

LEARNING TO *news*

Occasional Reflections on Living

Winter 2010



Years ago, while trying to get *Learning to Swim* published, my agent sent drafts of the book to prominent individuals in related fields. We hoped to win endorsements from some of these people, something that might tilt an editor's opinion our way.

One of our recipients was a former Olympian. He offered a warm review of the book, with some clear qualifications. "Make it more about swimming," he offered, "not so much about meditation." Another had just released a well-received work on human potential. "More spiritual practice," he commented, "less sport." A number of publishers gave similar feedback. I remember one writing, "Swimming and life - the book needs to be about one or the other, not both."

Yet one of the central points of a book entitled *Learning to Swim: Reflections On Living* was that sport and spirituality, how we swim and how we live, cannot be taken apart. Our approach to relationships will be exposed with our teammates, our world view will reflect back each time we stand on a starting block and peer into the water below. The two are intimately, inescapably linked. The deeper we dive into one, the more is revealed of the other.

The same can be said of meditation: life and practice cannot be separated. When we walk into our first two-hour workshop, though most of us are overtly seeking a small measure of relief from the demands of our days, we are entering into a process that will certainly touch upon every aspect of our existence.

We might soon see, for instance, that our incessantly busy schedule is mirrored in a mind that will not pause on the breath. Or that the aggression fueling our relentless and impossible quest for perfection echoes in the judgment which greets every instant of our practice. 'I don't have

time to feel this way,' we think while immersed in something at work. Is it any wonder that when uncertainty then comes up in our practice, we swat at it like an annoying bug? 'This just *can't* be right!'

Both these examples confront us with the truth that our lives are not left behind when we meditate, but are instead brought with us - or, more accurately, lay waiting. I suspect such an understanding informs a remarkable passage in Chellis Glendenning's *My Name Is Chellis and I'm In Recovery From Western Civilization*. She writes: "just about everybody I know who is serious about personal healing, social change, and ecological rebalancing is in recovery: recovery from personal addiction, childhood abuse, childhood deprivation, the nuclear family, sexism, racism, urban alienation, trickle-down economics, combat service in the gender wars, the threat of extinction, linear thinking, the mind/body split, technological progress, and the mechanistic world view." (ix)

When we begin to meditate, few of us suspect how much of our lives will be engaged. Most of us come in thinking like the Olympian, the author, and the publisher noted above: that meditation - like swimming - is somehow different, distinct, separate from life. This is one of many notions the practice will undermine if we stick with it long enough. Eventually, *inevitably*, we find the distraction of our busy days and the violence of trickle-down politics are sometimes as much a part of practice as posture and breath.

When this transformative realization presents itself, we will likely react. We might feel shock or disbelief. Our bodies might tingle with excitement or tense with resistance. I recall feeling as if I had been pushed off my seat upon first meeting this fact. Fortunately, in such moments our immediate task as practitioners remains straightforward as ever: we relax and return to the body without opinion or expectation, and there we wait for what is coming our way.

Finding Our Lives: An All-Level Weekend Retreat

Sat Apr 10 & Sun Apr 11
9:00 am - 4:30 pm
Queenswood Centre 2495 Arbutus Road
\$150 off-site \$250 on-site

An October weekend hosted our second Queenswood retreat. With a dozen practitioners in attendance, we dove into meditative practice and view. Time was devoted to group work, giving us a chance to share both experiences and ourselves. By Sunday's end, the meditation space was as intense as any I've felt in a while; people were connecting with the practice, the lineage, and life in remarkable ways.

Alternating guided instruction with walking, silence, and discussion, the 'Finding Our Lives' retreats occur three times a year. Grounding our work together, these are a powerful way to explore embodied meditation and the human journey. Off-site cost is \$150 (including GST and lunches). The on-site cost of \$250 includes a Sat room and required meals. Registration for Apr is open - sign up soon!

Winter 2010 Intensives

Two all-level intensives are planned for the early New Year, providing an excellent opportunity to dive into practice. Monterey will again host a five-morning Jan event. In Feb, a day-long workshop will take place at Royal Roads.

Mon Jan 4 - Fri Jan 8 *Sat Feb 27*
9:30 am - 12:30 pm *9 am - 4:30 pm*
Monterey Centre 370 7300 *Royal Roads 391 2600 (4801)*

Winter Classes & Workshops

Winter will see beginner¹, continuing², and all-level³ meditation events happening in several settings. Check my website for more information:

Monterey Centre ^{1,2,3}	Gordon Head Rec ¹
Queenswood Centre ^{1,2,3}	Juan de Fuca Rec ^{1,2}
Helga Beer Yoga Studio ¹	Greenglade Centre ¹
Royal Roads University ³	University of Victoria ¹

Continuing but can't find a class? Consider taking another intro offering. Others have found this extremely helpful!

Spirituality of the Body: Reggie Ray in Vancouver

Fri Jan 22 - Sun Jan 24
Fri: 7 - 9 pm *Sat: 9 am - 5 pm* *Sun: 9 am - 4 pm*
UBC Asian Centre 1871 West Mall, Vancouver
\$200 online \$220 on-site

The body provides our most direct access to spiritual transformation. In this workshop - his only BC event in 2010 - Reggie Ray will guide us into a landscape within which all the secrets of the universe are displayed.

Registration is available through dharmaoceancanada.org. And if you are interested in carpooling and/or billeting (or are willing to facilitate these) let me know - let's get as many islanders over to the big city as possible.

Intuitive Healing & Guidance

Engaging intuition, energy, and the unseen, this aspect of my work has helped friends identify blockages, find clarity, and determine guidelines for action. Now it seems time to offer this service to a wider circle. Sessions are typically 2-3 hrs over a couple of days. As office options are explored, these will be conducted in homes, coffee shops, and by phone. The wisdom of the subtle world can be a powerful - sometimes indispensable - ally on our journey. To arrange a session or get more information, please contact me.

What Can I Do?

The Land Conservancy of BC is entering the final push to save Madrona Farm in Blenkinsop Valley, ensuring a permanent future for land which produces nearly 200,000 pounds of local food annually. Thanks to donations, pledges, and other fundraising, TLC is on its way to success - but help is needed to raise a remaining \$857,000 by Jan. Donate by calling TLC at 479 8053 or visit their website at conservancy.bc.ca/donatemadrona.

- From Guy Dauncey's *EcoNews* (www.earthfuture.com)

Thanks

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