

Emergence

Journal of the Australian Spiritual Emergence Network

Volume 8 No. 1 – Summer 2004

Spiritual Emergency 1979 Style – and Still Emerging 2004 ***a bipolarizing story with a spiritual emergency twist – Part 2*** ***by Janet Werner, copyright 2004***

Editor's note: This is Part 2 of Janet's story, the first part of which was featured in the last issue of Emergence. Part one dealt largely with her experience of an expanding state of consciousness while she was studying for a MEd in Guidance and Counselling in NJ, USA in 1979. Having some context by which to understand her experience, and limited, enlightened support from her surrounding network, she devised a system of coping with the intense experience by channeling her excess energy into numerous activities and creative projects, and extensively journaling in order to document, process and monitor her progress. Intuitively she believed she was going through a process of spiritual transformation, but simultaneously she was aware that she was exhibiting classic textbook symptoms of mania, delusion and having a nervous breakdown. 'Breaking down' and 'breaking through' is how she describes her experience, however the institution viewed it differently in 1979. Part 2 picks up her story with her reluctant entry into various psychiatric wards where she was labeled "bipolar", medicated accordingly and her process was aborted and discredited...

Introduction to Part 2

I begin here with some references to offer a broader context from which to assimilate my story, and for you to assimilate your story with greater ease too. I also add my current toolbox from a 2004 perspective, having completed my original *Spiritual Emergency-Y* now, in an ongoing spiritual emergence without prescriptive medication for one year.

In the book, *Spiritual Emergency, When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis* (1989), Stanislav Grof, M.D and Christina Grof view many episodes of unusual states of mind as crisis of the evolution of consciousness or *spiritual emergencies*, comparable to the states described by the various mystical traditions of the world.

I agree with the Grofs that spiritual emergencies are unique to each individual, and should not be squeezed into categories nor treated with any template prescription. My story offers one woman's articulation of a real-life account that validates spiritual emergency from the mislabeling and mistreatment of manic-depressive illness. Listed below are the forms documented by the Grofs that I too experienced. You may read further descriptions in their book, *Spiritual Emergency* (1989).

My personal experience included:

Shamanic crisis, Awakening of kundalini, Episodes of unitive consciousness ("peak experiences"), Psychological renewal through return to the center, Crisis of psychic opening, Communications with spirit guides and "channeling".



In part one of this article I offered a number of examples where my 'manic' experience included mystical moments. The mystical connection is described by Dr. David Lukoff assessing these states as a transient, extraordinary experience marked by:

- ✧ feelings of unity
- ✧ sense of harmonious relationship to the divine
- ✧ euphoria
- ✧ sense of noesis (access to the hidden spiritual dimension)
- ✧ loss of ego functioning
- ✧ alterations in time and space perception
- ✧ sense of lacking control over the event

(Ref: www.internetguides.com)

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One of the significant mystical moments in the previous article describes the night where I experienced a spontaneous and rapid 'downloading', my mind was flooded with historical names, ancient text, philosophies and wisdom from many of the great thinkers of our past. All I knew to do was to write as fast as I could into my journal. A few days later I burned that journal out of fear that someone would think I was crazy.



Since 1979, my view has always been that the momentary openings into the collective unconscious I experienced were also shared by many others around the globe, and that we have a responsibility and an opportunity to free ourselves by expressing the content of that download. I have yet to decipher the content of that one particular download in 1979, but I intend to. In recent years, many more people seem to be experiencing downloads of this nature, which I believe need to be brought into the world.

Sandra Stahlman (www.well.com) explains this experience:

"The unusual sensations which accompany mystical experience, Deikman refers to as 'perceptual expansion', awareness includes stimuli which are usually filtered or repressed, such as our own electrochemical processes. As such information-limiting processes are deautomatized, boundaries of self expand to include a wide source of knowledge previously withheld from conscious awareness."

As I experienced my first exposure to deautomatization and widening of conscious boundaries I also retained some amount of my structured self, a self who would study, document and monitor observations of the deautomatized self. It was extraordinary and exhausting to do this alone.

At the point where I resume this story in 1979, I was engaged in two interlinking processes... I was working my way back up from a spiritual emergency 'breakdown' to a new state of normality and functionality, and I was also having a real, ground-level, psychological nervous breakdown. Actually, that was *good* news but I didn't fully realize that until I had to repeat the breakdown over and over again, finally breaking through 25 years later. Breakthrough follows breakdown if it is allowed, nurtured and supported.

Who's Really Crazy? Checking In and Checking Out Life in the Mental Institution

Back to 1979 and my dorm apartment – I am surrounded, I am stopped in my tracks and am about to make a choice to go with the flow, give in to the mounting resistance within my community, within my surrounding system and within me.

The system became stronger as the numbers of professional folks, loving friends and family joined me in my apartment. It looked like a convention. I wanted it to be a party. It turned out to be convergence of 'tough love'. They all meant well, I could imagine. They took turns meeting me one-to-one in my bedroom, each one sitting with me face-to-face, my eyes holding steadfast to an inner conviction. Each of them was trying every which way to convince me that I was in a breakdown and that I needed help. I already knew that I had broken down. I agreed that I needed help. I wanted one open-minded therapist who was familiar with the construct of a spiritual emergency. Why couldn't I have been asked what I knew and what my plan was?

Each of them was trying to give me as much respect as they could from the limited perspective they held. I knew not one of them would buy into my story, nor trust me that I could move through this without institutionalizing. Staying in my dorm room was not in the cards. Going home with my parents was not a healthy option either, as I did not believe we would be able to converse on the truth that I was experiencing. My choice was to sign in to the mental health institution. I decided that the only way out of this was to walk through it on their terms, at least for a time being.

Someone drove me to Trenton Psychiatric Hospital nearby, where I was given a bed and a roommate. The room was dark and cold and felt like a cell. I spent one night in that 'loony bin' of Trenton Psychiatric Hospital. It was a dismal and depressing environment, not to mention scary, for even the most sane of visitors. I continued to journal as I lay in my bed trying to stay safe from what felt crazy all around me. There were folks prancing around like fairies in a garden and others screaming through the night. I was not one of them. I knew that, but no one else seemed to know that. My psychiatrist came to visit me the next morning and I told him that I was getting out of there. No discussion, no convincing. I was signing myself out. I played their game and I decided that I would take my chances at home. I called my Dad and asked him to pick me up before I went crazy. I knew that some place deep inside he would support me, although he was scared – his little girl was having a breakdown because the professionals said so. He also believed that this was not the place for me. He hated that place too, and I was taken home the next day.

I couldn't talk with my family, nor my friends and definitely not the psychiatrists. It felt as if there wasn't a soul in the world who I could talk with, who would just listen, fully listen and consider what I was saying and value me, trust me that there was another way to go about

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this dilemma – this extraordinary experience that was happening. I wanted NOT to be seen as a problem to be solved but as a human being with a spirit that wanted to emerge; to emerge within a safe place where patience and tolerance for the extraordinary was valued. I found no such place at this time. I learned to talk with myself and with God. You know, when you talk to yourself in a loony bin they write you up on their little chart, so you have to be careful about this talking with yourself and talking with God. Neal Diamond Walsh didn't come out with his book yet *On Conversations with God* – so when you are labeled you could get into some sticky trouble if anyone caught you talking with God. I kept it under cover.

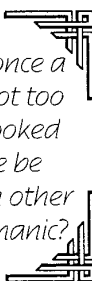
I was told by The College of NJ that I had to stay home until a psychiatrist approved me to return to college. Thankfully my mom took me to a cool psychiatrist (there are some cool ones out there) and after a brief discussion (I chose to share a little bit of this spiritual transformation thing without getting too dramatic) – something inside of him saw and felt my inner stability. He wrote me a note to return to school. Only a few days had gone by and I was back on the college campus. I hadn't yet learned to see myself as a problem, nor an illness. I also don't remember if, at this point, I was put on any medication.

I walked back into my residence hall and said, "I'mmm back". No one believed I would be back so soon. Why do folks insist on believing that this has to be so complicated and take so long?

I proceeded to continue my degree and my work in the residence hall but nothing seemed to be the same as before. It became more difficult to cope. I began to consider the mental model of being a problem and being an illness. I could sense the doubt from others. Trust from home wasn't there. Trust at the college seemed to be missing. The pressure was building. I was alone. I must have been under careful watch by folks at the campus because it wasn't but two weeks and... here we go again.



It's interesting in this system that once a person gets labeled manic there's not too much you can do that doesn't get looked at as manic. Why can other people be busy and I'm being manic? Why can other people be creative and I am being manic?



I was told that I couldn't do anything other than go to class and carry on my job in the residence hall as a graduate assistant. No creative programs, no assembling people for any reason, no fun activities to launch – and it was Christmas time – surely they didn't mean... no Christmas activities? My German heritage brought me up as a little girl celebrating St. Nicholas Day every December 6th. Each year my sisters and I would look forward to some

little pre-Christmas celebration with our tradition of putting a plate under our bed and receiving goodies in the morning from St. Nick. It's just what we did and what I knew. In the residence hall role I was used to offering activities – silly, unique things, for the students to experience – it's just what we did: it was expected. Not thinking for a moment that what I was about to do was taboo. I ran around the floors at midnight on December 5th slipping a plate of goodies under the door of each of my student staff member's rooms, with a note – *Happy St. Nicholas Day as celebrated in Germany – love Janet*. Well that innocent activity became a perception that I was out of touch with reality, out of control, and a clear demonstration that I was manic – maybe dangerous to the students – and I needed help that couldn't be provided if I stayed at school. I was beginning to feel like I was going to go crazy from being so invalidated and misunderstood.

I was called in by the professionals, who told me I had to leave the college campus. I must decide to commit to Rutgers Mental Health Institute or leave school, go home and not proceed with the completion of my Masters Degree. The message was clear: *Under no circumstances could I return without spending time at Rutgers Mental Health*. I had finally received the full-blown, control message from the system. Did I have free will and a choice? Sure. Was there a strong set of assumptions directing the course of my treatment? Yes. Was there a control model at work? Absolutely.

Ok, so I was caught up in a system of perceptions, beliefs, assumptions, and some observable instances of manic behavior, as documented in the abnormal psych archives. I clearly knew I was having a parallel transformation experience, one that would move me to a breakthrough, and would provide such fabulous learnings and a new life ahead – that seemed beyond my dreams but within my reach. I had a mental construct of what reality I was in, yet the context around me would not explore this reality with me.

For just a moment I will introduce the term 'schizophrenia' into this story for the purposes of including the messages below and to draw connections to my personal experience, which was NOT labeled schizophrenic, although it could have been. The great psychiatrist, Carl Jung defined schizophrenia as a condition where the unconscious overwhelms the ego-consciousness with contents from the deepest unconscious, taking mythic, symbolic form. Under certain personal crisis, all the psyche's energy is sucked back out of the personal, conscious area, into what we call the archetypal area in order to reorganize the Self. Jung believed that schizophrenia is a self-healing process where pathological complexes dissolve themselves. This description, as well as the two entries below, is taken from an interview between Dr. John Perry and Michael O'Callaghan found on www.global-vision.org/interview/perry.html

The late Dr. John Weir Perry, a Jungian psychiatrist, author, *The Far Side of Madness*, showed that when given the space to go through the visionary experience in a safe

environment, the non-ordinary state of consciousness tends to end spontaneously after about 40 days, with few relapses. Dr. Perry founded an experimental residential facility called *Diabasis* where individuals were able to go through a complete falling apart and coming-back-together-again – “weller than well.” He offers guidance to the subtle therapist to facilitate psychological shiatsu.

R.D. Laing, psychiatrist, author, “The Divided Self”, shook up the psychiatric establishment in the 1960’s when he showed that the person who gets labeled schizophrenic is usually the identified patient in a larger network of family and societal relation, which are themselves dysfunctional and whose members share responsibility for the outcome.

It is December 1979 and my therapeutic community was operating on the medicated control model. I could feel the horror inside of being so misunderstood, of being treated subordinate to my own process by the credentialed professionals, of being boxed up and labeled for shipment to some institution that would set my boundaries, that would treat me in confinement until they gave the approval to return to my home base, in accordance to some researched guidelines. This last trigger for them was only St. Nicks Day! If I wanted to graduate by June 1980 I had to face my greatest fear – sign myself up for a loony bin vacation, walk into that institution with all of it’s medical models and charts and rules of how to behave, agree to the medication and therapy prescribed and leave when they said I was well.

I feared being subject to electroshock treatment... what if I get zapped and they zap the spirit out of me, I thought. I was not only scared; trauma set in. I began to log the anger and the rage inside from such dishonoring of a human spirit. This anger and rage took 25 years to pay for and release.

I’m wondering what my life would have been like had I been trusted and believed in during that 1979 significant space. I’m wondering what these past 25 years would have manifested had I not aborted my spiritual transformation and been supported, held gently, validated, collaborated with through the mystery.

Well I was on my way to a mental institution and – I paused and I felt a guidance – *Before you leave the residence hall go and say good bye to your two friends who believed in you even though they didn’t really understand anything that was going on.* I knocked on a door and there stood my two student resident counselors, who I had grown to love. “I want to know if you believe in me.” They stood in the doorway and easily responded,

“Janet, we believe in you”. That was all I needed. I left. I felt empowered by their statement of authentic belief in me. I learned again that a hug and the words *I believe in you* have a powerful and life-giving effect.



The next I remember was walking on the Rutgers campus toward this big building with glass doors. Behind those doors I knew there were locks, and in just a few moments I would be signing myself into a place that, down to the cells of my soul, I knew I didn’t belong in. I walked down that sidewalk with the mantra, *I believe in you. We believe in you, Janet.* A strength came over me and my walk was easy. I entered. I had no idea how long I would be there. I wanted to be out for Christmas, and Christmas was only three weeks away. I wondered, as I entered the building, if I might never return. I felt the horror and the trauma for some moments about the possibility of being jailed for life, of some sick play on life to face the possibility of *really* losing it, and living out a hell in a straight jacket. There is no quicker route to ‘crazy’ than to lock up a sane person with no way out. The fear was real. I decided to face the fear. I had a choice and I made a choice to hold my sanity. I walked forward somehow knowing deep within – *All is well.* I had my journal with me, I had my God with me, and for sure someone in there would believe me.

The journal only seemed to get me in more trouble and validate to the all-knowing psychiatrists that I indeed was nuts and manic. The more they said, “ah huh, ah huh”, pretending to really listen, the more I grew frustrated and the faster I talked and the more I proved to them that I was indeed in a manic phase. Manic people talk fast. So do people who are falsely convicted of a crime that they didn’t commit. It takes a nice steady and powerful lawyer to stand by the innocently convicted to settle them down to some place of confidence and assure them that they will receive a fair trial. I didn’t have that lawyer. I didn’t have that doctor. I didn’t have a family member or community who believed in my innocence – no one who believed in my sanity. I was convicted, without a fair trial, of being in a manic phase and not in control. I was having a spiritual emergency requiring a significantly different treatment to allow for emergence, not suppression.

One of the points made by Emma Bragdon (*Spiritual Emergency*, 1988) is that spiritual emergence is more likely to become a spiritual emergency if: *No conceptual framework exists to support the experience with which to understand and accept the phenomenon with equanimity.* Another determining factor is if: *Family, friends or helping professionals of the person having the experience see the phenomenon in terms of psychological symptoms which have no possibility of being positive.*

In my reality I was a frustrated young woman alone on a spiritual transformation process with no framework to follow. I was trying, with all of the patience and tolerance ... *continued on page 6*

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I could summon up, to explain that something else, in addition to a nervous breakdown, was happening. Yes I was breaking down and I was breaking through – something that seems to be OK to do in 2004, but in 1979 it wasn't too popular. I never quite broke through. My spiritual process was eventually aborted to an extent. Aborting a spiritual process at a certain point (according to Barbara Marx Hubbard), and especially as cellular memory is being reconstructed, can be more destructive to life than never having started the spiritual process in the first place. I didn't know this, nor much of anything else about the human transformation process – all I felt was that I was in Big, Big trouble.

In 2004, I have clarity about the price I paid for aborting my earlier spiritual process. Consciously aborting a spiritual emergency has a trauma to it that has a sense of what I call *spiritual rape*, the violation of a system inserting itself into my being in a way that I can't stop, although I am pleading for my life. This 'spiritual rape' by a system on a young girl's being was a control over my soul's emergence, a sedation of my heart and soul. To some extent it was a 'spiritual rape' of self-to-self – of choosing to abandon myself and succumb to the system, allowing it to assert itself to me.

I know now not to try to talk to someone who really doesn't want to listen. I know now not to attempt to convince anyone of anything that they are not open to learning, especially with the experts. I know now to keep my mouth shut and be authentic only with those who are authentic, and to practice discernment. At that time, I didn't know these things.

At Rutgers Mental Health Institute, there were many folks with various expressions of psychotic, neurotic and spiritual postures. Some of them were patients. But this space wasn't as bad as Trenton Psychiatric – a bit more homey and civilized. There was a brighter atmosphere with a living room table and a couch in the community room.



I was soon put on Lithium, labeled 'manic' and monitored to insure that I swallowed the tiny pink pills. I was afraid as I swallowed my first one... *I vow that this pill will not take my spirit away from me.* I had no idea of what the pill was or what it would do to me. And knowing that I was going through a different understanding of the experience I wasn't sure if it was going to mess me up or take away the insights that I had found. Each night I would meditate and affirm to myself – *I release the power of these pills and I affirm my spiritual belief in the transformation* – so I could sleep fine. I had a secret and I wasn't going to tell anyone. Me and God would have to handle this by ourselves. You know, *Let Go and Let God* or maybe something like *Let Go and Partner with God* – and I did.

They ran me through all kind of tests looking for tumors or signs of epilepsy or some other brain malfunction – I really wonder why insurance programs let them do this – this was a big waste of money. They could have just asked me

and I would have told them that I didn't have a tumor or anything like it – I could have saved the State of NJ a good deal of time and money on all of these tests if there was only a slight consideration that there was a parallel spiritual emergency taking place, requiring a significantly different treatment plan, not in the hospital.

I asked myself: *What is it that I am here for? Since I am not mentally ill, what is my purpose here? There must be something for me to do as I pass the time and attempt to get out of here with my sanity.*

It didn't take long to find folks to chat with. There was this one young lady who never took care of herself, her hair always a mess. One day she began following me around, asking for my curling iron and make-up. She desired to look pretty and took charge of making a shift.

 *There was a young rambunctious man, Jamie, who was always running around either starting a revolution or fleeing from one. It seemed to me like he was living out a war in his head and had the spirit to fight for something. He would exclaim, "Revolt, a revolution is coming!" And I would say, "Jamie, no more revolutions. How about evolution instead – a bit more peaceful". He seemed to calm down.* 

There was also this nice old man. He was all crinkled up with his facial expression squished into contortions, his hands folded in fists and bent over. He never sat up straight and looked at you. We used to sit at the table and chat. In what seemed like a few hours from our first conversation this crinkled up little old man sat up with combed hair and hands comfortably resting in his lap and looked me in the eyes as we chatted. I don't remember what we said but I do remember the transformed appearance that he was wearing.

This other young woman, tortured by her visions of little people dancing around on the top of her soda can, was so frustrated because she didn't like them there. She didn't know what to do so she asked me, "How do I get these little people dancing on my soda can to stop?" I paused, and something came out of my vocal cords in a simple matter of fact way. I told her: "Just tell them to get off your soda can." She did, and they were gone. How about that? "Good for you", I said, and left.

Today I see these moments as an exchange of pure 'Dialogue'. Dialogue is the 2000-year-old practice of pausing, authentically meeting the other as equal, honoring self and the other, and speaking from a spiritual non-judgmental center. Dialogue is a tool brought forth to the modern world by physicist David Bohm and the project at MIT, to bring more coherence, more learning into communication and to allow breakthrough in evolving

consciousness. In the living room at Rutgers Mental Health Institute the patients and I were engaging in this ancient practice of true Dialogue and experiencing it's natural transformational effects. Later on, during the 1990s, I routinely applied this tool of Dialogue to business issues in the corporate environment and again experienced its transformative effects.



At the hospital I began to find my purpose and took on a role of chatting with the patients – with clear intention to hear their reality, to meet them with validation that what they were experiencing was truth for them. How do I know and how do you know and how do the brilliant psychiatrists know that what they see isn't really there, seeing into some other dimension? How possible is it that 'crazy making' is exacerbated through invalidation of another's reality? To what extent might the simple tool of Dialogue be of value in 'easing' this journey through mental illness, spiritual transformation and the daily challenges of communicating together?

What I found out was that through authentically meeting with them, not as crazy patients, and through acknowledging their experience as real, I did not promote more of the same 'delusions': in fact, the opposite occurred – the delusions and intensity and struggle seemed to dissipate. We were making some good progress. I knew that I was resonating an energy within that did not feel like the old, normal Janet I had known, yet it was not totally unfamiliar – just a bit phenomenal. I trusted me and I sent a message of trust to each of the patients – not as a planned counseling intervention – I was just being natural.

I was witnessing an affect on the healing of others – with simple listening, simple validation and simple unquestionable belief. I trusted myself to monitor the ego self that could get carried away with what we were experiencing as being 'spontaneous healing'. I had enough religious upbringing to honor God out there, and not necessarily me in here, for any miracles that were happening. I could feel and see what I believed was Spirit working through me – authentic, truth-seeking and loving Spirit. Patients around me were transforming fairly easily. They knew it too. The entire ward took on a different energy. Things were different and moving along nicely. But then...

First, the patients had a meeting, after which one came to tell me that they didn't trust me. They thought that I was a spy from the medical team because I wasn't like one of them. *Yeah*, I said to myself, *at least some folks in here can see reality!* It took a little more 'truth telling' and being with them to convince them that I was indeed a patient, and I also told them that I didn't believe I belonged in there. They agreed.

Then, after a few days I was called into a big room filled with medical folks all sitting in a circle. I was given a chair right smack in the middle of the circle. It felt like an


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inquisition was about to take place. I didn't know why I was called in but it certainly didn't seem like a surprise birthday party. What happened next was a barrage of questions from various points in the circle; it was weird and crazy. It felt as if I was a criminal under interrogation – "What do you think you are doing in here, young lady?", "What are you doing with the patients?", "Who do you think you are?". I paused, and thought, and said, "I don't know what you are talking about. I'm not doing anything – just trying to get out of here". They let me go.

I learned my lesson that day to deny my voice and my knowing, to protect myself in order to survive when the perception within the system is so strong against you – just lie and get by.

I think I knew what they were expecting me to say. I was identified as a bipolar patient in a manic episode, and 'manics' can often think or feel like they are 'saviors' commissioned by God to help heal the world. I don't *really* know what they thought, but I assume that they had noticed the various changes that were taking place. They were seeing their sick patients making breakthroughs and shifts at a rate that was unfamiliar. I *do* know that when I walked out of that room I felt my purpose-driven activity had been taken away.



I sat sadly alone on the couch by myself and this nice counselor came up to me. All he said was, "Janet, act like a patient". I looked at him, but didn't reply. I heard the meaning within his words that was useful to me, and started acting just like the other patients.



I withdrew at times, I didn't chat and help as I did before. I minded my own business and I thought to myself: *What a lesson in life... Stop helping others and get rewarded.* This was a painful notion to consider, I felt angry at a system that would reward me for focusing on myself, and discourage me from helping others.

Sure enough, not a full day passed and I was brought into another room and given a test. I passed the psychological test and I was released to go home with an approval to return to school.

Looking back on my experience in the psychiatric hospital, I am left wishing the system had the insight of Loren Mosher:

The late Loren Mosher, a San Diego psychiatrist, documents findings from his Soteria House project (early 1970's), standing up for the premise that individuals in severe personal emotional crisis (labeled schizophrenic or mentally ill) can and do move through to recover from

psychoses, craziness, whatever you want to call it, given a few simple elements:

- ✧ *a nurturing home-like supportive social based environment*
- ✧ *an attitude to understand what's really going on inside the individual along with a suspension of judgment by the 'professional'*
- ✧ *relationships of respect and dignity with the staff*
personal choice and personal responsibility
(See: www.mindfreedom.org/loren_mosher)

It was December 20th when I walked out the door. At that time I was still operating on the belief that there was this wonderful spiritual emergence evolving within me, and that somehow I was 'covered', spiritually. Over the past weeks inside the institution and the preceding month at school I always found a way to move forward – to find the diamond in the rough seas – to be connected with my center and with my Source. But now it was time to go home.

I came home with my bottle of little pink pills that my mom made sure I took and swallowed. I sat on the couch, withdrawn and isolated in a home filled with a mom, a dad, and two sisters and it was Christmas. We didn't talk much about my hospital experience and nothing of my spiritual experience. It was almost as if it didn't happen, and to me it was the most frightening and profound experience of my life. There I was, sitting at home as the middle child living out her worst nightmare, isolated and alone in her reality, right in the middle of a loving family. I was quiet and withdrawn and beginning to get confused, beginning to rapidly lose my connection with Source and lose my belief that this story has a positive ending. I was unaware of how much anger I covered up – the anger at everyone and everything in the entire system, and an anger at myself that hadn't yet surfaced. I felt deceived by my own inner knowing and naiveté. I felt alone and abandoned by my Source, by my God, and I was greeted by a cooperative traveler – depression – an appropriate reaction to the situation of suppression, non-communication and invalidation.

It was only a few days away from a true celebration of Christmas – the birth of Christ, as we believed – a truly spiritual time. And since I had been going through a spiritual transformation truly this would be the most fabulous spiritual Christmas ever. Was I in a fantasy world? Was I on drugs? Yes. A truly spiritual time it was; a joyous celebration it was not. While I didn't know it at the time, this was to be my first trek into the depths of the shadow side of spiritual transformation... If you are manic then you may get to experience depression. If you abort a spiritual emergency you may get to experience what I later learned was the *Dark Night of the Soul* as well.

My three months of what the psych crew called my "bipolar manic phase" was also a parallel powerful spiritual opening and introduction to what took me the next 25 years to learn about – this mass spiritual awakening and

transformation thing so many are speaking about these days in 2004. Once I aborted my spiritual breakthrough, I began my first journey into The Dark Night of the Soul. I wish that there were a book and a guide to get through what was the most hellish six months of my life. (Carolyn Myss, where were you in 1979?). This was to be repeated four more times through the course of the next 20 years.



The funny thing was that, following my winter break at home I went back to the college campus where everyone seemed to think all was well. I was living hell. Mind you I was on some heavy prescription drugs at that time, which I cut back on as soon as I was able to. My psychiatrist monitored my blood levels and validated that I responded well to a dosage lower than the therapeutic level. I was feeling kind of dulled, and was hoping that cutting the dosage might help to bring my spirit back.

In June 1980, I graduated on time with my classmates, despite the minor interruption of a manic-depressive episode or a spiritual emergency. I finished my MED partially because I used my time at Rutgers Mental Health Institution and my journal of experience with which to write my graduate papers. It was easy to leverage the insight I had gained from the inside out. I handed in my papers on group therapy and counseling theory from an experiential perspective, my professors accepted them and I passed the requirements to graduate.

Looking back on my experiences in 1979, it is clear that while I was exhibiting bipolar behaviors I was engaged in a parallel reality described as *spiritual emergenc-Y*. The treatment I received under the limited label of 'manic-depressive' was painful, dishonoring, and not efficacious. It prolonged my struggle for 25 years. Having wrestled with five Dark Nights of the Soul, and a battle on and off psychiatric medication, I am now living more freely in 2004, never ever to return to the confines of the mental illness context. I live simply now, integrating good common sense nutrition, exercise, creative forms of

expression and most importantly an engaged trusting and loving relationship with my son. I embrace the ongoing process of *spiritual emergenc-E* with daily attention, responsibility and discerning interaction within my community.

I conclude with a summary of my spiritual emergenc-E emergenc-Y toolbox for preventative maintenance and support of my ongoing process (and I encourage you to create your own). This includes:

- ✧ Replacement of Lithium with Tyrosine, B-complex, Fish oil/Essential fatty acids, green drinks & enjoyment of this earth's full menu of foods in moderation
- ✧ Tai Chi, swimming, gardening & general outdoor natural exercise in nature
- ✧ Routine discipline of retreat, meditation, breathing, napping. Taking time each day to just notice what's going on out there in my life, what's going on in here in my life right NOW.
- ✧ Creative expression via writing when it comes naturally
- ✧ Energy tools such as massage, reiki and bioenergetics.
- ✧ Homeopathic remedies as needed.
- ✧ Discerning interaction and meaningful relationships.
- ✧ Most of all, routine daily fun & connection with my son, Brandon.

