so, we narrow perception, amplify reactivity, and foreclose possibility. Beliefs are more like furniture. They can be rearranged. Moved to a different room. Donated. Replaced. Left at the curb.

Ask Yourself: Is This Belief a Door or a Wall?

Some beliefs open things up. "It's worth looking closer." "I might be missing something." "This experience could teach me something." These keep inquiry alive—they're invitations to stay curious. Other beliefs

close things down. "Everything happens for a reason." "I'm not the kind of person who gets angry." "That's just how people are." When the answer already feels settled, you're confirming rather than discovering.

The next time a belief surfaces, try pausing: *Is this belief opening a door, or holding one shut?* You don't have to abandon it. Just notice what it's doing.

Let Your Attention Tell You What's Actually There

Meditation is usually marketed as a stress-reduction tool. But it contains a hidden invitation. The standard instruction is to return your attention to some focus—the breath—when the mind wanders. But before you redirect, try pausing to notice what interrupted. Anxiety about a conversation you need to have. A grief hesitating to surface. An excitement with nowhere to go. You don't need to resolve it. But jot it down. Keep a small notebook nearby, or use your phone.

For example, during one session, something from earlier that day surfaced. My nephew



tutors younger kids through an after-school program for pay. He'd let slip that he'd figured out how to mark his calendar as busy—collecting a fee without the risk of having to work for it. I stayed with it, noted it down, and returned to the breath. After the session, reviewing my notes, I sat with both sides. Part of me wanted to let it go—it was trivial. Another part refused, and it was right: trivial or not, it was blatantly unethical. I resolved to talk to him the next day, and I did.

That's the practice. It wasn't dramatic. It didn't need to be. After your session, spend a few minutes with those notes. Ask: What does this part worry about? What does it need? You may not have solutions yet. But you can let it know you haven't forgotten.

Over time, the voices that once hijacked your attention will start to feel heard and begin to step back on their own. The white-knuckled effort to stay calm gives way to a serenity that arrives only when nothing has been left unheard.

Meet the Part That's Defending

Behind every belief is someone doing the believing. A therapeutic approach called Internal Family Systems (IFS) offers a deceptively simple idea: we are not single selves. Imagine driving to work when you're running late. One part wants to speed, another worries about getting a ticket, a third feels guilty about being late again. What seems like a single muddled feeling resolves, under closer inspection, into distinct voices—each with its own perspective, emotional tone, and agenda.

Most spiritual guidance comes with a hidden ambiguity. "Overcome anger." "Rise above selfishness." "Let go." These phrases conceal a fork in the road: either understand what's driving a part and help it find healthier expression, or suppress it. These can look identical from the outside. The person who has "risen above" selfishness may have developed genuine generosity. Or they may be running a

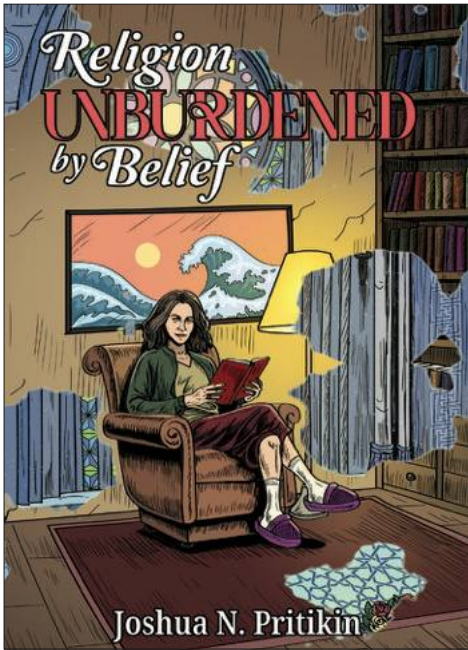
quieter story: *Having needs is dangerous. Just keep giving. Don't make a fuss.* Years of raises never asked for—and so never received. The slow burn of resentment, mistaken for growth.

Curiosity is what tips the scale. Look back at a moment when you felt unusually reactive—a disagreement, a criticism that stung, an urge you couldn't quite explain. That reactivity is a signal. Follow it back to its source.

That source is worth following further than this article can go. For those who want to stay with the parts work, a skilled IFS facilitator is a natural next step. You might spend months with just the first distinction—noticing when a belief is concluding rather than exploring—and find that alone quietly changes things. There is no ceremony you're late for, no door you should have already walked through. Your pace is entirely your own.

The question isn't what to believe. It's whether you've arranged the furniture—or the furniture has arranged you. And noticing the difference is where it starts. ✨

Joshua Pritikin, Ph.D. (*unburdened.biz*) is a quantitative psychologist and IFS-certified practitioner whose work explores the intersection of belief, consciousness, and personal transformation. After beginning his career developing financial software on Wall Street, he earned a Ph.D. in quantitative psychology from the University of Virginia and became an IFS Certified Practitioner in 2024. He has approximately ten peer-reviewed scientific publications and maintains a private practice. **Religion Unburdened by Belief: The Way of Open Inquiry** is his first book. "A counterintuitive yet compelling case for religious exploration divested from belief systems." — Kirkus Reviews





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Nature's Blueprint: How Biomimetic Dentistry Protects Your Smile and Overall Health

Imagine a building that could flex during an earthquake instead of fracturing, or a material that could mimic the exact strength and elasticity of human bone. In the world of oral health, this philosophy already exists. It is called *biomimetic dentistry*, a revolutionary approach to dental care that treats the teeth not just as isolated chewing tools, but as dynamic, living structures deeply connected to your body's overall well-being.

The word **biomimetic** literally means to **mimic nature**. Traditional dentistry often treats tooth decay by drilling away large portions of the tooth to make room for stiff, metal amalgams or massive porcelain crowns. Biomimetic dentistry takes the opposite approach. It aims to conserve as much of the natural tooth structure as possible and restore what is lost using advanced materials that behave exactly like real enamel and dentin.

To understand why this matters for your health, it helps to look at how a natural tooth is built.

A tooth is not a solid block of stone; it is a complex, layered structure designed to absorb force and stress when you chew. Conventional crowns require a dentist to shave down a tooth into a small peg, destroying healthy tissue just to fit the cap. The philosophy of biomimetic



dentistry views this destruction as a last resort. Instead, we use advanced adhesive techniques and composite materials to bond restorations directly to the remaining tooth. This effectively glues the tooth back together, restoring its original structural integrity and natural flexibility.

By preserving the tooth's natural architecture, biomimetic dentistry significantly reduces the need for invasive treatments. Traditional crowns often stress the tooth's nerve over time, frequently leading to cracks, failures, and ultimately,

root canals. Root canals remove the living tissue from inside the tooth, leaving it brittle and susceptible to further infection. **Because biomimetic methods avoid aggressive drilling, they keep the tooth alive and vital, stopping the destructive cycle of repeat dental work before it even begins.**

This conservative approach has profound implications for your overall health. Your mouth is the gateway to your body, and oral health is a major indicator of systemic wellness. Large-scale dental restorations and chronic tooth infections can trigger low-grade, systemic inflammation. This inflammation has been linked by numerous studies to serious health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and complications during pregnancy. By keeping teeth intact and alive, biomimetic dentistry minimizes the entry points for harmful bacteria, supporting a healthier oral microbiome and a stronger immune system.

Furthermore, biomimetic dentistry eliminates the use of heavy metals, such as mercury-containing silver amalgams. While the dental community continues to debate the long-term safety of metal fillings, many patients prefer to avoid them entirely. Biomimetic materials are highly biocompatible, meaning they work in harmony with your body's chemistry without



releasing unwanted substances or causing adverse reactions.

Ultimately, biomimetic dentistry shifts the focus from managing dental disease with aggressive mechanics to preserving health through biological replication. It offers a stronger, longer-lasting, and more comfortable smile. **By choosing treatments that honor nature's design, you are not just saving your teeth—you are investing in the long-term health and vitality of your entire body.**

Jimmy Kilimitzoglou, DDS, FACD, FPFA, DABOI, MAGD, FAAID, FICOI
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Who Would I Be Without My Suffering?

by Brenda Shoshanna,
New York City

Why does suffering go on and on? It's very valuable to take time to question this, and see the ways in which this happens. All of us are greatly affected by our own suffering and the suffering of others. The more clarity we have about this process, the more we can free it and help free others.

Addicted To Our Suffering

Some of us are actually addicted to our suffering, and seek all kinds of painful moments, relationships and situations. They're familiar and we feel at home in them. Masochists and martyrs, for example, often experience suffering as pleasurable. For them, suffering provides an identity, a way of interacting with the world. Perhaps it's a way to recompense for what they feel they've done wrong. They feel guilty and seek punishment to assuage their guilt. These individuals attract, seek, and cling to suffering.

Some want to take on the sufferings of others, to relieve them of their difficulties. It's worthwhile truly exploring what it is that actually relieves others of their suffering. Otherwise, it's easy to become manipulated by all forms of distress. And as we become more and more distraught, it's easy to bypass the true way that suffering can be released and converted into wisdom and strength.

Benefits of Suffering

For individuals who are addicted to suffering, there are usually secondary benefits. Their identity as a person who suffers, or a victim, can provide a justification for expressing anger or getting revenge. This identity can also justify demanding all kinds of special consideration from others. Some of these individuals enjoy making others feel sorry for them, guilty about their pain. And even suggesting that the other person has caused it.

Suffering can turn into a huge manipulation of others. It's as if those suffering are saying, look how much I'm suffering, now you have to do what I want, or else you'll be adding more pain to my life. They feel as though they can act any way they like, be as nasty as they want, demand anything.

No One Else Can Cause Your Suffering

Your suffering is never truly caused by another person, or by what happens. It is always caused by the way you respond to the person or situation, by your own perception of the event, and the way you respond to it. You may not be able to change the person or situation, but you can always be in charge of the ways in which you respond.

Pain is Not Suffering

Believe it or not, suffering is not inevitable. Pain is not suffering. It is just pain. You cut your finger and it throbs. You become ill and your body aches. A dear friend dies and you mourn. These



are natural life circumstances that cannot be avoided. They are not to be feared, but taken for what they are. Realize that pain is just pain. It does not mean you will feel this way forever, that you are being punished, or that the rest of the world is about to fall apart.

Pain is just an experience you are having, and if you do not resist it, it will leave naturally, making room for whatever comes next. Experiences come and go, like clouds in the sky. When you do not resist or hold onto them, they float away on their own.

Do Not Turn Pain Into Suffering

However, we often turn pain into suffering, which is harder to cope with, and can become a lethal force in our life and the life of others. The way we turn pain into suffering is to dwell upon our pain and make it mean something terrible - blame others for it, talk about it to everyone, use it to get sympathy and attention. We feel we are being singled out for unfair treatment. When we engage in this kind of behavior, suffering becomes a way of life, even addictive.

How do you turn your pain into suffering? What causes you the greatest suffering in your life now? Are there benefits to your pain? What are you getting out of it? What would happen if it were gone?

A Life Based Upon Suffering Is A Life of Fear

A life lived in suffering is a life based upon fear. You fear being happy, successful, or loved. You fear working through problems and letting conflict subside. You can be in a wonderful relationship, which you inevitably sabotage because you cannot allow yourself to have happiness or fulfillment. That would mean letting go of your suffering.

Who would you be without your suffering? How would you interact with the world?

John had a pattern of being with a woman for about six months. The initial stages of the relationships were wonderful, but as feelings deepened, and the women wanted more, he began to find fault with them. Not one of them fit the bill. There was no reason to continue the charade. Before long, he was alone again. After each of the relationships ended, he blamed the women, but he also missed them, and did not understand what caused all of this go on.

One day John realized, "I just couldn't take being so happy. It didn't fit my picture of myself. I didn't know who I was when I was happy. I needed something to complain about, someone to fight." John's sense of self disappeared when things were going well. Therefore, he held onto an identity fueled by suffering and fear. John was addicted to suffering. Ask yourself, who would you be without your suffering? What would you talk about with your friends? How would you make others care for you? Where would you get excitement from in life?

The more awareness you have, the more you will be able to stop clinging to suffering, to forgive yourself and others, and live a life that is truly inspirational for all. ✨

Brenda Shoshanna, Ph.D. is an award winning author, speaker, psychologist and long term Zen practitioner. Her work integrates the teachings of East and West and focuses upon how to make the teachings real in our everyday lives. This article is based upon her book, **Fearless (Seven Principles of Peace of Mind)**. Brenda offers talks, workshops and a weekly podcast, *Zen Wisdom for Your Everyday Life*. www.zenwisdomtoday.com
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The End. The Beginning ... and the Giggles in Between

by Joanne Steenberg,
Penobscot, ME

This past week my husband lost his dear sister, Beate. As we sat in the pew of the small church there were many moments of deep grief. We honored her gentle soul and reflected on her full life. The priest stood at the altar, speaking of heaven and memories. His voice was solemn. We held each other's hands trying to hold back what felt like an avalanche of tears.

And then right in the middle of the service I heard it. A gentle burst of sweet high-pitched laughter floated up from the back of the church. It was utterly joyful. Three children, ages two, four, and six, were giggling and whispering with the kind of wonder and silliness only the very young can express. I turned to look. Family members were gently trying to quiet them, but there was no sternness, only warmth, as if they knew this laughter belonged, too.

It was a true gift and a glimpse of the full spectrum of life. One soul being honored on the way out, and three little ones reminding us of what it means to be just starting out. Somehow, there was joy wrapped up in the goodbye, but with little giggles in between. It was a gentle reminder to remember the innocence of life in the midst of sadness and challenges.

In *The Book of Awakening*, Mark Nepo says, "Each person is born with an unencumbered spot, free of expectation and regret, free of ambition and embarrassment, free of fear and worry... It is this spot of grace that issues peace." I couldn't help but think of that "spot" as I heard the little ones. They still live from that place. That pure space where life is so curious and funny, filled with questions and wonder.

As adults, we sometimes forget this. We kind of armor up. We mourn and plan and hold tight to the idea of control. But the children reminded us, in that quiet church filled with sadness, that life isn't just what ends. It's also what begins again and again. In every breath, every sunrise, every burst of laughter.



Mark Nepo also says in his beautiful book, "To be broken is no reason to see all things as broken." I thought a lot about that line after the funeral. Loss breaks us, for sure. But in those cracks, light still gets in. And sometimes that light sounds like a two-year-old laughing at something only they can see.

Just like that funeral service, life is often about sorrow and joy held together in the same sacred space. I think that's what it means to be human. We gather to say goodbye and remember a life well-lived and at the same time, we are reminded that life is still bursting forth.

Let's try to learn from the innocence and joy of those at the beginning of their journey because the more we can look at the world with childlike wonder, the closer we come to heaven on earth.

And in the end, maybe there is no real end. Just love, ever circling, ever returning.

The most creative, joyful, and spiritual people I know are childlike. Not childish – childlike, with curiosity, wonder, and a sense of infinite possibility. – Deepak Chopra

Reprinted from the weekly Power of Love column in the Penobscot Bay Papers.

Joanne LaCurubba Steenberg is an award-winning columnist whose heartfelt and insightful writing has captivated readers across Penobscot Bay Press publications for years. As the creator of *The Power of Love*, a widely read column exploring compassion, human connection, and personal growth, she blends personal storytelling, wisdom, and cultural insight in a way that resonates deeply with audiences of all backgrounds. poweroflovestories@gmail.com
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Healthy Recipe from Truth & Laughter Dentistry: Black Bean, Date & Tahini Fudge Rich, Chocolatey, and Naturally Sweetened

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, drained, rinsed well, and patted dry
- 1 cup soft Medjool dates, pitted and packed (about 10–12 large dates)
- ½ cup well-stirred tahini
- ½ cup unsweetened cacao powder
- 2 tablespoons melted coconut oil, for a firmer set
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Optional: chopped walnuts or flaky salt on top

INSTRUCTIONS

1. If the dates are firm, soak them in hot water for 10 minutes, then drain thoroughly.
2. Blend the dates and tahini in a food processor. Add the beans, cacao, coconut oil, vanilla, and salt.
3. Process until completely smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides. The mixture should be thick. If needed, add water 1 teaspoon at a time, using as little as possible.
4. Taste and blend in another date or two if you prefer sweeter fudge.



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5. Press into a parchment-lined loaf pan. Smooth the top and add your toppings.
6. Freeze for 1–2 hours until firm, then cut into squares.

STORAGE

Refrigerate in a covered container for up to 4 days, or freeze for up to 2 months. Serve chilled—this is a soft, creamy fudge that firms up best in the freezer

Makes about 16 small squares

This recipe reflects our holistic approach to dentistry: supporting healing through daily lifestyle and nutritional choices that protect your health and smile.

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The Wound as a Portal

by Gina Goldfeder, Mexico City

I don't remember the day I stopped enjoying ruminating about the suffering from my past. My emotional wound had become my best friend, my confidant, from an early age. I had gotten used to the idea that the discomfort I lived with inside my home was a kind of destiny, perhaps because I could never escape it, so I just had to put on a brave face about it.

Cooking over Low Heat

The wound is a dish cooked over low heat. In my case, I couldn't say exactly when it started, and I don't even remember my childhood well enough to draw any conclusions, but a few images and fragments occasionally visit my consciousness.

Some turn out to be others' stories filling gaps in my memories. This leads me to think that something unspeakable is blocking my memories of the past. I must confess that rather than feeling envious, I feel curiosity, admiration, and astonishment when it comes to those who remember their childhood in detail.

I could say that my wound began at birth with my mother's postpartum depression. It lasted my first year and a half of life, and she couldn't



even hold me in her arms. I know this because it's what my father tells me, and because I see myself in a photograph where I am in front of my birthday cake with a number 2 candle, next to my grandmother and him.

Or perhaps it was the day when my mother helped a blind man cross the street and let go of my arm—or held it with greater force, I don't remember well—but what I do remember is that at that moment I felt immense anger, because it seemed to me that the man was more important to her than I was.

Or perhaps it was the day my father shouted at my mother in a restaurant and then we left alone and walked endless blocks home.

I also think that maybe it was when I was 15 and heard my father talking on the phone with his lover.

Or maybe it was three years later, when I heard my mother tell him that a "steady lover" no longer seemed right for her.

Or when my father cursed me in front of my mother's coffin.

Stop Blaming the Past

I want to go back to the miracle of no longer enjoying blaming the past and identifying with my wound. Perhaps the exhaustion of being a victim for so many years left me immune, although saying this is unfair: I have worked throughout my life to stop being "my wound."

Perhaps it was the acceptance that there are events that have no solution and what remains is to look for an opportunity to live a worthy and meaningful existence. As I said at the beginning, I don't remember how it happened, but I know two things for sure: After a long process of

introspection and therapeutic support, one day I stopped being afraid and the pain turned into my strength. I say this with all the honesty I can muster.

A phrase from Bert Hellinger, creator of Family Constellations, comes to mind: "The wound, too, is part of life, and also the scar that indicates that the wound is healed, although the place remains vulnerable and warns us to proceed with care and caution."

But why do we identify with the emotional wound? Why does our identity cling to it? Well, from my perspective, what we know most about ourselves is what hurts us—the ways we haven't been seen or the injuries we've received from those we love. When we connect with the pain, we learn what matters to us, what our values system is, and who we are in this world, especially when we are children.

The pain-wound that appears from whom we know where—because I can almost guarantee that it always takes us by surprise—suddenly places us in a vulnerable place and we start to dwell there; some of us with insecurity, others with fear, anger, or desolation, and still others with self-doubt.

The wound is the opposite of love. You hurt me because you don't love me is the first thing a child thinks, or worse yet, perhaps the feeling of being unloved impregnates their skin making them believe that they "are that." Identification is one of the earliest processes of development, as we internalize everything we see on the outside as children, and that's how our personality is built. Surprisingly, we hold onto our wound to find meaning in our story.

One of the most significant themes I work on with couples in my private practice is validation of the inflicted wound; everything else flows, surfaces, and resolves if they can recognize the pain they have caused each other. It is a powerful formula that I invariably resort to and has yielded results for many years in my professional work.

Signs

Imagine the wound as a portal that takes you to other dimensions, ranging from darkness to light. Visualize a subtle golden thread that connects those who have inflicted hurt with those who have been hurt. In that encounter, when there is an act of humility and then an honest attempt to repair the offense, the wound turns into love.

We don't let it go, because it gives us the opportunity to reclaim our individuality and to finally be seen. We don't let it go, because

the ties that bind us to it can disappear, nor do we let it go as a matter of honor. However, when we regain what we have lost—whether someone has helped us repair it or we have repaired it ourselves—it is time to explore new horizons.

The wound is a solitary experience, a universe different from others, with its own language. There are various investigations and theories on this subject that explain the meaning, triggers, and different manifestations of an emotional wound. However, it has not yet been discovered how the brain chooses which experience will become traumatic and the meaning it carries.

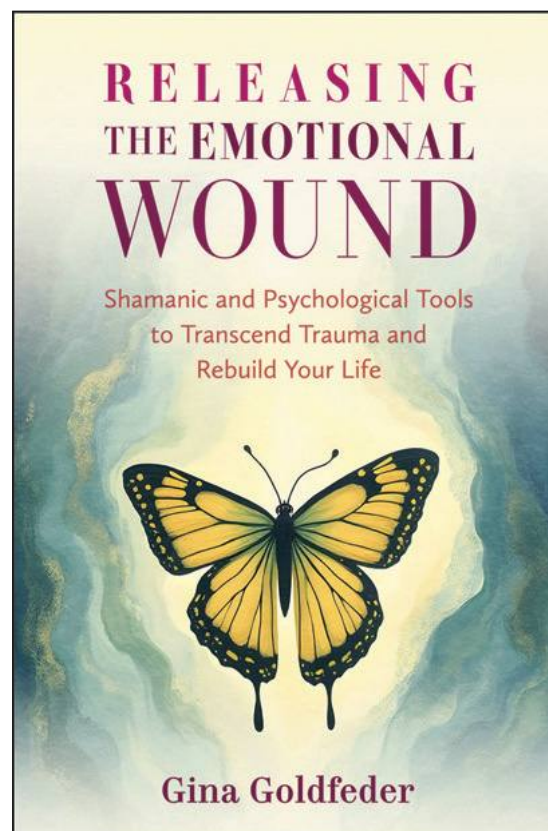
Just as there are people who recognize the origin of their wound, there are others who deny it and bury it in forgetfulness in an attempt to have an apparently balanced life, thinking that the pain is already in the past, so it is better not to open the door for fear that the heart-wrenching childhood experience will drown them.

Despite the effort to keep the wound in exile, triggers will appear at a moment we least expect, connecting us with unresolved suffering. These triggers can be as subtle or trivial as, for instance, seeing a scene in a movie that suddenly provokes uncontrollable tears; hearing a piece of music that brings back memories we had forgotten or blocked; a word or phrase written on a billboard confronting us; or more complex, noticeable, or transcendent triggers, such as the death of a family member, the birth of a child, a divorce, a job change, a move, an inheritance or financial loss, to mention a few.

Any of these events marks a life change, putting us to the test and connecting us with what we fear, what has hurt us, or what we have forgotten in order to survive. Then, the wound emerges as a call or reminder of what has not yet been resolved or alerts us to protect ourselves from situations that resemble that old injury. The repair occurs when we validate such experiences, recognize the impact they have had on our lives, are able to release them, and change their place in our world.

*Printed excerpt from **Releasing the Emotional Wound: Shamanic and Psychological Tools to Transcend Trauma and Rebuild Your Life** with permission of Findhorn Press, a division of Inner Traditions International. <https://www.innertraditions.com/moss-medicine> ✧*

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Leaving the Party

by Gina Florentino-James, Huntington Station, NY

The sun-tanned leaves on the tip tops
Were wearing their sunglasses and
Their purple and amber party clothes

They had drunk much of the summer sun
And had become punchy and overloaded
Hanging on – and over – the world

But alas...
The Autumn Wind had other plans
And blew her bugle.

Down, down the party-goers went in
A delicate dance
To the ground below...
Confetti-strewn

Party's Over
See you next summer!

Legacy

by Patrica Soper, Patchogue, NY

Her soft, plump, infant hand
rests on my wrinkled, blue veined skin.
Unblemished tiny fingers
grasp my gnarled, arthritic bumps.
The contrast is startling but beautiful.
She is the newborn promise of the first bud of
Spring,
I, the withered leaf about to leave the tree.
May she be showered by love
blossom no matter the storms
be true to and share her unique gifts.
Our eyes meet.
I see in hers serene depth of knowing,
the connection she still has
to the formless realm from which she came...
to the peaceful home that calls me to return.
Her baby hand pats mine
a gentle, reassuring touch that whispers,
You can go now, I'll carry on here.

by David Frieman
Huntington Station, NY

at the end of life
what you gained will fade away
what you gave lives on

Watercolors by
Jan Guarino
JanGuarinoFineArt.com

Fire in the Sky

(A Veteran's Story)

Song Lyrics by Andrea Randa Garvey, *Creations Magazine*

I met him in a healing space — a seeker of relief.
Had one too many 'fore he came, to liquify his grief.
Fiery sparks of anger flashed in jagged bolts of hate.
We could not see the reason why his suffering was so great.

Our circle closed, the others left, then tears began to flow.
I made a space to listen as I truly wished to know.
"The pain you carry, what's the source?" I asked him earnestly.
His anger rose, his voice it shook, but still he shared with me.

Oh, Fire in the Sky! Ooh, Fire in the Sky!

He served his country years before in war — still undeclared.
Surrendered youth, his morals, truth, and essence were laid bare.
Eyes that witnessed horrors far beyond what mind could hold.
The blinding sounds, the deafening sights, his story still untold.

Oh, Fire in the Sky! Ooh, Fire in the Sky!

When he returned from lessons learned there came a crueler fate.
No blessing for his sacrifice, no welcoming embrace.
They even pointed fingers and accused him of harsh crimes.
They left him with no where to turn, but crush the pain inside.

Misplaced glories can't find compromise
Withheld stories will never meet demise.
Count your blessings and forget the rest.
But what remains, when you've given all your best?

When we raise eyes to clear blue skies we see a heavenly hue.
For him, the clouds of shame arise obscuring love from view.
If we but offer caring hearts and time to hear his truth.
To heal the wounds, forgive the past, creating life anew.

Oh, Fire in the Sky! Ooh, Fire in the Sky!

To hear recording: <https://andrearandamus.com/fire-in-the-sky-a-veterans-story/>

by Roberta McQueen
East Islip, NY

Halloween party
there's the angel and devil
seated side by side

SPONGE

by Elaine P. Morgan, Warrenton, VA

It started with a trickle
when I took my first breath.
A drop here, a drop there
as I learned to walk and talk.
The laughter of innocence,
a lost toy, and a clip
to hold my hair.

I dribbled through my
first school day,
confused about leaving
my mother and my home.
I drizzled through my
high school and college years.
A rite of passage as I pondered
my future identity.
I splashed through classes,
tests, dances, a first date,
graduations, avocations
and career.

I thought I would always
be permanently moist
but the years flew by
as I answered life's calls
and followed my dreams
through youth, middle age,
life's paradoxes
and my senior years.

And now I overflow with age,
saturated with many memories,
life experience in the wisdom years,
wondering when my sponge
will dry or what will
wring it out.

It is difficult to get the news from poetry, yet
— From Asphodel that Greeny Flower

Expanding the Heart and Soul

by Valir, Channeled by Dave Akira

This is the sixth installment of an ongoing series.

The True Med Bed Is the Heart

Even as advanced healing technologies make their debut, it is vital to realize that *the most powerful healing instrument is already within you: your heart*. At the center of your being lies a crystalline spark of Source, and your heart chakra is a portal for that infinite light. When you generate feelings of genuine love, compassion, or gratitude, you activate a field around you that can transform matter. The heart's energetic field extends well beyond the body and can influence other living beings.

On a spiritual level, the heart's energy aligns disordered patterns of illness back into harmony. It is like a cosmic tuning fork that brings your cells and even DNA into their proper resonance. In this sense, your heart functions as a living med-bed – a quantum healing chamber tuned by love. Consider that every time you offer

comfort to someone in pain, your caring heart produces a calming, healing effect. Scale that up, and you can imagine what collective heart-centered intention can do. Breathing deeply and sending love to your own body is a practice many of you have intuitively used to aid your healing – and it works because the heart is broadcasting instructions of wellness to every cell.

In the times ahead, people will realize that technologies like *Light Tables* are effective largely because they induce a state of coherence similar to what unconditional love creates naturally. The machines may jump-start the process, but it is the life-force and consciousness (channeled through the heart) that truly heals. Know that your heartbeat – especially when you feel it as one with the heartbeat of the universe – is the hum of the Prime Creator. Through it, miracles of healing flow. Do not underestimate this innate power. Use it daily: infuse your thoughts, your food, your water, your home, your relationships with heart energy. Watch how life responds with renewal and grace.

Anti-Gravity and the Soul

When you see anti-gravity technology in action – craft levitating or objects floating free of Earth's pull – let it remind you of a deeper truth about your spirit. Gravity in the physical world is like the weight of fear, shame, and negativity in the spiritual world: it holds you down. Anti-gravity fields, by contrast, mirror the effect of love, joy, and truth, which lift you up. In simple terms, the soul rises naturally when it is unburdened. *As you release fear, anger, and old wounds through forgiveness and self-awareness, you become lighter in every sense*. Many of you have felt this during deep healing or meditation: a sensation of lightness, perhaps even of hovering slightly above your chair or bed. That is your consciousness experiencing a small taste of ascension – a personal anti-gravity moment.

In the higher realms, beings are not defying gravity so much as transcending it by their frequency. *The laws of physics adjust to match their level of vibration*. On Earth, your scientists are discovering ways to counteract gravity artificially; at

the same time, you are discovering how to counteract the spiritual gravity of low emotions through inner work. One day, these insights will converge – but even before literal levitation is common, the feeling of emotional and mental levity will become a hallmark of the new human. You will not be weighed down as before. Life will feel more buoyant. While there are tales of saints and yogis who floated in states of bliss – hints of what is possible – the greater point is symbolic: every step you take toward love and truth reduces the weight on your soul. You ascend bit by bit, whether or not your feet leave the ground. This is the real “anti-gravity” technology to pursue: the spiritual art of releasing all that is heavy and dense, so your divine nature can rise and expand without limit.

Founded by David Nicholas, GFL Station is dedicated to bringing forth teachings from our galactic and angelic helpers as accurately as possible, building a sense of community through the messages we share. Visit: www.gflstation.com

In the End ...

by Joyce and Barry Vissell, Aptos, CA

In the end, it's our love, pure and simple, that wins.

As humans, we often think that we are not enough just the way we are. Thoughts such as, “If only I had more money, a better degree, more possessions, better clothes, nicer hair, thinner or stronger body, more experience, or a better job. If I had these things or even some of them, then I could be happy and live the life I want. Then I could help other people.” But we ignore the power to love within each one of us, a gift we received at birth.

There is a true story of a woman who was dying in the hospital. During the day her friends and family came and brought her loads of flowers, candy, and balloons. They ignored the fact that she was dying, pretending that she would come back home soon. They filled the time at her bedside by telling jokes to one another, discussing politics and in general ignoring what was really going on. The woman grew more and more unhappy.

One night, the old cleaning woman, Margaret, noticed her and came into her room and sat down. Margaret was in her seventies and had been cleaning the hospital floors at night for fifty years. She had seen death many times. She knew the woman was dying and she knew how to love her best. She reached for her hand and merely said, “I can see that you are suffering. Do you want to talk about it?”

Night after night, the woman poured out her heart to Margaret, who merely sat quietly and listened. Margaret wasn't a trained therapist, doctor, nurse or social worker. She didn't even have a high school education. She couldn't afford to bring this woman any flowers or presents. All she did was listen to and love the older woman. In the end it was dear Margaret's love that helped the woman the most, and helped her to die in peace.

The love in our hearts makes us more than enough. We don't need all the other trappings of life to reach out to another. In the end, it is simply our love that wins the prize of life.



Joyce & Barry Vissell, a nurse/therapist and psychiatrist couple since 1964, are counselors near Santa Cruz, CA, who are passionate about conscious relationship and personal-spiritual growth. They are the authors of 10 books and a free audio album of sacred songs and chants. Visit their web site at SharedHeart.org for their free weekly inspirational videos and monthly e-heartletter, their updated schedule, and inspiring past articles on many topics about relationship and living from the heart.

Looking forward to ...

**The December / January 2027
Holidays Issue**

*Radiate the Spirit of the Season;
Spread Peace, Joy & Goodwill All-ways*

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CreationsMag.com

The Unifying Core of the Brain

by Roberto Pinelli, MD, Lugano, Switzerland

The pineal gland, also known as the *epiphysis cerebri*, is perhaps the most controversial and least understood part of our body, sparking immense curiosity and debate.

Nestled right in the center of our skull, this tiny gland serves as the brain's most intimate and, in many ways, "unifying" core. Unlike other glands in the brain, which are typically paired or mirrored on each side, the pineal gland stands alone, unique in its singularity. Scientists describe it as an endocrine gland, found in the brains of all vertebrates, including humans, and responsible for producing and regulating hormones.

The pineal gland develops from the roof of the diencephalon and is tucked away at the back of the brain's third ventricle, just beneath the corpus callosum—a structure that links the brain's two hemispheres. It's a tiny part of the epithalamus, measuring only about 1/3 inch (8 millimeters) in diameter and weighing just 0.0004 ounces (0.01 grams). Despite its small size, it's intricately connected to the surrounding nerves through adrenergic fibers and is richly supplied with blood from the posterior choroidal arteries. At a microscopic level, the pineal gland is composed of specialized endocrine cells called *pinealocytes*,



along with secondary cells resembling the brain's astrocytes.

But what's truly fascinating about the pineal gland is its shape, especially when viewed in cross section alongside the surrounding glandular structures. The gland itself resembles a tiny pinecone (hence the name *pineal*), while the epithalamus—the part of the brain where it resides—reveals a structure that intriguingly resembles the outline of an eye. In this view, the corpus callosum suggests the shape of an eyebrow, and the hypothalamus and pituitary gland even hint at the presence of a nasolacrimal, or tear, duct.

But while the eye shape of this structure is intriguing, one of the most astonishing and mysterious aspects of the pineal gland is that despite being located deep within the brain, it is surprisingly equipped with photoreceptors—the very cells that can detect light.

The reason for this is even more astonishing: In ancient times, the pineal gland was an actual third eye that faced outward. Over the course of evolution, as the ancestors of mammals developed a system of nerves that allowed light impulses perceived by the two front-facing eyes to reach this upper eye, its visual function became less necessary. As a result, this third eye gradually atrophied, retreating into the skull and transforming into an intracranial gland.

You can see evidence of this in certain reptiles, fish, and amphibians, which still have an external third eye known as the parietal eye. This organ helps these animals synchronize their circadian rhythms—something we'll explore later—with the light around them and even navigate their environment. It's truly fascinating when you think about it.

In humans, that same eye has evolved into a gland, now completely *internal*. It no longer functions as a visual organ but, like the retina, it has a *photic* function—meaning it still senses light. It's as if this "eye" now looks inward, observing our inner cosmos instead of the external

world. Perhaps this is why the pineal gland is so deeply connected to our dreams.

Ancient Understanding

It's evident that ancient civilizations possessed some understanding of the pineal gland and its functions, though perhaps they were not fully accurate or complete. Consider, for example, the Eye of Horus, a stylized eye symbol that the ancient Egyptians famously used to represent the pineal gland. Or think of the Assyrian effigy depicting the mysterious god Nisroch holding in one hand a closed pinecone—a symbol often linked to the pineal gland.

And finally, think of the third eye often depicted on the foreheads of Eastern monks. These are the same monks who, by chanting the primordial sound *aum*, can tap into their inner essence and reach higher states of consciousness—all through that "third eye" within them.

In ways we can barely comprehend, ancient keepers of wisdom had tapped into something remarkably complex about our physiology and our very essence. For many early cultures, the pineal gland was regarded as the eye of light, the eye of the sun—like the god Horus—that connected us to the rhythms of the world around us, acting as a receiver for the sun's life-giving rays. The ancient Sumerians, Egyptians, Indians, and later, brilliant minds such as Leonardo da Vinci, Galen, Andreas Vesalius, and Rene Descartes all recognized the pineal gland's remarkable characteristics. They regarded it as the seat of the soul, a portal to other levels of consciousness, and a point of unity within the self.

In those earlier times, this gland's role was likely seen as *esoteric* as in "knowledge reserved for a select few," the original sense of the word derived from the Greek *esos*, meaning "inner" or "intimate." Pythagoras often used this term for ideas meant only for a small circle of initiates—those who had the knowledge to grasp the ideas without misunderstanding. Over time, *esotericism* became a dismissive term, used to label the symbolic representations of the pineal gland across the ages. Its true nature remained scientifically unexplored, obscured by the mists of history.

Modern Medicine's View

Despite the esteem the pineal gland once held among figures like Rene Descartes and Leonardo da Vinci, modern medicine initially dismissed it as a superfluous gland, much like how geneticists once labeled the parts of DNA they couldn't understand as "junk DNA." If

the pineal gland was so important to so many ancient civilizations, why has it been almost entirely ignored by science and medicine in modern times?

To understand this, we need to go back in time to the origins of medical practice. Medicine began in relatively remote "provincial" areas and was developed by individuals who lived in close harmony with nature and practiced medicine as an "art"—an approach steeped in humanistic values that placed the person, not just the patient, at the center of their mission.

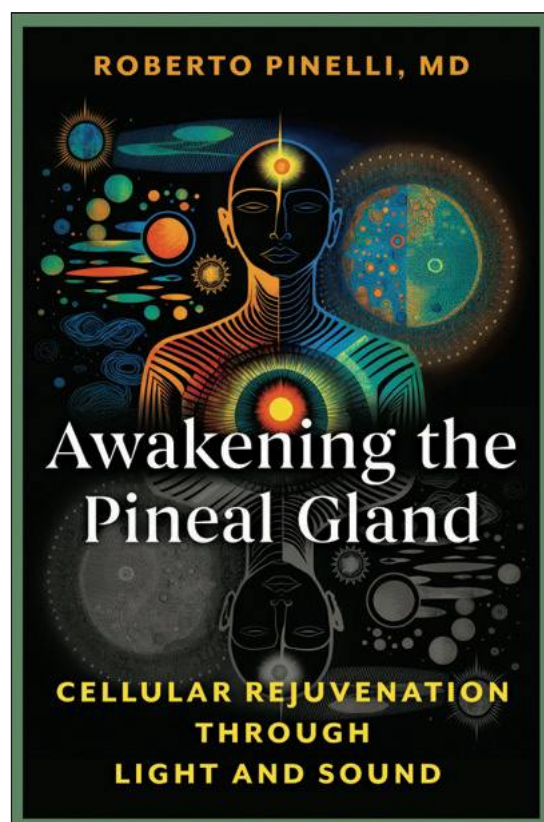
As medicine moved into the great cities like Athens and Rome, healing centers and hospitals began to emerge. Along with these institutions came new frameworks of thought that led to the formalization of practices such as herbal medicine, heliotherapy, health sciences, and the study of nature. Everything became subject to codified methods, and the work of the physician transitioned from an art to a profession—a "ministerium" where healing became a job rather than a calling, with practitioners receiving payment for their services.

To preserve the integrity and coherence of this newly formalized profession, medicine quickly shifted from being a medicine of health to a medicine of illness. In this transition, the pineal gland is truly the keystone of the body's balance. Its beneficial functions were relegated back to the realms of esotericism, magic, and superstition.

Today, thankfully, we're ready to shed outdated misconceptions and fully embrace the scientific and medical importance of the pineal gland. Setting aside the more folkloric theories that myth, legend, and esoteric traditions have spun around the pineal gland, it's time to understand how modern technology can help us unlock the full potential of this extraordinary gland. To do that, we must start with two fundamental questions: How does our pineal gland actually work, and why is it activated by certain types of vibrational treatments? ✨

*Excerpted from **Awakening the Pineal Gland, Cellular Regeneration through Light and Sound**, by Roberto Pinelli, MD, published by Inner Traditions International and Bear & Company, ©2026. All rights reserved. <http://www.Innertraditions.com> Reprinted with permission of publisher.*

Roberto Pinelli, MD, is an ophthalmologist, neuroscientist, and trained pianist and conductor. The director of the Switzerland Eye Research Institute in Lugano, his research is grounded in the use of photons and nutraceuticals to revitalize cellular mitochondria in retinopathies. <https://seri-lugano.ch/en/>



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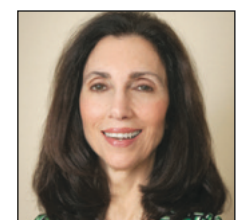
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Judgment vs Discernment

by Ann Albers and The Angels,
Phoenix, AZ

When you came to this world, you came with eagerness, as surely as one feels an eagerness to sample a glorious buffet. You were excited about the diversity that life would offer, eager to sample experiences, tastes, textures, smells, sights, relationships, etc. You couldn't wait for the opportunity to dive into contrasts, and you knew that as you did, you would discover your preferences and create from there.

You knew you would bump into people and things that resonated deeply with you, and, as well, you would encounter those that would not resonate at all. Your plan was to sample, experience, choose, create, then sample, experience, choose, and create again. You never planned to judge; instead, you came equipped with emotions that would help you discern.

As we've said in the past:

Judgement says, "No right to be."

Discernment says, "Not right for me."

There are many difficult things occurring on your earth right now. It is a challenge for most human beings to avoid judgment. What is right and for whom? For many souls, war is wrong. For some, it feels like the only option. For still others, their love of country or ideology drives them into the battle with a desire to protect all they love and hold dear. So what is right for whom?

Dear ones, **if you remain true to yourselves then you will engage in only what is right for your own soul**, your own education, and your own creations. If you follow others blindly without reference to your own heart, you will engage in what they believe is right for them. Only you can discern, through your feelings relative to life and choices, what is right for you and your evolution into greater love.

From a purely vibrational standpoint, that which promotes love is in alignment with the Source and the soul. That which comes from less than love drives

one farther from the experience of Source and soul. Your feelings tell you quickly how close you are to the perspective of your inner Spirit. Feelings of love, joy, appreciation, contentment, etc., indicate alignment. Feelings of anger, victimization, or vengeance indicate one has strayed from their loving center.

A complete surrender to love is heaven. A complete refusal of love is hell. Most of humanity experiences both extremes and everything in between during a single life. Some spend their lives closer to one end of the spectrum than another. Yet even the most lost among you will eventually—in this life or in ones to come—return to their true nature, for the Soul's beacon is a guiding light that constantly whispers to all, "Remember who you really are." Those with even a tiny spark of awareness will easily recognize actions, thoughts, words, and deeds aligned with their true self, while those who have dulled their awareness will feel little at all. Pray for them, dear ones. They are numb, and beneath their numbness is pain.

Each of you gets to discern what is right for you. You alone get to choose your path. Even when it feels you have no external choice, you have the vibrational choice to focus as you wish and therefore engage universal forces to assist. You know what is right and wrong for yourself.

That said, do your best to refrain from judging those who miss the mark or wobble from their own alignment with love. By all means, use your discernment. Avoid the 3D dance with them when you can, and even when you can't, do your best to avoid energetic entanglement with the misaligned. You need not sink to lower levels by hating the haters, judging the judges, or wanting harm to come to those who harm others. You aren't bad if you do. Those are very human feelings. But they do nothing to the lost except empower the darkness that fuels them, and they cause you a disconnect from the love that wants to carry you forward into kinder realities.

We know you would like to avoid such unpleasant feelings, and yet we hear you. "How do I like the haters?" Dear ones, we wouldn't expect you to like hateful people or their behaviors, any more than we would expect you to swallow and enjoy bad food. However, you don't have to join them in hatred. You can choose to see them as they



are—lost and lonely souls who push life and love away. They need your prayers, not your condemnation. There's no need to further empower the darkness.

And how do you avoid judging those who condemn others? Realize they are condemning a part of themselves. Those who would judge others based on nationality, color, creed, or gender are in a constant state of feeling unsafe or insecure. It is a sad reality in which they must constantly make others feel small in order to feel large. They live in a never-ending fight against their own feelings of inadequacy. Pray for them. They are lost.

So many also ask how to feel secure when there are those who would easily harm the innocent. It is a valid 3D concern. And yet, we remind you that not a single soul among you experiences a thing without vibrational participation. Not a single soul leaves your planet without agreement between the Source and the soul. **The innocent who endure the unthinkable are often Christlike beings who come to earth willing to go through anything to raise awareness.** And while that is not necessary, their sacrifices do awaken the masses. Some souls who look like they are filled with passion for life leave the planet in their desire to live even more fully and freely than they can on earth.

You truly can't judge a book by its cover when you look at others' lives. But you can know your own heart, make your own intentions clear, and live and abide in the vibration of Divine Love, in which a

benevolent and loving Creator supports your loving choices. **Judgment entangles you in the vibrations of those you judge. Discernment removes you from their influence.** So in a world that is quick to judge, you can find great relief in learning to discern. Learn to say, "This feels right for me," and allow it into your life, or "This feels wrong for me," in which case we encourage you to move away from it or attune yourself to that which resonates.

This may mean walking away or turning away from what is not right for you. It may mean remaining a silent observer and choosing not to dignify bad behaviors with your attention. It may mean speaking up with loving kindness in the face of something ugly. It may mean disconnecting from that which drags you down and dims your joy while focusing on that which does. It may mean focusing so clearly on love that you help, rescue, or rehabilitate those who have been hurt without getting lost in hating the ones who hurt them.

Do your best to dignify the light within you by refusing to join those who have been tempted to hate, fear, and condemn. For in doing so, you free yourself from the vibrations of hate, fear, and condemnation, and all who would live within them.

There are, and always will be, people doing unthinkable things on your earth. Until humanity remembers its true nature, there will be those who hate and want to rid themselves of the things and beings that reflect their own disconnection. But you, dear ones, can say to yourself when you see something you don't like, "Ah, this is a moment in which I can choose to stay in my loving center and turn the other cheek (tune away), or I can wobble. I choose love" And in that moment, **look for something that feels a little more like love to place your focus upon, for in so doing, you choose a life of love, a path of grace, and a vibration that will help uplift your planet Earth.** ✧

*Ann Albers, a popular author, spiritual instructor, angel communicator, and modern mystic, delights in helping people experience the power and beauty of their own soul. Ann's free weekly "Messages from Ann & the Angels" reaches an international audience with inspiration and tips to help you stay tuned in and turned on. www.visionsofheaven.com. Her book, **Love is the River, Learning to Live in the Flow of Divine Grace** is available at <https://www.amazon.com/Love-RiverLearningDivine-Grace/dp/1949780007/>*

HOLISTIC DENTAL & WELLNESS CENTER

DR. NORMAN BRESSACK | DR. BATOOL F. RIZVI



Batool F. Rizvi, D.D.S., P.C.

strives to keep her patients smiling from the inside out. She believes in a holistic approach to health care. Her gentle touch, excellent listening skills and thorough explanations keep her patients educated, happy and healthy.

Dr. Rizvi offers her Dental services with an integrative and systemic philosophy in mind. She is one of the few doctors placing metal-free Zirconia Implants, and safely removing mercury fillings.

Dr. Rizvi offers a full range of Dental services, treating both adults and children. In association with Dr. Norman Bressack, Dr. Rizvi provides all of Dr. Bressack's services as well as:

- **Metal Free Braces – Clear Aligner Therapy**
- **Metal Free Zirconia Implant Placement**
- **SMART Certified Safe Mercury Removal**



Norman Bressack, D.D.S., P.C.

has been dedicated to practicing healthy holistic dentistry for over 35 years. He is not only a mercury free dentist but also a “mercury safe” dentist, meaning that he uses safe removal protocols to ensure the protection of the patient, staff, environment and himself from exposure to mercury during the amalgam removal process.

Dr. Bressack's mission is to treat his patients in the most healthy, caring, compassionate, and holistic way possible. Most importantly, he wants his patients to feel warm, welcome and happier when they leave than when they came in.

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- Member of the International Association of
- Trained At The Huggins Diagnostic Center

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