

LIFE TRANSFORMATION THROUGH VOICE DIALOGUE

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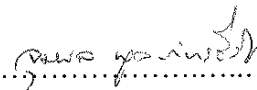
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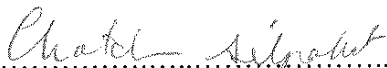
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ABSTRACT

Voice Dialogue is a consciousness transformational path that has the main objective of cultivating an Aware Ego Process in a person through its main tool which is Voice Dialogue Facilitation. The other related elements in Voice Dialogue are the psychology of selves, psychology of an aware ego, bonding patterns and dream process.

This research study mainly focused on the life transformation through Voice Dialogue. The research method used was “life story interview” which is a kind of narrative approach that had only one purposeful key informant who is senior Voice Dialogue facilitator and teacher with almost 30-year experience.

The results showed that transformation happens naturally throughout an individual’s life through various kinds of life events. However, it is important for an individual to learn how to go through and be with the period of transformation with trust and consciously engage in the transformation process itself. Voice Dialogue is one of the powerful transformational tool/approach that gives supporting means for a person to practice. Over time, ongoing practice of Voice Dialogue can bring a sense of impermanence to one’s life that will liberate a person from a fixed attachment of being in certain kind of selves. One can experience the freewill. One’s consciousness will expand and evolve. The person will become more whole. As a result, the natural compassion and humanity will emerge from within.

**KEY WORDS: LIFE TRANSFORMATION/ CONSCIOUSNESS/ AWARENESS/
VOICE DIALOGUE/ AWARE EGO PROCESS**

173 pages

การเปลี่ยนแปลงชีวิตขั้นพื้นฐานผ่านงานวอยซ์ไดอะล็อก

LIFE TRANSFORMATION THROUGH VOICE DIALOGUE

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ศศ.ม. (จิตตปัญญาศึกษาและการเรียนรู้สู่การเปลี่ยนแปลง)

คณะกรรมการที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์ : ศักดิ์ชัย อนันต์ตรีชัย, Ph.D., ชัชวาลย์ ศิลปกิจ, พ.บ., Ph.D.

บทคัดย่อ

วอยซ์ไดอะล็อกเป็นงานบนเส้นทางการเปลี่ยนแปลงของจิตสำนึกซึ่งมีจุดมุ่งหมายหลักเพื่อ บ่มเพาะกระบวนการเท่าทันตัวตน ในบุคคลผ่านเครื่องมือหลักของงานนี้คือการสัมภาษณ์ตัวตน องค์ประกอบสำคัญอื่นๆที่เกี่ยวข้องในงานวอยซ์ไดอะล็อกคือจิตวิทยาเหล่าตัวตน จิตวิทยาเท่าทันตัวตน แบบแผนพึงพิงทางความสัมพันธ์ และกระบวนการทำงานกับความฝัน

งานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาเรื่องการเปลี่ยนแปลงชีวิตขั้นพื้นฐานผ่าน งานวอยซ์ไดอะล็อก โดยใช้การสัมภาษณ์เรื่องราวชีวิตเชิงลึก และนำเสนอผ่านรูปแบบเรื่องเล่าซึ่งมีผู้ให้ ข้อมูลหลักแบบเฉพาะเจาะจงเพียงหนึ่งตัวอย่างคือเจมี โอนา แพนกายา ผู้สัมภาษณ์ตัวตน/ครูวอยซ์ไดอะ ล็อกอาวุโสผู้มีประสบการณ์กับงานวอยซ์ไดอะล็อกมาเกือบ 30 ปี

ผลของการศึกษาพบว่าตลอดช่วงชีวิตของแต่ละบุคคล การเปลี่ยนแปลงขั้นพื้นฐานนั้น เกิดขึ้นอย่างเป็นธรรมชาติตามเหตุปัจจัยต่างๆที่เข้ามาสู่ชีวิต แต่อย่างไรก็ตามสิ่งสำคัญสำหรับปัจเจกบุคคล ที่กำลังผ่านช่วงการเปลี่ยนแปลงนั้น คือความสามารถที่จะเรียนรู้ในการดำรงอยู่กับแต่ละขณะของการ เปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างตระหนักรู้และเท่าทัน รวมถึงการมีความสามารถที่จะไว้วางใจต่อกระบวนการ เปลี่ยนแปลงนั้นๆด้วย วอยซ์ไดอะล็อกเป็นหนึ่งในเครื่องมือและวิธีการปฏิบัติที่มีประสิทธิภาพซึ่งสามารถ สนับสนุนกระบวนการการเปลี่ยนแปลงของปัจเจกบุคคลให้เกิดการตระหนักรู้และเท่าทัน เมื่อบุคคลได้รับการ ฝึกฝนอย่างต่อเนื่องและยาวนานพอ การยึดติดในตัวตนจะลดลงเนื่องจากสามารถประจักษ์ถึงความจริง ที่ว่าตัวตนต่างๆมีการเปลี่ยนแปลงและเป็นสิ่งที่ชั่วคราวอยู่ตลอดเวลา ซึ่งสามารถส่งผลให้เกิดอิสรภาพที่ แท้ ถอดถอนการเห็นผิดและการติดยึดในตัวคนต่างๆ เกิดอิสรภาพในการเลือกอย่างแท้จริง เกิดการวิวัฒน์ และการขยายของจิตสำนึก สามารถเข้าใจการเป็นมนุษย์ที่บริบูรณ์ยิ่งขึ้น และความเมตตาที่แท้จริงต่อ ความเป็นมนุษย์จะผุดบังเกิดขึ้นจากภายใน

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)	iv
ABSTRACT (THAI)	v
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem	1
1.2 Purpose of the Study	5
1.3 Thesis Question	5
1.4 Scope of the Study	5
1.5 Limitations of the Study	6
1.6 Importance of the Study	6
1.7 Definitions of Terms	7
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 Theoretical Framework	9
2.2 Review of Voice Dialogue	18
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHOD	38
3.1 Research Design	38
3.2 Research Procedures	40
3.3 Interview Guidelines	43
CHAPTER IV LIFE STORY TELLING	46

CONTENTS (cont.)

	Page
CHAPTER V LIFE TRANSFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION OF LIFE STORY	115
5.1 Overall Life Transformation	116
5.2 Life Transformation Through Voice Dialogue	125
CHAPTER VI REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL JOURNEY	151
BIBLIOGRAPHY	168
BIOGRAPHY	173

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	A diagram of a Male-Female interaction of Bonding Pattern	31

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem

I was born in a big extended Chinese business-focused family. All of my parents' family members are business persons. I am the eldest daughter among three siblings. However, for my first 12 years, I was raised as an only child since my second-born brother and my younger sister came along later. When I was young, my parents worked very hard since they were building up the family financially. So I spent a lot of time with many of my nannies and neighbours throughout my childhood. As I remember, at home, I used to be a very aggressive girl, easily annoyed, self-centered, angry, stubborn, and sometimes scolded other people. On the other hand, at school, I was very quiet, well-behaved, got along well with friends and teachers, nice, lovely, and helpful but lacking in self-confidence. I started to get confused and have wondered about my personality ever since I was young. Besides my own confusion about my mixed personalities, I also received contrasting comments from my relatives and friends regarding my behaviors and attitudes toward things around me. For example, when I was with my maternal relatives, they said that I was a big spender, but when I was with my dad's relatives, they said that I was economical. That made me even more confused and I asked myself, "What kind of a person am I?" and "Who am I really?"

As a Buddhist, my meditation practice began when I was in high school. I went to a week-long youth Buddhist meditation camp every year from grade 10 until my first year in university. Meditation practice calmed me down, and I behaved less aggressively. When I started working, I realized that my aggressiveness had seemingly been hidden and successfully suppressed for a long time because it burst out only a few times with small annoying events. I often heard people remark about me that "You are a kind-hearted woman" or "You are just like St. Mary." It sounded like I was so good, and I know myself and what I kept inside me, how cruel and cold I can be.

All of my subpersonalities confused me internally. I had at least two different sides of me, and they always made me feel sick and stressed, both psychologically and physically.

During my primary school days, I came up with my own theory to explain myself just to relieve my confusion about how I was related to other people and why I had mixed personalities. I called it a “mirror theory.” I imagined that each human shows oneself to the world with many different pieces of mirror. Each person around us would have known us according to which mirror we used to reflect ourselves out. What did I mean by mirror? Mirror is a set of personalities that we use in our relationship between one person and another. Sometimes when we used only one facet of a mirror with one person, such as one of our family members, one day something bad could have happened between us, and the mirror, which represents the relationship between the two, could break into pieces. When the mirror was broken, people might try to fix that mirror. But even after repairs, it would be likely that some cracks could still remain. It meant that the relationship would never be the same as it once was again. After I came up with that theory, I felt that it was helpful to me in explaining what was happening when there was any problem in my relationship with other people. I felt that this theory made a lot of sense to me.

In 2009 and throughout my first year of the Master’s program in Contemplative Education and Transformative Learning (CECT) in Mahidol University, I practiced insight meditation, Vipassana, one of the Buddhist meditation techniques. This is the major consciousness training I have experienced, and I continue it as one of my main practices. For me, Vipassana is a path that provides much insight about the nature of life and enables me to see the truth as it is.

“Voice Dialogue” came to my attention on the last day of my first semester in CECT. One of my teachers, Dr. Jarupan Kuldiloke, spoke about the “inner child” in me after I finished my presentation on a “Self-transformation” project, and mentioned Voice Dialogue. However, it was not yet time for Voice Dialogue for me. Then, early in 2011, my Voice Dialogue journey began. I had a chance to join Voice Dialogue workshops for beginners taught by J’aime ona Pangaia. In the workshops, I had a chance to learn the theory of Voice Dialogue and also to experience its facilitation process. Just those two 4-day workshops created a small yet significant impact on my

awareness that humans have many subpersonalities, or as Voice Dialogue termed it, “Selves,” more than they think they are or more than what they are identified with. Also, I started to have more understanding about, “What is going on within a human’s inner world or human psyche?” and, “How do people relate themselves to or interact with other people around them and the world?” After the workshops, I did some self-study about Voice Dialogue by reading some related books and articles and also watching Voice Dialogue online VDO clips. The concepts of Voice Dialogue attracted my interest even more, especially in terms of “the aware ego process” and “the evolution of consciousness.”

During the last week of July 2011, with my great interest and curiosity, I decided to go to Portland, the United States of America, to attend the 5-day Voice Dialogue retreat with J’aime ona Pangaia. I experienced three Voice Dialogue facilitation sessions and observed several sessions of other participants. I discovered that Voice Dialogue has an enormous impact and benefit on the personal growth of people’s lives both in terms of the inner relationship among the voices within oneself and relationship with the people around them.

Thus, while I have been doing this CECT program to finish my master’s degree, I have also been a student in a 2-year Transformational Arts Program hosted by J’aime ona Pangaia. That program offers a generative container for initiating a higher/ next level of consciousness and purposefulness in life. It supports participants when they are in, or ready for a significant life transition in order to generate body-mind-spirit wholeness and empowered compassion in the world (Ona Pangaia, 2011). As a student in this program, I deeply experience Voice Dialogue and see huge benefits of the work through how I perceive my self, engage through life with myself and others and the world with more of compassion, and how I live my life differently and more beautifully with purposefulness in life than before.

Yet, most importantly, it awakes a person who has direct experiences in Voice Dialogue facilitation, and brings awareness and consciousness into a person’s life. As an ongoing process, the work helps in cultivating the “Aware ego process” which eventually can transform the way people perceive their lives and the way they live their lives as well.

Because I am a student in Contemplative Education and Transformative Learning in Mahidol University, I believe that one of the goals that the program strives for is to develop humans. Ideally, this is not only through external world knowledge, but also through developing people internally in order that they can look at their lives more deeply by having some tools to bring insight to people's lives about how to become a full human being (wholeness), and how to live their lives as one with the world and nature.

Life is transformed when a person experiences a sense of new perspective which comes from the moment of awakening. An awakening moment is accompanied by a heightened awareness. Drs. Stone (1989, p. 7) stated clearly that the moment of awakening is a very special time in human lives. It may happen while they are awake, it may be the result of a dream, or it may occur during meditation.

Drs. Stone (1989, p. 3) explained that humans are raised in cultures and families where they are trained to think, feel, and see in specific, predetermined ways. Because their learned perceptions are all that they know, they naturally assume that the world around them actually exists as they perceive it. They only know a certain set of selves as they think they are. This is human reality. They will know nothing of their "other" nature. They cannot have access to the information available from other sources. They normally deny the richness and pleasure that this "other" nature could bring to them. It is this "other" nature or these "lost" parts of human's selves that the Voice Dialogue method seeks to restore.

As mentioned in the Voice Dialogue DVD Series (2004), at any point in time, humans are only able to express one particular subpersonality. They can jump from one subpersonality to another very fast. This can give the impression that a human is one single personality because it is very rare to have awareness of this natural but extremely fast process without special training. By not being aware of this process, not realizing that they are a multifaceted series of subpersonality structures or expression potentials and behaviors, having a lot of literally different selves limits humans' lives greatly and often causes their relationships, careers, finances, and health to be unfulfilling or even disaster.

Thus, it is clear that it is very important to discover the subpersonalities/selves that operate within our psyche. Because as Drs. Stone (1989, p.

16) point out that without this understanding, humans are in the powerless position of watching different subpersonalities drive their psychological car while they sit in the back seat or, worse yet, hide in the trunk. This journey of discovery is the evolution of consciousness.

Personally speaking, I have been exploring and experiencing Voice Dialogue continuously and intensively for 3 years. I truly believe that Voice Dialogue is one of the most powerful tools among many psycho-spiritual practices that can transform a human's life internally and externally, and which can greatly impact surrounding people and the world around them.

I hope that this study benefits and inspires many people in the contemplative education and transformative learning fields, both for personal use or academic purposes. The study helps in introducing, expanding knowledge, and being part of the process of rooting Voice Dialogue in Thai society, which may be of future benefit for Thai people in various ways.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this work was to study life transformation through practice of Voice Dialogue from the deep experience of life transformation of one senior Voice Dialogue facilitator/teacher. Thus, a narrative case study approach was used in my research.

1.3 Thesis Question

My thesis question was essential. How does life transform through the practice of Voice Dialogue?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is a qualitative research project. The research method used in this study is a "life story" (narrative) approach. Life story is suitably used in the study

because it can excerpt the essence of personal life experience. Detailed information can be derived from a life story interview.

This study covers related works of Voice Dialogue. This includes the psychology of selves, Voice Dialogue facilitation, bonding patterns, the dream process, and the Aware Ego Process.

The purposeful key informant selection is used in this study. The specific key informant is J'aime ona Pangaia, a direct student of the Voice Dialogue originators, Drs. Hal and Sidra Stone. She is a Voice Dialogue senior teacher and facilitator who has almost 30 years of experience in this work. She engages her life with the work she does, journeys herself into wholeness, and also lives her life with the purpose of supporting the transformative journey of others.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Research and studies on Voice Dialogue are very limited. To date, not so many Voice Dialogue research projects have been conducted. A few research projects are either not yet published or in fieldwork still. Thus, academic sources of information are mainly derived from the writing of originators and other articles from lineage students, who are nowadays experienced Voice Dialogue senior teachers and facilitators around the world. Because this study is limited in the number of key informants, the findings of this study can be considered as a specific case study of an individual life transformation of a person who has been doing Voice Dialogue for a long period of time.

1.6 Importance of the Study

This study contributes to creation of an intense and defined knowledge base as it gathers current findings of the benefits and impacts from Voice Dialogue. It can enhance understanding of how the work and the process can transform human lives. I anticipated that this study would inspire readers and become a useful source of information for people who are interested in and are looking for a certain kind of well-defined personal growth/transformational tool.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

Voice Dialogue is a specific psycho-spiritual practice and has many specialized terms that are essential to clarify meaning. Terms following are listed in an order of progression of understanding the study rather than alphabetically. Definitions of specific terms used in Voice Dialogue listed below are excerpted from “Definition in Voice Dialogue” by J’aime ona Pangaia (2001) except for the terms “Life Transformation” that are given a definition only for setting the scope of this study.

Inner Selves—These refer to parts of the psyche. Human’s psyche has innumerable psychological parts that exist to fulfill psycho-social-spiritual needs for health and wholeness. The terms “parts,” “voices,” “subpersonalities,” and “energy patterns” are used interchangeably throughout the study.

Primary Selves—These are the selection of inner selves that people are most identified with as “who we are.” They make up human conscious personality. They are mostly determined by familial and social conditioning.

Disowned Selves—These are the inner selves that people long ago learned to repress and deny due to familial and social conditioning. Although disowned, they are every bit as much a part of being human and because they are disowned, they operate below the level of conscious intention.

Power Selves—One half of all human selves can be categorized as “power selves.” They function to control either one’s own behavior or that of others for the main purpose of protecting and fulfilling one’s needs. As adults, most of our primary selves are power selves; likewise, some of the disowned selves will be power selves.

Vulnerable Selves—These are the selves who directly sense and experience the status of human needs. Vulnerability is about being open, sensing, and receptive. For many people, it is their vulnerable selves that lead them to their deepest sense of real human being-ness and soulfulness. Each power self is directly related to and motivated by the experiences of a vulnerable self. As adults, most people have disowned vulnerability to a considerable degree.

Ego—It is the executive function of the psyche and the conscious sense of self. This is humans’ capacity to exercise will and choice. Typically, most people’s ego personality is the collection of whatever primary selves they are most identified with. In Voice Dialogue, the ego is mostly called the “Operating Ego.”

Awareness—It is the witness state, as a nonjudgmental observing, mindful perception. This is a state of consciousness that can normally occur occasionally and spontaneously in life, as well as one can practice entering into this state via simple meditation techniques. It perceives without reactions, sensations, valuations (positive or negative), or expressions. It makes no decisions, and has no attachments to outcome. From this state, a person dispassionately notices and a person is presently situated.

Aware Ego—The process of separating one's ego identification from any particular self and temporarily aligning one's ego, one's will, with the Awareness state. From an Aware Ego Process one can make choices that perceive the validity of all parts of themselves (that they are observing) and make choices based on that nonjudgmental perception. It is as if in the Aware Ego Process that people have true freewill. It is not a more evolved self; it is essentially an activity, a process.

Voice Dialogue—A method for introducing a person to the cognitive and sensual/energetic reality of their inner selves in a nonjudgmental atmosphere in order to cultivate an Aware Ego Process. Voice Dialogue is usually conducted between a trained facilitator and the person who is exploring their own inner selves.

Life Transformation—A uniquely individualized process of expanding consciousness, wherein one becomes aware of, welcomes, and embraces both old and new forms and chooses to integrate these forms into their lives.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review has two main parts. Theoretical Framework offers the structure used for this study regarding life transformation, as well as a review of Voice Dialogue materials.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In this section on theoretical framework, I draw from two models that were used to structure this study. One is the Consciousness Model of Voice Dialogue, and Life Transformation is the other.

2.1.1 Consciousness Model of Voice Dialogue

Consciousness is a process that must be lived out. This means it is an evolutionary process that continually changes from one moment to the next (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 18).

Referring to Drs. Stone's concepts found in *Embracing Our Selves* (1989, pp. 18-26) and *The Voice Dialogue Anthology* (2012, pp. 22-23), there are three distinct aspects of the consciousness process. Each of the three levels of consciousness represents a distinct, individually evolving process.

Awareness. Awareness is the capacity to witness life in all its aspects, whatever is happening inside or outside of oneself without evaluating, judging, attaching, or controlling how one should be in the world. It is simply a point of reference, a place of pure insight that objectively witnesses what is. It is not an action state. Some meditative methods seek to develop the awareness level of consciousness.

Experience of the selves. The experience of the actual energy patterns is relevant. Everything in life has an energy pattern of one kind or another. These patterns relate to a human's internal state, which incorporates experiences deriving

from physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions. Perceptions and experience of the world take place within this holistic spectrum of energies. The energy patterns may vary from a vague feeling or barely discernible sensation to a fully developed subpersonality. The experience of an energy pattern is different from the awareness of it. Awareness without experience isolates humans from life. Experience without awareness keeps humans locked into an emotional state. Therefore, both awareness and experience of the selves are essential for an ongoing consciousness process.

Aware Ego. The ego receives its information from both the awareness level and the experience of the different energy patterns. As consciousness evolves, the ego becomes a more aware ego. As a more aware ego, it is in a better position to make real choices. The aware ego grows little by little as it is able to separate from the primary selves and learns to embrace the opposing disowned or less developed system of selves. The aware ego is an action state. The action may be directed towards the world, or it may simply be the ability to hold and live with the tension of opposites.

As consciousness evolves, guilt, shame, and bad feelings about the way we are diminish. Each self will be fully honored; our awareness will simply witness what is. Integrating new selves adds much richness to one's experiences. With an Aware Ego Process, a person can have a huge number of choices in life where before, there was none.

The evolution of consciousness is also a process of ever-increasing expansion of the awareness level, ever-increasing awareness of ego, and ever-increasing experience of the vast multitude of energy patterns that are available to be experienced. Transformation can occur at any of these three levels. The development of an awareness level that can witness and an aware ego that can embrace both power and vulnerability is one of the central goals of transformational work (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 191).

Last but not least, Drs. Stone (2001) stated that Voice Dialogue is about separating from the many selves that make up the human psyche and creating the Aware Ego. Nothing is discarded. We embrace the selves that are already ours and we add in again those we have disowned. As we embrace all that we are, we naturally become more fully human and more compassionate. We do not have to learn

compassion, it just appears by itself. After all, everything out there is within each of us. This Aware Ego blends awareness with an experience of selves. It moves beyond duality by carrying the tension of opposites and, because it does so, it allows us real choices in life. It enables us to safely follow our unique paths.

2.1.2 Life Transformation

I came up with the central question of this thesis by using life transformation as a key word. However, after studying more in depth for the literature review, I found that the terms “personal transformation” and “individual transformation” are used by most of the articles / books / and other research studies rather than the term “life transformation.” I maintained my intention to use the term “life transformation” in the title of this thesis because I would like to explore the life experience of a person and refer the transformation as a process throughout a person’s life. Each term may be used interchangeably in this thesis with the same meaning that I wish to refer to.

As referenced in the book, *The Unfolding Self–Varieties of Transformative Experience* (Metzner, 2010), there are many theories of human transformation and theoretical approaches to understand the transformation. The meaning of transformation can vary depending on which idea or perspective we look from. We can find the word transformation in different religions, philosophies, evolutionary theories, spirituality, or various schools of psychology. However, those theories have some common symbols, metaphors, and images that refer to the myths of ancient people in order to explain their perspective on transformation. Those symbols, metaphors, and images generally show the idea of changing from one form to another, such as reclaiming land from the sea, light shining into the darkness, a seed becoming a tree, or a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. In general, referring to the meaning of the word “transformation” in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (1995), transformation means the action or an instance of changing the appearance or character of something/somebody completely.

From an interview with Werner Erhard in the documentary called *Transformation: The Life & Legacy of Werner Erhard* (2007), Erhard said, “I had a transformation. Whoever I had been up until that point, I no longer was.” Erhard

(1984) spoke of transformation as the possibility for breakthrough living, a clearing for aliveness to show up in our everyday activities, self-expression, and commitments. Transformation does not merely change our actions, nor does it merely give us new options from which to choose. The work of transformation is the revealing of ourselves to ourselves that occurs in a profound way which alters the very possibility of being that we are inescapably, decisively fixed forever. What transformation makes available is the moment-by-moment choice from which the realities of our lives are shaped. In the moment of transformation, there is the presence of choice, as the phenomenon of creating possibilities—no more, no less. The actual choosing remains of our own making. Yet, in the recognition and ownership of the choice appears true freedom of action. In short, from Erhard's definition, life transformation can be described as the process of a complete change in any area of life which can bring freewill, free from certain kinds of constraints, to the way people live their lives.

According to Michelle L. Casto (n.d.), to transform life, one needs to raise one's awareness, practice pro-activity, and live by vision, purpose, and values. Casto (n.d.) divides the transformation process into four stages as described below.

Stage 1: Cocoon. This stage is characterized by a feeling of comfort, as one is beginning to awaken to the need to change. One begins to realize that one could be so much more and recognize an error in judgment or dysfunctional patterns.

Stage 2: Change. This stage is characterized by a feeling of discomfort, as one is beginning to stretch oneself, one's abilities, one's environment. One may look, feel, and act differently than before. One experiences new ways of being and thinking and has the desire to deeply transform oneself.

Stage 3: Flight. This stage is characterized by a feeling of confidence and courage. One now recognizes oneself as a beautiful creature, and has excitement about future possibilities.

Stage 4: Conscious. This stage is characterized by feelings of inner peace and joy. One remembers and realizes who one really is.

Casto (n.d.) focuses more on what happens to the person's feelings in each step of transformation phase. Like Erhard (2007), Casto does not put emphasis on what happens in the person's psyche during the transformation process, only on what happened as a result of the transformation.

According to Metzner (2010), there are two aspects of transformation that have been discussed which are the change in behavior and the change in appearance. However, there is still a question whether the actual behavior changes as a result of a deep transformative experience. In an extreme case, one can change from one form to another such as from a role of criminal to saint. However, in the deeper and more subtle levels, one may just simply find oneself confirmed in one's life path with no outwardly observable change in behavior.

He also explained that transformation can occur in two ways. One is that people go through a transformative crisis. Another way is by pursuing a disciplined practice path of development.

In Metzner (2010), several meanings are given about human transformation through self-concept. First is self-actualization that implies a bringing into actuality of something that had even a latent potentiality. Second is self-realization that suggests a making real, or a seeing as real, of something that had been until then only a dream or a vague intuition. Third is Jung's term of individuation that means both becoming an individual distinct from mass consciousness and becoming indivisible or whole.

According to Murray Stein (2005), transformation is realization, revelation, and emergence. It is not self-improvement, change for the better, or becoming a more ideal person. The outcomes of transformation for the individual person are to become more deeply and completely who they are and have always potentially been. Paradoxically and interestingly, it is a change to the new and also a change to the very old. People who are in the process of transformation are called a transforming person. They are incomplete and can be seen as works in progress. They are becoming themselves and also becoming what they have not yet been. Stein (2005) believes that only those who have been or are being transformed can be agents for other people's transformation. They can influence others to do the same.

Stein (2005) also explained that the terms metamorphosis and transformation have the same meaning which is the passing over (meta-, trans-) from one form (morph-, forma) to another. Sometimes, the transformational period extends over a considerable period of time. It can be years or over a decade or more that people find themselves living in a sort of limbo. In depth psychology, this period is

called liminal, which means the period when the very foundations of a person's world are under construction. Such transformation is life-changing. It is a massive reorganization of attitude, behavior, and sense of meaning. This typically is triggered by a singular encounter with a transformative image—internal images or external images—or by major life trauma such as loss of loved ones. After the trigger, it will take months and even years to become complete.

In *Transformation: Emergence of the Self*, Stein (2005) uses the metamorphosis from larva to pupa to butterfly as a useful metaphor for the human psychological process of transformation in adulthood. Butterflies pass through a long series of preliminary moltings before they arrive at their complete metamorphosis. To compare with human processes, there can be large and small psychological transformations throughout people's lives. Thus, people undergo many small transformations and that results in a big one over the course of a whole lifetime.

Simply, the process of a butterfly's metamorphosis begins with a larva immediately feeding itself without ceasing on the leaves of the plant where its mother laid the eggs. It grows way bigger than its original size and then it sheds its skin in a series of moltings. Even though the moltings are lesser metamorphoses, they also constitute crises. During each molting, the larva is vulnerable until a new protective coat grows around it. Finally, when the caterpillar is fully grown, its body chemistry changes. This induces pupation, a massive molting rather than just another simple one. When the hormones of the prothoracic gland increase as a result of the process of diminishing levels of the juvenile hormone in the bloodstream, metamorphosis is triggered. An entirely new structure, a butterfly, will emerge and become dominant as a result of this metamorphosis. Complete metamorphosis is a dramatic transformation, out of which a creature emerges that bears no resemblance to the one that existed before.

Scientifically, however, passing from one form to another, the butterfly draws upon the latent structures that have been present all along but were undeveloped, hidden from view, or disguised by other features. The change from caterpillar to butterfly is a transformation in which underlying latent structures come to the surface and assume leading positions, while other features that were prominent change radically or disappear.

We can compare this process to psychological transformation in human adults. When we look carefully into an adult person's early life, one usually can find basic and partially formed images of things to come. In childhood and adolescence, attitudes take form which later will undergo change and development but which will express themselves as variations on the same theme. For some people, there seem to be huge discontinuities in life but this is only a surface phenomenon. At a deeper level, there is a major single process of becoming. A new form of life emerges from this dynamic exchange between conscious and unconscious process. This is the process that Jung calls individuation.

Individuation (Stein, 2006) is a dynamic life-long process of transformation by which the both personal and collective unconscious are brought into consciousness and the parts are assembled into the whole new distinctive personality for adulthood. This is the form that then is lived, deepened, and enriched throughout the remainder of the individual's life. Basically, individuation means a person goes through a process of becoming the unique individual personality he or she always potentially has been and becomes whole, which means a unified, undivided, and integrated person.

In *The Principle of Individuation* (Stein, 2006), it is importantly said that individuation is a psychological discipline that requires the full participation of the conscious person in order to take the process forward. Essentially, it seeks to move ego-consciousness out of and beyond its established personal traits and habits and its culture-bound attitudes into a much wider self-understand and wholeness. Jung ultimately termed the goal of the individuation process as wholeness. As cited in *Jung's Map of the Soul* (Stein, 2011, p. 188), in order to approach wholeness, the conscious/unconscious systems must be brought into relationship with one another.

As Jung explained,

The psyche consists of two incongruous halves which together form a whole. Conscious and unconscious do not make a whole when one of them is suppressed and injured by the other. If they must contend, let it at least be a fair fight with equal rights on both sides. Both are aspects of life. Consciousness should defend its reason and protect itself, and the chaotic life of the unconscious should be given the chance of having its way too—

as much of it as we can stand. This means open conflict and open collaboration at once. That, evidently, is the way human life should be. It is the old game of hammer and anvil: between them that patient iron is forged into an indestructible whole, an “individual.” This, roughly, is what I mean by the individuation process. As the name shows, it is a process or course of development arising out of the conflict between the two fundamental psychic facts [conscious and unconscious]. (as cited in Stein, 2011, pp. 188-189)

It is also important to note that individuation and individualism or individuality are totally different. Referring to Johnston (2011) and Preece (2006), Individualism means the development of supposedly unique properties of the ego that includes self-interest and ego-fulfillment. Individuality leads to separation and a sense of self-preoccupation that isolates one from others. Whereas, individuation does not shut one out from the world, but rather gathers the world to one’s self. As Jung (1974, as cited in Johnston, 2011) defines, individuation involves an intimate interrelationship between the individual and community.

Further explained by Dirkx (2000) in *Transformative Learning and the Journey of Individuation*, normally a person’s consciousness is often quite one-sided, reflecting the influence of a specific personal context. When we begin to participate consciously in the individuation process, we often discover that our conscious, ego-based striving to be what we want to be is not the same as being who we are (Jacoby, 1990). Without conscious participation, we are much more subject to compulsions, obsessions, and complexes. Individuation involves differentiating and becoming aware of the presence of the different selves operating within the psyche. This requires an imaginative engagement with the unconscious, a working dialogue between ego consciousness, and the powerful contents of the unconscious.

According to Stein (n.d.), there are three main stages of the individuation process. The first two are major crises periods which are “the containment/nurturance stage” (can be called mother stage) and “the adapting/adjusting stage” (can be called father stage). These two periods are typical stages of psychological growth and development in a person’s life especially from childhood to midlife. The last stage is the ultimate goal of the individuation process which is “the centering/integrating

stage.” A person gradually makes the passage from one into the next through a whole lifetime. The last stage may happen in late adulthood and old age. However, people can be stuck at the first or the second stage and cannot go beyond them throughout life, which means they have not fully actualized their potentials and can contribute only a fraction of what is possible.

An interesting and important piece of Jung’s work is the idea of the ultimate goal of the individuation process which is the final stage of psychological development. Most psychological theories stop at the second stage when people can adjust/adapt and take up the responsibility of living like an adult in a world of reality. However, the final stage of individuation drives people who have already fully succeeded in achieving their goals in life, and still wonder whether there is anything more or still feel that their life is not yet fulfilled or completed. As Stein (n.d.) explains, the task in the final stage of life, if all has gone relatively well in both first and second phases, is not to become responsible member of the community and a relatively independent and self-sufficient personality, but rather to become a centered and whole individual who is related to the transcendent as well as the immediate concrete realities of human existence.

Entering the stage of centering and integrating means gradually letting go of the previous collective definitions of identity and persona, and instead adopting an image of self that emerges from within. There is a shift of interest and emphasis, toward reaching out to dimensions of living that have less to do with survival and more to do with meaning. This new person is more unique, individual, and less a social construction. In this stage, one now finds something that is worth living for, and this new direction must be tailor-made to fit the individual.

Stein (n.d.) also explains the process of this third stage as separating from the identification with the persona formed in the second stage, and then finding a personal center, that is a point of inner integrity which is free of the stereotype of collective culture and based on intimations of the Self. According to Jung (as cited in Stein, 2011), the Self (with capital S) refers to the center, as it is the source of all archetypal images, and of innate psychic tendencies toward structure, order, and integration. It has an ego-free quality. What is aimed for is a degree of integration of the inner opposites inherent in the Self, which brings a vital balance in one’s everyday

life. The person becomes one who is able to remain intact and balanced in even the most splitting and tension-ridden situations, who maintains an even attitude of connection with others but also detachment from ego preferences. It is a person who has found the Self and lives in relation to that inner reality rather than seeking approval from others or being possessed by desire and attachment to egoistic goals. Most importantly, it is a person who shows spontaneity, freedom, and a distinctive personality. This person is vivid and displays a sense of uniqueness based upon having made many clear individual choices in life.

Thus, the goal of this third and ultimate stage of individuation is the inner union of pieces of the psyche that were divided and split off by earlier developmental demands or processes. In this stage of integration, a strong need arises to join the opposites of persona and shadow, of masculine and feminine, of child and adult, of right brain and left brain, of thinking and feeling, of introversion and extraversion. In conclusion, one becomes more accepting of complexity within and without and feels less alienated from all of humanity and from the profound complexities of reality.

2.2 Review of Voice Dialogue

2.2.1 Development of Voice Dialogue

Voice Dialogue was originated by Hal Stone, Ph.D. and Sidra Stone, Ph.D., American psychologists, teachers, and authors. Drs. Stone have devoted their lives to mapping and exploring the human psyche with particular emphasis on personalities and relationships. They explored how the human psyche works and came up with their Voice Dialogue system that grants access to the structures in a human psyche known as subpersonalities, selves, or energy patterns.

In the early 1970s, Drs. Stone developed Voice Dialogue as a method for working with subpersonalities. Through both their personal relationship and their professional collaboration, their work evolved over the next quarter of a century into a complex method for working with selves and a complete theoretical system which they called the Psychology of Selves (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 254).

As Drs. Stone (2012, pp. 7-15) stated in article called The Basic Elements

of Voice Dialogue, Relationship, and the Psychology of Selves—Their Origins and Development, they created their work from outer and inner influences that blended indistinguishably. From the outer world, there have been teachers and information from many different traditions that they have had many powerful experiences with, both professionally and personally. From the inner world, they have had their individual dreams, transpersonal experiences, and moments of sudden clarity that seem to be gifts from sources outside of their personal experience. They digested all of these and came up with the raw material from which they created Voice Dialogue.

In the early years, people reacted to Voice Dialogue as if it was a Gestalt technique or was similar to psychosynthesis. However, both of them have extremely limited experience in Gestalt work and also psychosynthesis. Nor were they particularly influenced by psychodrama or transactional analysis. However, they have always honored these various approaches as having some relationship to Voice Dialogue since they were clearly a part of the general psychological culture in the early 70s. The roots of their work go far deeper than their exposure to these schools of thought.

Dr. Hal had deep experiences with the work of Jung because he trained as a Jungian analyst at the Jung Institute and had the opportunity to meet with Jung himself for an individual session. However, he decided to leave the Jungian community and the traditional practice of analytical psychology in 1970. It was the beginning of a new life that moved him into an entirely new kind of creative process and that has led him to where he is today.

Dr. Hal's first encounter with the idea of talking to selves, later on named Voice Dialogue, came some time in the late 60s when he was invited to become a consultant to the department of psychology and the department of psychiatry at Mt. Sinai. After a year working as a consultant, he heard from his colleague about a clinical demonstration that was facilitated by a professor at U.C. Santa Barbara. The professor worked with a client using a number of chairs for the different selves of the subject. Dr. Hal was fascinated by the description. Then he contacted the professor and asked him about the demonstration. He told Dr. Hal that he had no real interest in this work and he did not mind at all if anyone wished to explore it more deeply. Whatever he was doing had no name though it certainly seemed like the way a Gestalt therapist

would work even though the professor had no connection to Gestalt work. Dr. Hal then began to play with the idea at home with his daughter, Judith and his son, Joshua (now deceased) and his then wife, Thea, as subjects.

In the early 1950s, Dr. Sidra was influenced by the idea that a psychologist could break down complex behavior into its component parts and see how everything worked in an ultimately sensible and predictable fashion. Another major influence was from the writers Hermann Hesse and Nikos Kazantzais. Both of them were men whose lives were deeply committed to the evolution of consciousness. All of their books explored the struggle between opposing forces within human life, that now Drs. Stone term “the tension of opposites.” Dr. Sidra was introduced to the concept of many selves from Hesse’s *Steppenwolf* book. Lastly, she is interested in the ancient Greek gods and goddesses that later on directly related to the archetypes and energy patterns in Voice Dialogue.

Early in 1972, Dr. Sidra decided to expand her practice of psychotherapy and wanted to learn more about this technique. At that time Dr. Hal had been teaching a psychotherapy approach that was central to his training in Jungian Psychology. Dr. Sidra came to see Dr. Hal to become more effective in facilitating psychotherapeutic processes. They both learned from each other in sessions when they worked together. Apart from the visualizations, they began to share dream processes and to talk about vulnerable feelings that were unfamiliar for both of them. During one session, Dr. Hal suggested that Dr. Sidra move over and become the vulnerability instead of just talking about it. It was the moment of the creation of talking to the selves, that was the birthing process of the Voice Dialogue method.

From the very first facilitation sessions, they were in touch with the presence of a child within them. Both of them had experienced that the child was real, and the selves in them were real. The work began with what they named the “Inner Child.” They were stunned and excited. They started to wonder who else was there in them. They explored the countless selves together and then began to emerge them into consciousness. The theory of Voice Dialogue came later.

From very early in their explorations, began their journey of relationship in which the relationship itself became their teacher. That is how the work of Voice Dialogue emerged and how the work enhanced and related to their relationship as

well.

2.2.2 Voice Dialogue Theory

Voice Dialogue is a tool for transformation. It is one of the various approaches that can be used in the evolution of consciousness. It can also be used in relation to or with any other approaches or techniques to growth, healing, and transformation (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p.80).

The basic assumption behind Voice Dialogue theory, as when referring to the various writings of Drs. Stone since 1989 regarding the development of the selves, or what can be called as psychology of selves, is the concept of how humans develop their personalities, which may have been known as “I’s,” “selves,” “complexes,” or more recently as “energy patterns.” Framing their approach as the psychology of selves clearly emphasizes the importance of discerning why and how humans are comprised of many selves.

Everyone is born totally vulnerable and in the early years of life has to be taken care of by others in order to survive. A newborn infant is a unique human being who comes into the world with its own genetic make-up that determines its physiology and some of its behavior, and with a specific quality of being unique to the infant, which Drs. Stone called its “psychic fingerprint”. (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989)

As early as possible, along with its basic unique psychic fingerprint, the infant has the potential to develop an infinite array of energy patterns or selves, which will construct the individual personalities in order to help to protect its vulnerable core. Some selves are strengthened and others are weakened due to the systems of reward and punishment from the family, school, culture, or society. The stronger the developing personality, the farther away the child moves from vulnerability, from its psychic fingerprint. It loses contact with its unique being as it learns to be powerful.

The vulnerability, which is also named the “inner child,” lives within everyone. This inner child never grows up and is with us forever. This child can be seen as a doorway to the most profound states of being, the human soul, or true being. The problem is, of course, that humans gradually begin to lose track of his/her psychic fingerprint and thus, the whole system of human relationships is affected by this loss.

Naturally and unavoidably, the very first part that evolves in human life is

the Protector/Controller, which helps protect the vulnerable child and control both its behavior and that of the others nearby. It determines what behavior is safe and brings love and rewards or what is likely to bring physical or emotional pain or punishment. The child adapts itself to its specific environment and sets up an appropriate code of behavior accordingly in order to keep life coherent. It becomes the Operating Ego that is the foundation of individual personality. Along with the other primary selves that gradually develop throughout childhood to support the protecting self, the whole primary self system evolves. It represents and defines who we are in the world to ourselves and to others.

Generally, the ego's job is to provide good executive function to the human psyche. However, the ego is mostly identified with and dominated by the primary self system. This means that there will be contrasting selves of equal or opposite energy that are disowned, repressed, or less developed, which are called disowned selves.

Disowned selves are the parts that had to be rejected in the growing-up process due to the same reasons that the primary selves emerged, which are from influences of family, school, society, and culture. Disowned selves are energy patterns that have been partially or totally excluded from our lives, which are curious, unfamiliar, or even extremely distasteful.

The main purpose of Voice Dialogue is to learn about the subpersonalities and to discover what these selves are and how they operate within us. The journey of discovery is the evolution of consciousness. Moreover, when we do the work that separates us from the primary selves that always limit us in how to see the world, then a new Aware Ego is born. This Aware Ego is constantly separating from the primary selves and thus becomes able to embrace both the primary selves and the disowned selves without being identified with either. Therefore, development of the Aware Ego is to work with primary selves and disowned selves continually.

2.2.3 Voice Dialogue Method

Voice Dialogue facilitation is the method that enables one to contact, understand, and work directly with the many selves that make up the human psyche. It is precise and enables the facilitator to focus upon a specific area of psyche for

exploration, understanding, and healing. Voice Dialogue facilitation is a tool that is compatible with most psychological systems and can be used with a wide variety of backgrounds (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1994).

Basic Principles of Voice Dialogue Facilitation. Voice Dialogue is a method that will work only if the facilitator has a proper attitude. When the process is used properly, it provides quick and easy access to various selves that live within the psyche. The following principles are suggested by Drs. Stone (1994) for a person who is interested in using the Voice Dialogue facilitation process—being a Voice Dialogue facilitator.

1. An attitude of acceptance and respect is extremely important in the Voice Dialogue facilitation process. The facilitator is an explorer, an interested observer who is trying to discover as much as possible about each self. The selves are extremely sensitive to the feelings and judgments of the facilitator and they will not respond if they sense disapproval or manipulation.

2. Voice Dialogue facilitator is not trying to change selves, to get rid of them, or to help them to grow up and be more sensible. There should be no agenda. Changes will take place, growth will occur, there will be healing, but these cannot be the aims of the facilitator.

3. Voice Dialogue facilitator does not negotiate amongst selves. There is no attempt to get the selves to agree on anything. Each self is different, and these differences are to be respected. What the facilitator does is to help each self to clarify its views and to give as much information as possible. Thus, the subject learns to live with the tension of opposing viewpoints represented by these selves and to make decisions which take these opposites into consideration.

4. The aim in Voice Dialogue is to expand the subject's ability to make choices in life with an Aware Ego rather than to behave in an automatic and unconscious way.

Method of Voice Dialogue Facilitation. When using Voice Dialogue, we are sensitizing ourselves and others to the drama played out by these subpersonalities (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 50). Voice Dialogue can help objectify, recognize, name, understand, and creatively work with an individual's subpersonalities. The

method of using Voice Dialogue is usually conducted in a private facilitation session between a trained facilitator and a subject.

The following are specific steps for the Voice Dialogue facilitation process as recommended by Drs. Stone (1994). These steps provide an overview and broad picture of the whole process of Voice Dialogue facilitation.

1. Relax. The Voice Dialogue facilitation session is conducted in a relaxed yet alert fashion. The facilitator first relaxes, gets centered and quiets own inner pusher and critic. The emphasis is upon the subject, not upon the facilitator's performance. Facilitator will be observing the subject's energy patterns and looking at physiological, emotional, and linguistic cues.

2. Mapping the Psyche. The facilitator will listen as the subject discusses some aspect of life or a particular troublesome issue and identify some of the primary selves that are operating in the subject's life and the selves that carry the opposite characteristics that are disowned. This is the process of creating a "psychic map." It is important to get a picture of the territory that is to be explored before beginning so that the facilitator has an idea of how the selves are aligned and what might be expected in the facilitation. However, this "psychic map" is open to constant revision.

3. Introduce the idea of selves and see how the subject responds: It might start with framing and repeating the idea of primary self to the subject. If the facilitator hit upon a primary self, most people will respond easily to the suggestion. Another way of doing this is to speak about two sides of a conflict as two different selves. If the subject responds positively, the facilitator is in a position to talk to both selves.

4. Begin Voice Dialogue by physically separating the self. When the facilitator is ready to talk to a specific self, simply ask the subject to move to another space in the room. The subject then changes position or seats or simply moves his/her chair. Each self has its own position. The original position of the subject's chair is taken as the position of the subject's ego or the Aware Ego. The movement away from the original position is very important even though at first it may feel somewhat artificial. This aids in the separation and the objectification of the selves. Also, it is a great help for the facilitator because the positions of the selves can be used to identify them easily and to see how they relate to one another.

5. Facilitation. Once the self has taken up its own position in the room, the

facilitator can speak with it. Simply talk with the self as though it were a real person. The facilitator's attitude is most important at this time. The more curious, open-minded, empathetic the facilitator can be, the better this will work. The most amazing discovery is that these selves are delighted to talk. So relax and enjoy. However, if this becomes tedious or burdensome, stop.

6. Begin with the Primary Selves. The most important work for the facilitator is to help the subject separate from the primary selves and have the Aware Ego in relation to those the primary selves. Then in later sessions, the disowned selves can be explored. This is done only after the primary selves are understood and their role in the subject's life is fully appreciated. The primary selves are an amazing source of information about the difficulties and dangers that the subject has faced. They know about the vulnerability, the fears, and the inadequacies that need protection. Once the primary selves are aware that the subject is ready to accept responsibility, they will allow the facilitator to work with the disowned selves. After working with a disowned self, take time to check back with the primary self that represents the opposite characteristics. This emphasis upon the primary selves keeps the work safe and allows progress at a rate that is appropriate to the subject.

7. Observe changes in the energy patterns. The facilitator has always been sensitive to shifting selves or energy patterns. The more the facilitator experiences in Voice Dialogue, the more sensitized the facilitator will become to the shifts. As the facilitator, notice that the subject is moving out of contact with a self, perhaps another self has come in, or perhaps it is time to end that particular part of the facilitation.

8. Altered States of Consciousness. When talking to a self, the subject is in an altered state of awareness. There is no ego present to protect him/her. The facilitator has to treat this with respect and caution, try to avoid interruptions, and do not leave the subject alone when in a self. If it is necessary to leave, return the subject to the place of the ego and separate him/her from the self that the facilitator has been exploring.

9. Summarize for awareness. Leave 10 minutes or more to summarize. In order to develop this awareness, facilitator asks the subject to stand beside him/her facing the selves and then summarizes the important points of the session for the subject. It can be as brief or detailed as the facilitator wishes, but be objective. This

gives clearly delineated insights and enables the subject to “see” the selves, their roles, and their interactions.

10. Return to the Ego position (the Aware Ego) for centering and integration. At the end of the session, always return the subject to the original chair or position. Leave adequate time for discussion. This is a time for the facilitator to help the subject separate from the selves that have spoken and to integrate the work that has been done. It is important to discuss what has happened and to encourage the subject to speak about his/her reactions. This gives the subject a chance to center and to prepare to go back out in the world. If the session has been particularly intense, it would be appropriate to suggest the subject to take some extra time to be quiet before returning to their daily routine in order to savor the experience.

Guidelines for the Use of Voice Dialogue. The points below are some guidelines or suggestions that are excerpted from various writings of Drs. Stone.

- Never go beyond the level of comfort either as a facilitator or as a subject (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1994).
- Taping the sessions can be extremely valuable since in the later time when listening to it, this can induct a greater awareness and insight for the subject (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1994).
- Suggested time for one session is at least 1 and a half hours. This gives adequate time for the selves to emerge clearly and then allows additional time at the end of the session for discussion and centering (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1994).
- At the beginning of the session, the facilitator position and the subject position, are aligned and face each other. Where is the ego (aware ego) position?
- The protector/controller self should be addressed first in the session (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 54) because it will sense the safety of everything during the session. The facilitator can get some ideas how to conduct the session to be safe enough so that the session can go smoothly.
- It is important to honor all the selves and remain nonjudgmental when doing Voice Dialogue (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 59).
- Be patient and whenever possible, allow plenty of time for the selves and voices to emerge (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 61).
- Whatever progress is made is acceptable—specific problems do not

need to be resolved in a single session. The aware ego is responsible for any problem solving (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 56).

- The exciting aspect of all this is that there are no mistakes. Every hook-in, every difficult facilitation, every wrong turn is a possible source of growth. Each one has something to teach both the facilitator and the subject—each one can add to our awareness of how we function in this world (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 58).

Apart from the general guidelines for the use of Voice Dialogue by the originators, there is an International Voice Dialogue Agreement (IVDA; 2008) initially developed by the six senior Voice Dialogue teachers and facilitators in USA and Europe, along with further discussion and suggestion from other senior teachers and facilitators around the world. I list several important guidelines derived from the IVDA as follows:

For a Voice Dialogue Facilitator, the process of becoming a skillful facilitator is a process of learning, which is not linear, and includes the following steps:

The 1st Step

- Receiving initial and ongoing training in Voice Dialogue theory and practice.
- Receiving sessions from an experienced facilitator on a regular basis.
- Observing experienced facilitators doing Voice Dialogue facilitation.
- Practicing Voice Dialogue facilitation with peers under supervision.

The 2nd Step

- Facilitating Voice Dialogue with clients on a regular basis.
- Making arrangements for an ongoing process that affords objective feedback regarding facilitation and personal process.

According to the experience of the senior Voice Dialogue teachers around the world, the process of becoming a Voice Dialogue teacher includes the following elements and development of skills in addition to those needed for facilitation:

- Be an experienced facilitator (at least 3 to 5 years).
- Be a teaching assistant in Voice Dialogue training programs.
- Practice teaching of parts of a training under supervision.

- Have experience and skills in using energetics in groups.
- Have didactic and group dynamic skills.

According to ethical guidelines stated in the IVDA (2008), ethics refers to the facilitators' and teachers' behavior with clients, students, and also with colleagues. The following are considered to be some of the most important values for a Voice Dialogue Facilitator or Teacher:

- Continuing one's own Voice Dialogue process.
- Maintaining confidentiality around client's identity, issues, and work.
- Working in accordance with one's own competence and the client's needs.
- Being clear with the client about the facilitator's professional orientation (such as coaching, counseling, therapy) and about what the client can expect.
- Referring clients to specialists if needed.
- Not using the relationship with the clients or students to one's own advantage or benefit.
- Respecting the right of the client or student to terminate the relationship at any point.
- Being aware of one's own limits as a facilitator and referring the client to another facilitator if required.
- Staying conscious of bonding patterns that may arise between client and facilitator (transference and countertransference) and taking responsibility for one's participation in the pattern; paying great attention to not getting involved in a romantic or sexual way with a client or current student.
- Being committed to dealing with any of one's own interpersonal issues amongst colleagues.
- Respecting the client's former facilitators.
- Maintaining transparent and clear professional relationships within the Voice Dialogue community.
- Complying with the laws of one's country and state regarding professional practice guidelines, obligations and limitations (i.e., practicing within scope of license), professional reimbursement and taxes, legal structures for

professional practice.

2.2.4 Common Primary Selves and Disowned Selves

There are numerous energy patterns that can be called the voices or the selves in Voice Dialogue. In order to talk about these energy patterns, Drs. Stone have given them names, as simply convenient labels to help people recognize the patterns when describing it. Even though it is impossible to introduce all of the selves, the common ones, mostly found as primary selves in people or disowned by them in this era, are listed below with some explanations for each of them.

Drs. Stone (1989, p.86) emphasize the contrast between the primary and the disowned selves. The primary selves are the ones that we are identified with. For each of these primary selves, there is an equal and opposite disowned or less developed self. It is helpful to think of the psyche in terms of the dynamic balance between these two systems.

Common primary selves. They are as follows:

1. Protector/controller. This self ensures that the disowned selves remain disowned. It arises early in life and, after determining which behaviors are socially acceptable, creates a persona which can face the world. Its function is protection from vulnerability. It saves a person life by ensuring that he/she acts appropriately. It is both culturally and familiarly influenced, and each has its own basic inviolable principles (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 91).

2. Pusher. A strong pusher will certainly help people achieve success in the world. However, it might also bring migraines, backaches, heart attacks, and a generally bilious attitude toward life. The pusher pushes everybody and is the one creating endless to-do lists and drives people to do things (H. Stone & S Stone, 1989, pp. 110-111). This part is not comfortable resting. The pusher always wants to be busy and active and it is driven to accomplish whatever is left undone (Cohen, 2006-2009). The New Age Pusher becomes more and more identified in people in this current period of New Age expansionism (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 107).

3. Critic. The critic is a remarkable subpersonality who prevents many people from experiencing life as pleasurable (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 114). It is the inner voice that criticizes a person and speaks about him/her in a disparaging way.

This voice develops early in people's lives, absorbing the judgments of people and the expectations of society in which one lives. This self speaking running critical commentary feels like a natural part of people. The critic is the voice within the person that criticizes himself/herself, whereas the Judge is the self within the person that criticizes other people (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1993, p. 4).

4. Perfectionist. It sets standards and required a person to do things perfectly (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 122). This part wants to do everything just right. Perfectionist may drive a person to become obsessed with doing things flawlessly, sabotaging one's capacity to derive any pleasure from one's life. This part wants to get things perfect, usually with the hope of gaining approval (Cohen, 2006-2009).

5. Power broker. The power brokers are a group of energy patterns that may include power, ambition, pusher, money, selfishness, and a variety of other voices. Power is a fact of psychic life that many people today would like to believe can be eradicated or transmuted. But power is a reality, and, as with all energy patterns, the real issues are whether or not it is used to control people and whether it is used with awareness (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 127).

6. Pleaser. The pleaser is exquisitely sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and gently guides a person in the delicate task of meeting those needs, so that others will think highly of him/her and be similarly understanding of his/her needs (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 7). The pleaser part wants to make people happy. While the pleaser is very helpful to others, it often leaves you feeling emotionally drained and resentful that you are not getting your needs met or that you are being taken advantage of by others (Cohen, 2006-2009).

Common disowned selves. They are as follows:

1. Demonic. Over time its disowned instinctual energies can become destructive. Natural instincts may range from simple assertiveness to fairly primitive energy patterns. By definition, the instinctual energies do not become demonic until they are repressed or disowned (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 136).

2. Vulnerable child. The vulnerable child embodies a person's sensitivity and fear. Its feelings are easily hurt and it generally lives in fear of abandonment (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 149). It perhaps is the most universally disowned self in

this civilized world. Yet this child may be the most precious subpersonality, the one closest to a person's essence. The vulnerable child enables people to become truly intimate, to fully experience others, and to love (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 151).

3. Playful child. It knows how to play as a child knows how to play. It is generally easier to reach than the vulnerable child. This inner child brings joy to people's lives (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 151 & p. 166).

4. Magical child. It is the child of imagination and fantasy. It is the child of the right brain, intuition, and creative imagination. It is, in part, the source of visions (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 150).

2.2.5 Other Theories Related to Voice Dialogue

Bonding patterns are one such theory. Drs. Stone (1989, p. 19) explained in their book *Embracing Each Other* that the term bonding patterns in relationship refers specifically to the activation of parent/child patterns of interaction between two people. These are normal and natural configurations that exist in all relationships. This bonding can develop between any two people with any genders.

As illustrated in Figure 1, a diagram of "A Male-Female Interaction," the mother side of the woman is bonded to the son side of the man (the Mother-Son axis), and the father side of the man is bonded to the daughter side of the woman (the Father-Daughter axis). This basic bonding is always in this pattern before the development of any kind of awareness. It is a normal and natural process, and cannot be eliminated. Also elimination of the bonding pattern is not desirable, because these bonding patterns contain much life and vitality (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p.18).

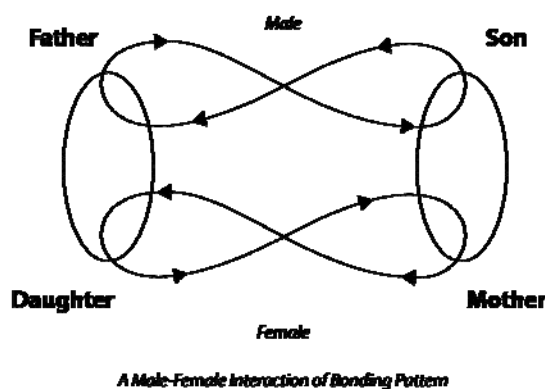


Figure 2.1 A Diagram of a Male-Female Interaction of Bonding Pattern

There are two types of bonding patterns, positive and negative. Positive bonding patterns are when the feeling between two people is good. They often provide warmth and nurturing. The problem is that without awareness they are very likely to turn into negative bonding patterns. The catalyst for all negative bonding patterns is the activation of the disowned vulnerability in the two people. The fuel for these bonding patterns can generally be found in the mutuality of the disowned selves that exists between two people (H. Stone & S. Stone, 1989, p. 19).

Dream process is another related theory. C. G. Jung described the importance of working with dreams.

Dreams are impartial products of the unconscious psyche, outside the control of the will. They are pure nature; they show us the unvarnished, natural truth, and are therefore fitted, as nothing else is, to give us back an attitude that accords with our basic human nature when our consciousness has strayed too far from its foundations and run into an impasse. (Jung, as cited in Taylor, 1992, p.3)

There are many useful ways to work with dreams. However, here I briefly focus on a particular approach to dreams that is mainly applied in Voice Dialogue. Drs. Stone (2000) said in their article, "Dreams as a Window to Your Inner Selves" that dreams give the most direct experience of their deeper intelligence to people. They can bring a person into connection with one's own spiritual reality, a reality that, in one's dreams, is untouched by the rules, feelings, and expectations of others. Dreams can help people understand the amazing family of selves that lives within us. Dreams give an objective or unbiased picture of how selves dance with each other, and also dance with the selves of one's partner.

Carolyn Conger (2012, p. 95) explained that using Voice Dialogue engages the dreamer at an energetic level, bringing the images alive and opening the exploration. The interaction of the dreamer with the dream is active and vital, affecting all levels of body, mind, and spirit. It is the overall process that is essential, rather than assigning meanings to individual symbols and images in the dream and checking the dream off as complete.

Working with dreams is quite flexible. However, there are some basic elements that are usually used in working with dreams. First is to *title* the dream. Next is looking at the *context* to see what is happening in the dreamer's life during that

period of time. Then, it is possible to start working with *characters* in the dream as they represent the selves/energies in the dreamer's psyche by using Voice Dialogue. The *feelings* in the dream are also important to work with. Towards the end, *associations* to parts of the dream may prompt the dreamer (Conger, 2012, pp. 97-99). As Conger (2012, p. 100) mentioned, Voice Dialogue Dream Work can be used in a group setting. The basic Voice Dialogue is done with the dreamer after he/she shares his/her dream. *Intuitive movement* connecting to the vibration of the particular self in the dreams can also be used. *DreamDrama* is another technique for amplifying the connection to a subpersonality that emerged during a prior individual or group Voice Dialogue session. In the group, *Dream Council*, the insight from each person about oneself is often surprising, and readily available.

2.2.6 Voice Dialogue in Diverse Areas of Professional Work

Since Voice Dialogue has been introduced and spread to the world, it has been widely recognized as a useful method/tool in various kinds of work. Below are some of the diverse applications.

Transpersonal Dialogue. Ana Barner (2012, p. 326) has included Transcendent work within traditional Voice Dialogue. She experimented with a variety of processes to make it more deliberate. Because the energy is contagious, it is possible to induce the experience in the client by connecting with it within herself. The process can be compared to the technique of some traditional spiritual approaches. Even if the client has experienced the Transpersonal before this has usually happened when they were alone and inactive. However, this can be profoundly moving to experience being connected to another person and involved in a conversation while grounded in spaciousness.

Voicedrama in Management Training. In the late 80s, LexMulder, and later on Berry Collewijn and Judith Budde, set off to implement psychodrama in various forms of management training. At the end of the 80s, when LexMulder came into contact with Hal and Sidra Stone, he found some answers to the challenges they were facing. The theory aided him in making psychodrama even more effective in management training. Voicedrama is Psychodrama that utilizes the "Psychology of Selves" theory. This means that its effectiveness is a sum of the effectiveness of the

psychodrama method and the richness of the “Psychology of Selves” theory (Mulder&Collewijn, n.d.).

Foundation for Buddhist Meditation. In Buddhist practice, subpersonalities are considered to be “aspects of appearance.” It is at this point that Voice Dialogue and Buddhist practice begin to overlap. Because Voice Dialogue has come to understand the subpersonalities to be energy patterns of consciousness, the Voice Dialogue process has developed organically into a form that reflects what essentially are the principles of Vipassana meditation: contact, equanimity, and impermanence. The outcome of this work is a compassion for the subpersonalities, for one’s self and one’s process and for others, and an integration of the personality (Voice Dialogue World, n.d.).

Neurogenesis and Neuroplasticity. Neurogenesis is the development of new neurons in the adult brain. Neuroplasticity is the process by which the brain can continuously remodel itself by generating new neuronal pathways in response to either novel experiences or brain injury. The process of the Aware Ego compliments stabilizing meditation, and the conscious engagement of the Aware Ego during stabilizing meditation may plausibly facilitate and augment neurogenesis and neuroplasticity. In the Aware Ego Process the meditative self or attentional self must be channeled through the Aware Ego. The attentional self represents an ally of the Aware Ego and the Aware Ego Process. The Aware Ego Process has been strengthened with the possible development of new neurons and neural pathways (J. Dougherty, L. Dougherty, & A. Dougherty, 2007)

Intercultural Dimension. In September 2004, MIKADO (Knowledge Center for Intercultural Mental Health Care), in collaboration with Robert Stamboliev of the Institute for Transformational Psychology and trainer/coach Judith Budde of “Het Balkon” (Center for Personal and Professional Development) organized a master class on the Voice Dialogue method and social assistance to immigrants. The aim of the master class was not only the transfer of knowledge by the trainers, but also an exchange of expertise between the trainers and the health care professionals. The conclusion from the class was that the method was specifically suitable for second and third generation immigrants but not quite suitable for first generation immigrants. In October 2005, a Training Course of Voice Dialogue and Immigrants was initiated.

Experienced health care professionals assisting immigrants were trained in Voice Dialogue, and were to use the method with their clients, under supervision. At the same time an independent study took place, further looking into the feasibility of using the method with immigrants. This study was conducted under supervision of MIKADO (Hoogstraten&Sönmez, n.d.).

Cross-Cultural Communication. John Kent (n.d.) described the concept of the Psychology of Selves as providing a new paradigm for facilitating cross-cultural exchanges—one that takes people to a metalevel understanding of what is going on when people with different cultural backgrounds try to communicate with each other. He suggested that cross-cultural training more appropriately start with these metalevel understandings of the dynamics of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. It could encourage the perspective that all intercultural interaction is a potential learning experience—not just about the other culture, but most of all about our own. It is the ability to see the other in us that most enhances international business communication. Our intellectual knowledge of other cultures becomes much more meaningful when built on the experience of our many selves within (Kent, n.d.).

Body Dialogue Process. The Body Dialogue Process was inspired by the Voice Dialogue Process, the Psychology of Selves, and Judith Tamar Stone's personal experience with a physically disabling illness in her late 20s. The Body Dialogue Process invites conscious communication with the body's overall voice and the voices of its parts. Hearing and valuing the body's own knowledge base is essential to cultivating a healthy relationship—an intimate friendship—with the body. Imagine the kind of relationship people have with their significant other or best friend, a connection based on mutual respect, effective communication, and pleasure in each other's company. This possibility also exists with our body. Body Dialogue uniquely helps bridge the divide between mind and body (Stone, 2012, p. 54).

Conscious Body and the Energy Medicine of Selves. For over 20 years, Judith Hendin has been working with Conscious Body process. Conscious Body employs the principles and wisdom of Voice Dialogue and the Psychology of Selves, as well as her background in body therapies, psyche-soma modalities, cultural anthropology, and theatrical dance. The Conscious Body process has been used with hundreds of client symptoms, and with 40 symptoms of her own, both major and

minor. The Conscious Body process can be used with any physical symptom, or with any physical component of a psychological condition, such as the rapid heartbeat of a panic attack (Hendin, 2012, p. 78).

Performer Training. Jason Bennett (2012, p. 69) is a trainer of performers. He had studied essentially all of the well-known, 20th-century performer training methods. After experiencing the work of Drs. Stone, he realized that each method appealed to the archetypal make-up of certain kinds of performers but left out others. Voice Dialogue work allows all of the archetypal systems to be unified for the first time in history. This is because the fundamental and deepest aspects of the Psychology of Selves and Voice Dialogue are so expansive. He adapted Voice Dialogue and the theory of the Psychology of Selves to performer training, including the Aware Ego Process, Bonding Patterns, and the Energetics of the many selves and archetypes found within the human experience.

Homeopathy and Voice Dialogue. Gabrielle Pinto (2012, p.271) has practiced as a homeopath since 1984, and for over a quarter century she has amalgamated Voice Dialogue into her work. She discovered early in her practice that homeopathy could provide support for emotional problems, and later learnt that when homeopathy is combined with Voice Dialogue, patients experienced insightful, long-lasting changes in their lives.

Imago Relationship Therapy and Voice Dialogue. Dorsey Cartwright (2012, pp. 344-345) has combined Imago Processes with Voice Dialogue methods. The Imago Dialogue is a tool that therapists use to enable partners to shift from an unconscious to a conscious relationship. This is a structured dialogue in which partners mirror, validate, and empathize with each other when addressing conflictual issues. Voice Dialogue is invaluable in the process of The Behavior Change Request Dialogue. Also it adds value in the visualization process called Holding the Tension of the Old and the New which mainly creates the sense of Aware Ego Process.

Research on Voice Dialogue. To date, there has been limited research on Voice Dialogue. Jukka Laitakari, Finnish Professor and Tetra Frey-Laitakari, Finnish Therapist (J. Laitakari & T. F-Laitakari, 2007) gathered and summarized five studies of Voice Dialogue in their article. Two studies have been published. The rest are unpublished papers and in-progress research development.

1. Dr. Judith Hendin from New York City reported interesting findings on Conscious Body process by employing Voice Dialogue work. The analysis of Conscious Body client records over a 10-year period with the self-reports of 140 clients, published in the *USA Body Psychotherapy Journal*, shows the effectiveness of this work: 63% of symptoms disappeared; 22% improved; and 15% saw no change.

2. Dr. John Dougherty from Tennessee and his coworkers have written an article, in which they postulate, on the basis of modern neuroscience, that the Aware Ego Process is located in the anterior cingulate cortex of the brain. This is due to the recent studies in their laboratory utilizing PET brain imaging suggest that patients with Alzheimer's disease and anosognosia (lack of self-awareness) also have a defect of the anterior cingulate cortex.

3. In collaboration with Dr. Martha-Lou Cohen from Los Angeles, Professor Jukka and therapist Tetra are currently attempting to construct a short questionnaire about the Aware Ego Process. The development of this kind of questionnaire is very valuable as the Aware Ego Process can be called the ultimate "product" of Voice Dialogue facilitation. The questionnaire requires further developmental work and trials before it can be made available for general use.

4. Pekka Mustonen, a Finnish sexual therapist, did a study of the effects of Voice Dialogue on three of his sexual therapy clients over a 7-month period with an average frequency of one session per month. Main research question was whether Voice Dialogue can be applied to sexual therapy. Results of his study strongly suggest that it can.

5. In-progress unpublished documents from the Finnish Centre of Voice Dialogue, research is currently being done to find out about what types of changes the Finnish Centre of Voice Dialogue program produces. The program is very specifically defined: about 150 hours of training out of which personal facilitation includes about 20 hours.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a qualitative research project. I chose to conduct this study by using the Life Story research method to obtain the findings. Human experience is the essential information to be derived as data for this study. The main focus of this study was on the life transformation experience through Voice Dialogue of one senior Voice Dialogue teacher, J'aime ona Pangaia.

3.1 Research Design

I choose the life story approach (or life history approach) as the specific qualitative research method for my journey into J'aime's life. Life story is a narrative approach that is very appropriate for understanding an individual's life across time and how life interacts with the whole. Life story approach enabled me to collect holistic and qualitative data regarding her transformational life and uncover the different stages of her life course.

Life stories are particular narratives used to reconstruct and interpret whole lives to obtain a comprehensive, over time view of people's experiences (Frank, as cited in Wicks & Whiteford, 2006, p. 8). In a sense, life stories are autobiographical accounts about a person that can be obtained through an oral communication or through written accounts, such as diaries or articles (Detzner & Wallace, as cited in Campbell, 1999, p. 11). Life stories usually cover a person's entire life and they help researchers gain a holistic perspective of the person under study (Wallace, as cited in Campbell, 1999, p. 11).

As described by Abu Bakar and Abdullah (2008, p. 4), life story approach can be seen to have both general and specific purposes. The general purpose is to provide insights into the nature and meaning of an individual. Specific purpose is to analyze a particular life for some specific reason. In life story approach, large samples

are unnecessary and perhaps even inappropriate. Adequacy is dependent not upon quantity but upon the richness of the data and the nature of the aspect of life being investigated. Life story approach aims to penetrate deeper than any other approaches by allowing the subjects to tell their stories and present their views. The process of collecting information is typically to start with a broad overview then to narrow down to the area of interest.

As noted by Abu Bakar and Abdullah (2008, p. 6), there are many strengths of the life history approach. For instance, life history approach uses open-ended questions with few directives from the researcher, and the informant can give lengthy explanations regarding his/her real life. This provides an opportunity to understand the process that took place in the informant's life at a certain time period. Moreover, life history invites detailed description of specific acts, events, relationships, and circumstances in particular lives. It also has an ability to interpret one's own life and oneself that is in the past, the present, and the changes they recognized. Yet, it helps to make sense of changes in individual life. Without the perspective of time, it is difficult to see what many small changes amount to. Using this method of data collection helps provide depth and detailed information.

Kluckhohn (1982; as cited in Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008, p. 4) recognized some problems involved in the use of life story approach such as reliability, validity, and interpretation of information. The problem of reliability of life story evidence can be approached in two ways. First, reliability can be addressed by checking for internal consistency, and second by checking against all other possible sources of related evidence, in which I use triangulation to double check results. For validity, the researcher needs to be disciplined by the data, and also careful about the source of the data as well. Interpretation of the information collected is another problem. The interview transcripts are very essential, because it is a presentation of data in the form of words and sentences recorded which can overcome possible confusion that may arise from the interpretation of questions.

According to Abu Bakar and Abdullah (2008, p. 7), to use life story approach, the role of researcher as a communicator is important. The researcher needs to possess various communication skills. The strategies used by the researcher to communicate effectively with an individual are several. First, being an excellent

listener in the dialogue rather than an active interviewer. Researcher should be able to encourage informant to communicate his/her underlying attitudes, beliefs and values. Second, be willing to lend one's ears, eyes, and heart to informant's messages both verbal and nonverbal. Also, being open-minded which means the willingness to accept ideas from the informant. Third, being a good talker which means easing the informant so that he/she is more willing to tell "his/her story." The result is that the researcher most often will experience close relationship with the informant and probably feel obliged to protect data collected from outsiders. Fourth, possess good persuasive skills to encourage the informant to produce an answer to questions being raised. Researcher should have good probing skills that encourage the ability to persuade/encourage informant to reveal more information. It can be nonverbal or verbal. The probe should be as neutral as possible. It should not incline the informant to a particular response. Probing is a key interviewing skill in life history approach. Therefore, researcher or researcher's assistant needs to practice this skill because probing can easily lead to bias.

Validity, in qualitative research, refers to whether the findings of a study are true and certain—"true" in the sense that research findings accurately reflect the situation, and "certain" in the sense that research findings are supported by the evidence. Triangulation is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity in their studies (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2002). In this study, I used two sources of data (documentary review and interview itself), and then my direct experience and observation for triangulation. Also, the key informant check is used to enhance the validity of the findings.

In summary, to access to the data and obtain the findings, I used life story interview as a main method to collect the data along with analysis of other sources of data such as journaling, articles, books, or other documents if they were available. For validity and reliability of this study, triangulation and key informant check were used.

3.2 Research Procedures

As mentioned in the first chapter under Scope of the Study, the only key informant that was selected is the senior Voice dialogue teacher/facilitator, J'aime ona

Pangaia. Because she has almost 30 years of experience in Voice Dialogue, not only in using the work for herself but also to transform the lives of others around the world, her life experience is definitely rich enough to be explored and studied. She has devoted herself to Voice Dialogue and has integrated Voice Dialogue into every aspect of her life, both personal and professional.

Steps used in conducting this study were several. First, to prepare the questions for life story interview, public documents/articles written by J'aime ona Pangaia were reviewed. Reviewing writing available in the form of published material as well as her written articles found on the internet gave a broad background to set the framework and guidelines for the interview questions.

Second, a life story interview was conducted. Atkinson (2002, p. 123) explained that life story interviewing is a qualitative research method for gathering information on the subjective essence of one person's entire life that is transferable across disciplines. Life story interview stands alone because it is a method of looking at life as a whole and is a way of carrying out in-depth study of individual lives. Moreover, Atkinson (2002, p. 125) also stated that the movement toward life stories is a movement toward acknowledging personal truth from the subjective point of view as well as a movement toward the validity of narrative. A life story narrative highlights the most important influences, experiences, circumstances, issues, themes, and lessons of a lifetime. A life story narrative can be both a valuable experience for the person telling the story and a successful research endeavor for the one gathering the data.

The life story interview was conducted by the researcher privately with the key informant on face-to-face interview basis. Four interviews were conducted to obtain the data, each lasting about 2-3 hours. Listed below are the specific interview dates and the length of each interview time.

1st interview: Monday, February 4, 2013 for 2:50 hours in Bangkok

2nd interview: Monday, February 18, 2013 for 2.51 hours in Bangkok

3rd interview: Monday, May 6, 2013 for 2.41 hours in Portland

4th interview: Tuesday, May 7, 2013 for 2.08 hours in Portland

Additional questions were asked later in person or in written form when extra information or clarification was required. All interviews were recorded as raw data before fully transcribing them into written form. This was in order to obtain and

to collect data from the key informant. Tools that were used for the interview are the life story interviewing guideline, a voice recording device to record the interview, a note book to record any notes and any observations during the interview. After the interview, recording data was transcribed into written data before interpretation. The complete transcribed interview was given to J'aime to review and check for accuracy as well as for any changes or corrections she might wish to make. This is also a form of a subjective reaction or validity check. Any additions needed were done by either e-mail or face-to-face involvement, which depended on the best accessible choice at the time.

Third, data was gathered from documents. Any available personal documents provided and public documents were collected and reviewed. Forty-eight written public articles including a book titled *An Introduction to Voice Dialogue: Finding the Benefit of People Who Bug You* (2012) and teaching materials written by the key informant were used as additional data to support and crosscheck with the data obtained from the interview. These data were mainly used for triangulation.

Fourth, data interpretation and analysis was conducted. As stated in Akinson (2002, p. 133) by Josselson and Lieblich (1995), the ultimate aim of the narrative investigation of human life, which applies to life stories as well, is the interpretation of experience which is highly subjective. This is where I needed to apply the interview (data gained) effectively and efficiently to achieve the original research goal which is to answer the thesis question of, "How does life transform through Voice Dialogue?" Findings are presented in the form of storytelling and put the emphasis on the stage of life transformation before and after experiencing Voice Dialogue. Interpretation is derived from a review of each life story text transcribed along with the patterns and meanings of the life transformation. Confidentiality of the life story told by the key informant is of concern here. The key informant has a full right to decide which part of the story she wants or does not want to include, present, and publicize in this thesis. This process granted full respect to the right of ownership of the story of the key informant. Both chapter 4 on life story telling and chapter 5 on interpretation were sent to the key informant to review, confirm accuracy, and to finalize or to adjust some details if any.

Fifth, a validity and trustworthiness check was done. Akinson (2002, p.

135) clearly stated that telling a story implies a certain and unique point of view which the truth is not the main issue. It is more important that the life story be deemed “trustworthy” than that it be “true.” The subjective reality is sought out after all. Also, the most important measure for trustworthiness check is internal consistency. This means that what a life storyteller says in one part of the narrative should not contradict what he or she says in another part. Internal consistency is a primary quality check that was definitely used.

Akinson (2002, p. 135) additionally explained about external consistency, that it is not always going to be a valid measure since the life story interview does not necessarily seek historical truth, only the storyteller’s version of or perspective on what he or she remembers as happened. Therefore, the narrative approach to the study of lives places emphasis upon internal coherence as experienced by the person, rather than external criteria of truth or validity. As suggested by Akinson (2002), two other control measures of the validity of life story interview are corroboration and persuasion. Persuasion is an objective measure of whether the life story seems reasonable and convincing to others.

I used the triangulation method for validity check to enhance the quality of the findings. The edited life story was checked against the other written data obtained and the researcher’s own direct experience and observation. This can enhance reliability and validity of the study, even though the method itself is not required. Moreover, subjective corroboration was achieved when the transcribed life story and interpretation portion were given to J’aime to check whether or not it conformed to what she said originally.

3.3 Interview Guidelines

Below are the interview guidelines that were used during the interview. However, the interview was conducted in a very organic way. These guidelines were used as controlled list of questions to check during the interview whether the information aimed for has been told by the key informant. They were sent prior to the interview process.

1. Please narrate your life story according to each period of life span (i.e.,

childhood, teenage life, university student life, working life). Describe the characteristics/ personalities/ behaviors/ way of life/ belief system/ value in each period of life/ interaction with others and the world (relationship between you and family, friends, partners, society, environment, and nature), including how were you raised up which impact you to be formed as you are today.

2. Would you please describe the critical points/periods/circumstances in life (both positive and negative) that significantly impacted your thoughts/beliefs and bring about the seeking for life transformation?

3. How did Voice Dialogue come into your life? Can you say more about the pros and cons that you have experienced so far from Voice Dialogue Work? How do you integrate Voice Dialogue into your life? How has Voice Dialogue work transformed you in terms of your personal life and relationship with others and the world? How has this work transformed your view towards your life as a whole? Would you please say more about your current Voice Dialogue Journey?

4. Would you please tell me why and how did you become Voice Dialogue facilitator/teacher? Can you say more about your experience after being Voice Dialogue facilitator/teacher? Are there any differences between using Voice Dialogue work as an inner work tool and using the work as a profession? If yes, would you please describe the differences?

5. Is there any other inner work/transformational work/contemplative work you have experienced/ learned/ used in your life? If yes, would you please describe them and share your views regarding those tools?

6. Would you please describe how did you deal with your life difficulties/suffering in the past? What are the differences between your reaction towards those difficulties/suffering before and after knowing Voice Dialogue?

7. Can you talk about the most difficulty in Voice Dialogue work that you have faced? Can you share the top 3-5 most valuable experiences that you have faced from Voice Dialogue work? Do you still experience some problems/ obstacles working with yourself? Please share your reasons of your answer.

8. Would you please share your experience of your Aware Ego Process? How has the Aware Ego Process developed in you? Can you describe the impact from the Aware Ego Process towards your life?

9. Can you say that your life has been transformed, and your consciousness has been awakened? If yes, please explain the experience that has happened in you and what has transformed in you? If no, please explain the reasons for that.

10. How do you see/perceive the world differently? How do you live your life differently? Can you say about the meaning and value of your life? How do you see your life in the future?

CHAPTER IV

LIFE STORY TELLING

For this thesis, a life story interview was conducted in four sessions of approximately 2 to 3 hours each. It was a marvelous gift to listen to the rich story of a person's whole life. The story presented here was transcribed from the recording of the life story telling of J'aime ona Pangaia as interviewed by the researcher. It was rearranged into sections in order to make it smoother and easier to read. My questions and responses were eliminated and I retained only the pure story from the storyteller. However, parts of the life story that were considered less important were omitted due to limitations of chapter length and also the focus that the researcher aimed for, that is the story of transformation and Voice Dialogue. Criteria for inclusion were through the researcher's subjective evaluation of the degree of richness of each turning point/transformational event of the key informant. General background of the first period of life was included to give an overview of how her life was constructed. If there were similar events/stories that happened in the key informant's life, only one event was selected for presentation. Some rich and meaningful thoughts/beliefs were included in the interpretation section in chapter 5. The story written here has been read, edited, and approved by the story teller to validate the information and enhance the accuracy of the story. None of the researcher's opinions or own understandings were added into the story. The researcher's interpretation is presented separately in chapter 5. The whole story presented from this point forward is told by J'aime ona Pangaia.

Prelude—The Myth

“The point of my life could be something as simple as when I'm 86 years old, there's a rose blooming in my neighbor's yard, and my whole life's purpose is to be present with it and smell its aroma that morning.”

Preface

Let me preface this life story telling by acknowledging that these are memories, told as best I can and yet, as memories, they are subjective and mutable. I can recognize that there are different parts of me who get involved in the telling of this story. I'm aware that these stories will be selective; most of my life story is quite ordinary to me, taken up with the everyday mundane activities that everyone experiences and which I enjoy.

Family Background and Early Childhood

I was born in 1954 in a time that my parents were living apart because my father was in the army, stationed in Georgia. While he was in the army, my mother lived with her mother in Michigan. I don't know this for sure, but I think that they conceived me on one of their visits. My mother spent a good part of her pregnancy living with her mother while my father was away. Then, she came from very far away to give birth to me at the army base hospital where my father was stationed. Shortly after she gave birth to me, she went back to her mother until he was finished with his service. They did it this way just so that he was there, I guess, at the time of my birth.

After he left the army, he went to college back in Michigan again. So my earliest years were being raised at the dormitory for married students, young families, just those people. I grew up the first 4 years of my life in a very protected area with other young families and children. My father was in school but my mother didn't go to college; she just raised me, and later, my sister, who came along when I was 3. I had a feeling that, at that time in my life, my parents were probably fairly happy together, maybe. I was not aware of anything different. I was not aware of any disturbance in their relationship. I was just an innocent little child.

I can look back on a very early memory as the beginning of a very big primary self for me: an event which happened at this housing area for students was for young families. It had fences all around, kind of closing the whole thing like a little village, and outside of the fence, I remember there was a big field. In the summer time, there were a lot of wild flowers in this field. I have this memory of me and some of the other children. We figured out how to open the gate because we wanted to go outside

and get the flowers for our mothers. So we went out and we picked a bunch of very common flower weeds. After we had all picked them, we ran back to our different apartments, excited to give them. I remember that I got in trouble because we had walked outside the gate.

My mother said, "You are the oldest, you should be responsible. You endangered those other children."

So I remember this feeling of excitement to see my mother and give her this present and her scolding me. I also have the sense that as a 4-year-old, I was a grown-up now. I should be responsible for the other children. I always remember that this experience was really the beginning of very big primary self in my life.

So in my early life, when I was still 4, we moved to a different state, from Michigan to Ohio, where my father had his first job. We lived there just 1 year. Something had happened already but I don't really know what it was. I was just still 4 or 5 years old. Something had started to break in my relationship with my mother.

I don't know that I could ever name like how this happened. But I do have another memory, which is that the apartment complex that we lived at had a swimming pool. At this swimming pool, they had a class every day that taught the little children how to swim, so that we could play in the water and be safe. I remember our final test was to jump off the diving board and swim across the pool by ourselves. After we "graduated," I was playing by the pool and my mother was in the deep end of the pool. She told me to jump off to the side of the pool and come swim to her. I remember being a little girl thinking, "I can't do that. She is dangerous. She will drown me." It's very odd experience. I just remember the feeling I didn't really trust her anymore; I was afraid of her.

That's the first time that I remember that there was something going on. It reached the conscious level that something scary was going on in the relationship with my mother. That continued for the rest of our lives together like that.

In Ohio, I went to kindergarten. Then we moved because my father got a better job in New York State. We lived in one place for 1 year where I went to first grade and then we moved to a better apartment. So I went to a different school for second, third, fourth, and fifth grade, and a different school for sixth, and a different school for seventh and eighth grades.

Somewhere in the period starting around second and third grade, I began to be aware that my parents were not happy. They were very unhappy because they stopped talking with each other—at all. They were angry. We didn't really know why—my sister and I. It was like the energy in the whole house was very cold. It was like there were everyday things going on but there was no linkage. There was absolutely no linkage.

Our parents said, “Go tell your father this.” “Go tell your mother that.” “Go tell your father dinner is ready.” “Go tell your mother we are going to the car now.”

We children began to be used to be a kind of go-between for our parents. The energy just became much more dark as times went on. If they did talk, they were fighting quite loud or in withdrawn voices.

So again I have another primary self in me, which started to take form, which was I felt that I needed to protect my sister. She was very frightened by how our parents were.

As a girl at that point, I was very alone, very responsible still. The responsible girl that got activated for the other children in the neighborhood was then really focused on my sister. I had few friends because we moved from location to location and from school to school. So I didn't really have a way of building friends that would last very long because there was all that moving around.

The result of that was, as the oldest of the two daughters, I had a self in me who tried to see what can I do to help, make things different, how can I make these people happy? I don't have a lot of clear memory of how I tried to accomplish that, but I think I had more sense of, “How do I fit into this; what's going on in the family?”

It evolved over time in terms of the pathology of my family relationship—the family system—was that my father became really withdrawn into a kind of hurt, quiet, doesn't talk in their marriage; that was his coping mechanism. I think my mother's method of coping was to try to make contact, but very judgmentally. This was frustrated because her husband, my father, was really withdrawn now. She was a very, very critical person, very judgmental. I think that was how he handled it, was to just disappear down into his hobby room in the basement.

I felt very responsible for watching my sister. I know that as a girl, I

adored my sister. I just loved her so much. Even during the time when older siblings start to feel, "I don't want to play with you now. I play with kids my own age. You can't play with us." Still if anybody ever messed with my sister, I would attack them! I would do anything to protect her. There was one time that a little boy was picking on her and I just went after him like a wild bear. I beat him up even though he was really much bigger than I was. I was very fearless in that way but I couldn't really protect her from our family life. It was beyond my control. I couldn't manage my parents' relationship.

I could only try to shelter my sister a little bit. At this point my mother was starting to really divide us more. I was the "bad" girl, my sister was the "good girl. My mother began to single me out for strange rules and punishments. They were kind of crazy like, "You didn't comb your hair right so go stay in your room." "You're not allowed to use the front door (but everyone else can)." Or some small little breaking of rules, which maybe I didn't really know that it was a rule. "I am going to have your father beat you when he comes back home from work tonight. When he comes home I'll tell him." He used to beat me with his belt, mostly at her command.

It was very obvious and confusing to my sister and I both. I began to have a sense that I was always in a battle with my mother, every moment. Her intention was to destroy my self-esteem, to have me believe that I was a bad person. She said things like this to me, "You are worthless." "You look odd, so no other children would want to play with you." "You'll never succeed or be good at anything." "Something was wrong with you." She was very much my killer critic. Any given day she would say these things to me.

So I was really just in a space of always telling myself, "Don't believe this." I would resist this and be in more of a rebel energy about believing these messages she gave me. It was a struggle, because I was a child and she was my mother.

These messages were often accompanied by punishments. So really, from about the time when I was in fifth or sixth grade, I began to have the sense that I really had to be on guard all the time around anything she said to me about me. My father was just no help. He just worked or withdrew.

That caused a lot of pain for me because I really wanted my father to

protect us. Not just me but I also felt that there was something not right about the kind of attention my mother was giving to my sister, that my sister needed a protection from that too. I didn't have any kind of psychological understanding yet of how to make sense of it. It just didn't feel right to me. I couldn't do anything about that. One result of all this was that it became more and more unsafe for my sister to be linked with me, since there was something "wrong" with me and I was a "bad person." If she began to associate with me too much, it could risk her also getting this kind of reaction of my mother towards her. I'm sure that she also began to wonder if these things about me were true; why else would our mother say these things?

First Initiation: Out-of-Body Experience

What happened around eighth grade was a very big initiation for me. I was feeling much like, "What can I learn to do that can help the family, and help me?" Somehow, somewhere I heard about "hypnosis." I don't know how I heard about it, but it made a "click" for me.

I thought, "I am going to get a book of self-hypnosis because maybe I can hypnotize myself into being a good daughter." It's a kind of innocent way that a child would think.

Because whatever I was, apparently I wasn't good enough. I thought of hypnosis as some kind of magic action that would somehow transform you into something else.

I got a book on self-hypnosis at the library. It was a little pamphlet. It taught how to go into a relaxed, meditative state. You count slowly back from 10 to 1, you watch your breathing, you stare at something, and you have this hypnotic message to give to yourself once you get "there."

So I wrote in a piece of paper, "I'm a good daughter." I don't remember exactly but it was something to that effect.

First of all, just so you know, the condition around this was that I was often "grounded," meaning, unless I was in school or doing house chores, I was often frequently confined to my room. My sister didn't have to be, but I was because I was considered a "bad girl." So after dinner and doing the dishes with my sister, because I

was grounded, I went back to my room and I had my book. I felt excited and felt that this was going to be fine. This solution was a little secret that I kept from her. This wasn't a horrible punishment now to be sent to my room either, because I was happy to get away from my mother.

I went up to my room, read this little pamphlet, and followed the instructions. I had a little lamp turned on across the room. It's kind of a soft light. I counted my breath slowly 10 to 1 and then I became completely relaxed. I was in such a state of relaxation. I hadn't felt this good in years! I felt really completely peaceful and relaxed. My mind was just hovering there, quiet. I was in a kind of peaceful meditation state.

Then I heard a loud noise. It was like "POP" (clap hands) sound and the very next thing I knew was that I found myself in middle of the air in the room downstairs below me as if I was suspended up near the ceiling. I was looking to find out what made that noise.

I saw my father was on one side of a couch. My mother was on another side of a couch and my sister was sitting on the floor between them. They were looking right past me, sharing a bowl of popcorn. I wondered what were they looking at because I was right there in front of them. As I wanted to know what they were looking at behind me, I was then, suddenly facing another direction to see what it was they were looking at. What they were looking at was television. There was a TV show going on and I recognized the TV show.

I was looking at the image on the TV for a couple of seconds and then the thought came to my mind "How did I get down here? I am upstairs." As soon as I thought that, I was back upstairs again. I was again in the middle of the air. Then, what I saw was my body. It was as if I were just eyes looking. I was just the act of perceiving. I didn't even seem to have a body, but I was hearing and seeing what's going on. I saw my body sitting on the bed where I left it apparently. It was sitting there looking at the lamp across the room and I thought to myself, "I must be dead!"

It was the only thing that I could think of to explain this, because I was so called "Here." Whatever I am was "Here," and *There* was my body. I was completely perplexed. "How did I die? I didn't even know I had died. That was so easy." I went to look at my body to see more clearly how I died. As I was sort of looking at it more

directly, I saw that my body was still quite alive! I could see my body breathing. The eyes were open. It had been staring at the lamp across the room. They were opened but sort of empty looking. My body was breathing. It meant there was life. It was definitely my body.

As I saw it, I suddenly felt this amazing tenderness and love for my little body in a way that I didn't think I'd consciously allowed myself, ever. I'd never seen myself objectively. I very much appreciated this little body of mine and that act of appreciating it, loving it, pulled me right back into the body.

Immediately, I could feel like something very hard to describe which was that for the first time I felt a sense of my physicality that I never ever noticed before, which was density. I could feel the weight, how wide, how tall, the volume of your body in space. It is something that is so normal. We almost don't catch it. I'd never felt the experience of going from no density to density, from no thickness whatsoever to now, not only thickness, but the varying densities within the body. Here was something that is more dense, like bones, which are more dense than muscles. Then, I had a second amazing experience. I had been sitting there for a while in that relaxed, meditative state. As I somehow remixed with my body, I felt my heartbeat and the life force of my body. Then, the heartbeat started to go faster. Bum BumBumBumBumBum It was like WOWWW feeling. And I knew somehow, in some way that I had never known before, that how I think and feel affects what the body experiences.

I now knew somehow I had discovered something about life that no one ever told me, which is that you exist beyond your body. You exist as your body and you can exist without the body. I had a direct experience of this. My heart was still going fast; I was very excited by this discovery!

Then I was super-curious, wildly curious about this. I could hardly believe that this happened. I got up and I walked downstairs, and looked around the corner. I felt I had to check. This really happened? There they were, just exactly as I saw them with the popcorn, but they looked at me this time. I looked at the television and there was the show that was playing. They said, "What you are doing downstairs?" I said, "Oh, nothing I just wanted to see you." I went back upstairs and I took the piece of paper "I'm a good daughter" and I tore it up. I didn't need to care about being a good

daughter anymore. I didn't need to hypnotize myself into anything. Whatever just happened, I was very alive with curiosity. "You can ground me all you want. Leave me alone so I can explore this!" It completely changed my life. It was an amazing initiation.

So after that experience, because I'd done it once, somehow I knew how to do it again. What happened accidentally, it was like a switch went on in me. What began to happen from then on (for over a decade) was that several times a week I would wake up in the middle of the night with this kind of vibration at the base of my skull. There was both a physical sensation and also, a low sound, a very deep vibrating hum that seem to come originate somewhere low, in the base of my brain.

It would happen during a certain part of the sleep cycle. I was sleeping but I'd somehow start to wake up a little bit in the night and I could tune in to this sound. It's like somehow I began to orient to the presence of that vibrational sound in my body. If I surrendered to that sound, I would just pop out of my body and I would just be hanging over it there in the bedroom. My body would be there just resting, still sleeping. Then "I" would think, "OK, what do I want to explore?"

I did this for years. I just began to explore what are the kinds of ways to experience reality from this state. Well, the first year or so of doing this, it was like being a little bird learning how to fly but with no one to teach me. I had to teach myself through experience.

I now had a secret. I assumed, at first, that everyone knew how to do this after a certain age, but that my parents hadn't told me about it, because I was "grounded!" I was keeping it secret from them so that they couldn't somehow take it away from me. I soon realized that very few people knew how to do this. My family life, my everyday life was just the same as it always was. It didn't change at one bit. The only difference was I felt a bit less dependent on how things were going in the family because I was more interested in what was happening in me. The kinds of things I experienced in that out of body state is a whole other story. Nothing from these experiences were in my daily life. What was going on in the house became uglier, more mean, more punitive. But I was just becoming a little bit less defeated by the punishments emotionally. I had another aspect of my life to pursue.

There was a real attraction that went on for me to be in this state, at night,

because it was really quite awful—traumatic—in my family life at that point. My parents were more expressively hating each other. My sister was then really staying separate from me and I was just still trying to process this in my life. In my family life with them, I was becoming more depressed and struggling around what was going on.

At the same time, I had a completely different inner adventure that was going on. This was psychologically creating quite a counter balance for me for the heaviness that was going on in my life.

So I'll just tell you more about my personality at that time. My personality, on one side, was really liberated, curious, and adventurous about what was going on through those out-of-body experiences. Then, there was also a regular daily routine that was quite sad, quite frustrating, leaving me with a quite trapped feeling. There was a trapped versus very free quality that was being held *at the same time*. It was not yet any kind of balance, but was two things coexisting.

I later became very broken-hearted about how this life was. I didn't entertain any idea that I was going to somehow escape into the *other* state all the time. It was just somehow another part of my life but it was not something that I knew how to have in a way that informed me how to live my life differently in the waking reality. Everything I was learning there, I didn't really know yet how to integrate it into something useful for my waking life.

Depression to Freedom

Eventually, by the time I was 17 years old, I became very depressed. At a certain point, I just had a complete emotional breakdown. All the emotional trauma and abuse finally caught up with me and broke me. One night I just cried my heart out. I was so sad and in so much relational, emotional pain. I was crying in this state for hours in my room alone. I was in a dark room and just cried and cried. My mother was home and also my sister. My father came home from work and he heard the crying, "What's going on?" I was just crying out loud, sobbing out loud.

He ran up the stairs to my room and opened the door and all the light came in from the hallway. I saw him, my mom, and my sister, these three people together. I looked and saw that my sister was really scared to see me like this. My father was very

horrified to see me like this, and my mother was smiling and nodding her head. It was like a knife to my heart. I felt killed. My father went to touch me, to comfort me. However, in that emotional state, I was afraid if he touched me, I couldn't bear it. I was in such pain emotionally. So he said, "We're going to let you leave here and stay the night with your aunt and uncle, and it's going to be ok." The next day I got brought to their house to stay there for a couple of days. Then, my mother decided that now she could prove that I was a crazy person. She decided she wanted to have a psychiatrist commit me to an institution for the mentally ill. This was something she often used to threaten to do to me when I displeased her in some way.

So they made the appointment and my parents took me there but they took me in separate cars because they were not talking; they were not doing anything together anymore. I was riding with my father.

I said to him "You'd better stand up for me now, this is your one chance. You haven't been protecting me. She wants to do me further harm. She wants to have me committed. You have to stand up for me now or it's over. This is it. I demand it of you as your daughter."

My father was a fearful man. I did this because I realized that I had to command him more now than my mother did. They were not speaking but somehow she had a power to command him to do things. So I had to command him more and I told him this. When they took me in to see the doctor, he interviewed me first.

I said this to him: "I'm desperately unhappy. All of my crying and all of my sadness, whatever they say about me is because I'm so hopelessly unloved feeling. I just want to go to live with my grandmother, who loves me. All I need is to be with somebody who can show me love. She will take me. I know she will and this is what I want. There is nothing wrong with me other than I'm deeply unhappy from not being cared for and loved. And I'm always being criticized." He said, "It's OK. Go and wait in the next room." Then he called in my parents and he talked with them while I was waiting in the outer room.

I learned later on that my mother said what she wanted was to have me committed and the doctor asked my father what he wanted. He said, "I want her to go to my mother's house." So he stood up for me! My mother was furious about this because she did not like my father's mother at all. The doctor didn't commit me since

my depression was not a psychiatric problem and he recommended I live with my grandmother, if she agreed. So I went to my grandmother's the next day who lived in Michigan. They sent me there, and my life started over again.

At the time, I was halfway through my last year of high school. I was 17. So I left my school again, and I started again with a new school 5 hours away from my home town. I spent the last 3 to 4 months of my high school education there with my grandmother.

Life very much started again. When I went to live with my grandmother, she was the exact opposite of what I had ever experienced in terms of an adult holding space for me. My grandmother, she was maybe a little younger than I am now, she was working, so she was not always there when I came home from school. She loved me, and she was very trusting of me and held space for me. It was a *completely* different world for me because I was completely free to do anything I wanted to.

I spent the next 8 or 9 months being a free-spirited child. My grandmother was okay with this as long as I was not killed or hurt. I'm sure she did worry about me! I did almost get killed or hurt a couple of times. I had no inner judgment capacity yet for outer danger because I'd been really on a tight leash my whole life. At this new school where my grandmother's house was, all the students had been in the same class with each other from first grade to twelfth grade. When I came in the last half of the senior year; they'd already known each other for 12 years. This was nothing new for me to come in to new schools—but for them, “Wow, who is she?” I was the new person that they'd never had.

As I came in to this new school, the vice-principal of the school had a private interview with me and my grandmother, to admit me to the school. Although, my grandmother couldn't understand much of what he was saying, because of her poor English skills. My grandmother was from what we called “the old country.” She was an immigrant from the Ukraine.

The vice-principal thought that somehow I was in some gang culture in New York City or something because I was from Rochester and he was confusing New York City with Rochester, which is like an 8 or 9-hour drive away! He said, “We don't want you bringing your New York druggie ways. I'm warning you that my kids are good kids.” I said, “That's good. I'm on board with that because I've never done

drugs.”

When I went into this school, I discovered that nearly *everyone* was doing drugs, even the teachers were smoking pot with the students during breaks. There was no getting away from it. I very quickly got involved in that whole culture. So, for about 6 months, I experimented with drugs. In addition to my wild and newly liberated energy, I was trying all these different things. The only thing I didn't do was shoot up anything into my body with needles. But I smoked it, I swallowed it, I inhaled it. My attitude was, “I want to try it.” I wanted to discover whatever life had to offer, even this.

I had a very healing experience from doing those drugs. It was like somehow all the trauma was kind of emptied out of me, because of doing these drugs. And without quite understanding it, I had indeed been filled with trauma from my family life. I don't even know how to explain it but because of having taken these drugs, as each time I took them, and because of the kind of experiences I had, somehow, they took the trauma out of me. They started to wash it away. In particular the hallucinogens, like mescaline and LSD, which I did a lot of. They made me feel connected with some very essential aspects of my being and with nature, and I felt safe in a deep way. I feel extremely lucky because there were many kids around me who were doing these drugs, and some of them had very bad or confusing experiences. They went temporarily crazy or they did dangerous things. I was very lucky. Nothing bad happened to me and fortunately, I didn't accidentally cause any harm to anybody or myself. I was not doing these drugs because I was using any “good judgment.” I had terrible judgment. I didn't know how to make good decisions yet for myself. So I was just lucky. And my intuition or fate was holding me.

But one day, I had a dilemma, and the dilemma was a boy who really liked me a lot, who was a year behind me. We were very good friends and lightly dating, but he was in love with me, although I was not “in love” with him. I felt very kindly towards him, and I was now graduating from high school and preparing to move back to my home city. He came up to me, and said, “I have another year of high school to finish, but after I finish my year of high school, I want us to have a life together and get married someday.” At that time, I was a kind of a wild girl, who could play with any boy I wanted to. After I had my fun with them, I just dumped them. I didn't care. I

mean, I was very self-centered. I was just having a good and free-spirited time. But this boy said this to me, and I realized that he didn't deserve that and I thought to myself: "Oh my, how am I going to handle this? I should drop some acid (LSD). I should take some acid and figure this out." As I heard myself think this thought, my next thought to myself was, "*What?* You have to solve your problems by taking drugs, to figure this out? That's not what this is for! These aren't to solve normal problems. You're simply still immature and you have to develop maturity for these kinds of problems."

I thought, "Okay, I'm done taking drugs." Because if I started thinking about them (the drugs) in that way, it was the wrong way, so it was time to stop. They'd done me a lot of good, but I'd gotten the goodness out of them, and now I just had to learn from ordinary life and became more mature through trial and error. So I just stopped. That's it. I'm done.

Beginning of My Own Life

I finished high school. I came back to Rochester, my hometown, my home city. I stayed for a couple of weeks with a friend who still lived with her family until I found a job and an apartment. I began my own, independent life at 18 years old.

Nobody had ever, ever mentioned to me what happened after high school. No one had ever talked to me about college. Nobody had those dreams for me or encouraged me to have them. I don't understand how I got missed, even by the teachers, given the socio-economic class I belonged to. My only thought was that after high school, young women get married and became wives. Since I no longer had a boyfriend, my future was now wide-open!

So I got my first job, which was a very boring job. It was the type of job that you can get when you have no education beyond high school. It was a job that's so far below my potential that I can't even describe how low it was. I was filing papers in an insurance company. Then, a friend told me about a higher paying job working at Kodak. Rochester New York *was* Kodak-town. Almost everybody at some point in their life there worked at Kodak. I got a job there that was even more mind numbing, which was a factory job, worse than the other one but it paid more.

One day Gary, my ex-high school boyfriend, called me up to have lunch together. I asked him, “You’re in college?” I knew his family didn’t have much money either. “Well, how did you get to college? You have no money. I have no money. How did you get there and I didn’t?” He explained that he got student loans and free educational grants, available through the government.

So I turned around, and I got all that and I took myself to college. I was not going to work at this job for the rest of my life. In college, I also worked part-time as a bartender at a rhythm-and-blues nightclub. That was very fun. But I was up very late at night and then had classes all day.

Being in Danger: Almost Get Killed

Meanwhile, I was still adventuring through those out-of-body experiences, just as a normal part of my life. Also during this period, I had another experience that really changed my life, when I was 20. Actually, this happened twice to me, once when I was living with my grandmother, and once when I was living on my own.

When I was living with my grandmother, I had an experience where a stranger tried to murder me. I had another experience like this once before I was in college. I could have been killed is what it was. A man tried to rape me.

I was walking in my neighborhood on New Year’s Eve. I was 20. I was meeting my friend for a New Year’s party who lived three blocks away, and I was walking there. It was winter which means there was a lot of snow everywhere. I was dressed with a big heavy hat, and a long coat (to my ankles), boots, gloves, scarf. I was all bundled up like an Eskimo!

It was already 11:00, 11:30, something like that. I was trying to get there before midnight. This was in a neighborhood with houses mostly. As I was walking there, a car pulled up along by me, and this guy rolled his window down, and said, “Hey, you want a ride?” I said, “No. I’m fine. I’m good,” and I kept walking.

Then he asked, “Well, you want to get high?” and I said, “No. Leave me alone!” He kept driving slowly alongside me as I was walking. Next he said, “You want to make some money with me?” I got really mad at him. I said angrily, “Back the fuck off and leave me alone!”

So he pulled away, fast. He was mad. At the top of the street there was a little neighborhood bar. He parked his car there and went into the bar. I was like, “Okay, fine.” I didn’t think about him anymore, and just kept walking. I was about halfway across down the street, when I heard fast steps crunching in the snow; there was somebody running towards me. I looked behind me to see who was running, because there had been nobody else out, anywhere. It was in a quiet neighborhood, late at night. It was him. He was running towards me and he had a gun in his hand.

I started running and screaming for help, even though there were only a few houses on the street that had any lights on. I was trying to reach a house that had lights on —meanwhile, I was yelling, “Help! Help!”

But he caught me and grabbed me. He put a gun to my face and said, “Shut up or I’ll blow your face off.” I had about 1 second where I contemplated this possibility. It was a yes-or-no thing for me. I just decided no. Then I completely lost my mind, and I became like a wild animal, and I grabbed him back, and I started beating on him with all my might. I was yelling insults at him. I was cursing him. I was screaming at him. I was an absolutely enraged, wild animal-woman.

He had grabbed onto me and so I had grabbed him right back; just beating him up, yelling at him, “Go ahead and blow my face off! It’ll make you a man, right?! What a despicable piece of . . . !!!”

Sometime as this was going on, I started to hear some people shouting. They were yelling, “You! Stop! Stop!” As I heard this, my mind returned and I thought, “Oh, help is on the way.” As I was distracted by this thought, my hand let go of him, and he ran. He just took off. I realized later that he’d been trying to get away from me this whole time. (Laughter) But I’d grabbed him, and I’d just gone wild on him.

Three big guys came racing at me, and they threw me down in the snow, and they just jumped on me and covered me up. I felt so happy to feel their bodies protecting me. I felt so safe and I started just crying my eyes out, “Oh, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. He had a gun.” And they were looking confused! They were completely shocked, because they thought I was the attacker, and the girl had got away. (Laughter)

We called the police and I was put in the back of the police car while they

tried to find and arrest him, because they wanted me available to identify him. It turned out that he was hiding in a car after raping another woman in a garage only one block away from where he had attacked me. The police were taking me home when they got had gotten a call that there was another attack in progress. The police used the car that I was sitting in as a block for the street while they were trying to capture him. I was in a line of fire, since I was locked in the back seat with no way to exit the car. I was trapped between the police who had their guns out and this guy who had a gun. I tried to get them to let me out of the car, but they completely ignored me. I was traumatized by that too.

Then there was a gunshot and the police were asking each other, “Did you shoot?” “No, did you shoot?” Finally they decided *they* didn’t shoot. “No, no one’s been hurt here.”

So then they got one of the police officers to go up to the car, and the man—my attacker—had shot himself in the face and killed himself. Those policemen wanted me to identify him, but I said NO! Later, it was discovered that this man was a man who had raped many women in my neighborhood for over a couple of years. They nicknamed him “the garage rapist” because he always raped his victims in people’s car garages. After about a year later, or 2 years later, I learned that there was an organization in my city to help women who were raped, and I joined it as a way to help other women. At that point, I was in nursing school.

Cancer: Hodgkin’s Disease

In the last semester of my nursing education, I was 25, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s disease. One day I was visiting a friend. We were talking and looking at something up high on a shelf, and I was doing this (touching neck), and through my hand, as I was rubbing, suddenly, I felt danger. It was like somehow my hand felt the danger. And I thought, “I’m in danger.” I had this kind of a whole aura field of danger feeling. Then I became aware that where I was rubbing my neck, there was a big bump on my neck, nearly the size of an egg. Because my neck had been extended backwards so far as I was looking up high, this lump could suddenly be more easily seen and felt.

My friend, who was a new friend to me—I'd known her only about 6 months—was the only person I'd ever known who was my age who had cancer, and she had Hodgkin's. I'd just met her a few months before she had cancer. She already had no hair and wore a scarf. She was who I was with when I felt this danger. I asked her, "What is this? Do you see something here?" She said, "Yeah, it's kind of swollen."

I said, "I have to go right *now*." I got in my car, and I went right to the hospital emergency room. The doctor came in after waiting a long time. He was a young doctor. He looked at me, felt me, and asked me some questions. Then he said, "Okay, wait here."

Then, about half an hour later, an older doctor came in, and he did the same thing. He said, "Okay, wait here," and I was like, "Oh no, this is *not* good."

Then the old doctor came in and felt my neck, and I knew, whatever it is, it's very serious. He said, "Okay, I want to do these tests. I'm going to do a biopsy." And I knew; I already knew.

After the test, the doctor said, "Well, we put the tissue sample under the microscope, and our preliminary finding is it looks like it's Hodgkin's lymphoma, because it's a very distinct kind of cell. I've made an appointment for you already with an oncologist and radiologist, starting on Tuesday. We want to get you started right away."

Because this was Friday night, I had Saturday, Sunday, and Monday before Tuesday, right? I was in this kind of drugged, codeine state on Friday night from the biopsy. Then the next day, I said to myself, "Okay, I need to think about this." I was wondering, "Why do I have this?" I was doing something that everyone does when they have an experience that's disturbing, that is, is looking for meaning. We create a myth, a story in order to orient ourselves to the experience.

I needed to orient to what this meant to me, to having cancer. "Why is this going on in my life?"

As I was thinking about this over these 3 days, what occurred to me was that I'd had all these out-of-body experiences that had been just becoming more and more interesting to me, more and more stable, more and more meaningful to me.

My life was not unhappy at this point, really. I mean, even though I've

described all these sort of weird, traumatic things that had gone on, I was also going to school. I had a boyfriend that I liked. I had fun, good friends now. I was advancing from near poverty and no education to getting an education and earning money, being independent, having people in my life who I really enjoyed being with. I was having a sense of fun, such as working in the rhythm and blues nightclub at night, and having fun with music. I usually went out dancing three times a week with my friends. I roller-skated and rode my bike everywhere; I was very physically active. I was having a good time in my life. I was learning a lot. I was going on adventures and seeing the world. I was traveling. My life was rich in the real, physical waking life.

I also had this other experience of the out-of-body experiences. It was still going on since I was 11 or 12. It just felt like it was a normal part of my existence. I'd now met a few other people who have had these experiences that could talk about them. I now knew that this belongs to the human realm of experience that, for some reason, some people know how to do and some don't.

I know that some people think it's special, magical, and powerful, and I don't think that at all. I just think that somehow I just know how to do it. I have no idea how to teach anybody else how to do it, because no one taught me. I just found it.

I didn't think of myself as being any better than anybody else. I had a rich life now. These out-of-body experiences that I was having were continuing to bring me more and more insights about what was possible for me in life. I didn't have any sense yet of how to apply it to help others. I didn't know how to apply it in terms of making it a part of a culture that I belonged to. It was just this kind of unique thing in my life that I really enjoyed. But as I was given this diagnosis of cancer, and was contemplating this, I realized that when I was in the out-of-body state, there was something that felt so natural to me about that state that there was a sense of knowing that this was how it was going to be permanently for me at some point. I knew I was in the physical world for a time, and at some point that time would end, and that this other state would become the dominant experience as opposed to the subordinate experience. I knew that existence wasn't only what happened in the physical life, nor was it dependent on having a physical body.

As I was sitting there contemplating my diagnosis, something clicked for me; all this learning that I'd had, taught me that your thoughts and beliefs have power.

I realized it was as if somehow my own interior had said, “Okay, here, Honey, here’s your ticket. It’s called Hodgkin’s. You can go. Take this, and you can be in that state all the time. It’ll take a couple years, that’s all, if you really want to go.”

Because you don’t have to kill yourself (not that I was entertaining that idea). You’re always dying anyway, so do you want to let the dying fulfill itself, now?

At that moment, everything became very still, and I thought, okay, I had a sense of all these things that were possible that I’d been exploring. All these nights since I was 11 or 12, and becoming more and more proficient at this, and more confident in this state. *And*, I had this incredible day life. It was so bizarre; it was like there was all this past family based trauma and suffering, and there were those near murder or near rape experiences and also, joy and new opportunities—I mean, I had all these kinds of things going on here. I couldn’t make sense out of any of it. Why am I here? How did this come to be?

I knew from my experiences in this other state that somehow things move from the unmanifest to the manifest through some form of intention to be. I realized that I was still too immature, young, and inexperienced to have any clue about how that that happens *here*. I hadn’t applied any curiosity on that side of existence.

I didn’t know if I would come up with an answer about “why was I here” in physical life, but I was curious. Maybe I would only have 2 years, whether I took this treatment or not. But maybe I could use those 2 years to be curious about the material life and what this was about.

So I consciously decided not to pursue the out-of-body state anymore. On some level, I just shifted. That had been very enjoyable, but I don’t need to do that right now. I could also feel in me, some part of me feeling really sad about giving that up. Another part of me was, like, “No, let’s not simply just be in life (unconsciously.) Let’s invest some of this same kind of adventurous curiosity, joy, into discovering what this physical life is.”

So I made a myth, and the myth was this: that maybe the point of my life could be something as simple as that when I’m 86 years old, there’s a rose blooming in my neighbor’s yard, and my whole life’s purpose is to be present with it and smell its aroma that morning.

I don’t have to make anything arrogantly grand about the meaning of my

life. No, maybe it's something very quiet, like being present in the moment with what is right in front of me. Something simple like the smell of a rose. If I can achieve that, really achieve that quality of being present, maybe that's what it's all about. I decided that, "No matter what I do in life, I'm going to allow it to be heading me towards that rose."

Looking back, I always knew that that was the time when I stopped doing the out-of-body experiences and began to go and just be in the body, no matter what it was. With that, I decided, "Okay, I'm going to get the treatment." I may not live to be 86, but I was going to start practicing being present to what is, right now.

So then I began a journey of treatment, and it was awful. I had a major surgery and a lot of difficult and invasive procedures and I lost my hair, and I lost a lot of weight. I was very skinny, weak, and ill.

Terrible. Throwing up—my mouth was filled with sores from the radiation. I couldn't salivate anymore. I had to take this fake saliva to put in my mouth so I could eat something, although I was so nauseous, I was rarely hungry.

I had radiation treatment right after I was done with surgery in which they opened me up. They took my spleen out, and they took samples of my lymph nodes from just below my heart down to here (pointing to below the belly button). They moved all my organs around to find these lymph nodes and then sewed me back together.

From the radiation, I threw up every day. It was terribly painful to throw up with all these ulcers in my throat and mouth, and to throw up for hours with nothing in my body, just heaving, heaving, with radiation sickness.

And I would be hanging over the toilet in the most physical, pitiful state, and I'd be think, "This is life. This pain. This suffering is life. Be present with this." And I felt all this terrible pain and ecstasy at the same time. Like, "Oh, my God, this is life!" And there'd be this way that my body was suffering, but I was not suffering, because I was just so appreciating being in life. Just *this*, right *now*.

Every humility, every dizziness, every "I can't walk. I can't eat." This is life. I mean, I was so grateful for it all because I'd just decided, I'm going to be with this now. This was what I was really curious about. This right now. This. This. This.

All that kind of life experience that I'd talked about before gave me the

ability to claim this life. No matter all these things that had happened, this was how it was happening in this life now. This body. I didn't know where it was going to lead. I just was going to just live it, be present with this life.

I had the one place in me that, like I said, felt like this was about life, just be with exactly with what's going on right now. I just kept trying to do that, just trying to be exactly with how I felt right then. And at the same time, I felt very much like I just had to go day by day. I couldn't work. I couldn't go to school. I spent a lot of time alone. I was sick, in my room. I did a lot of reading. I did a lot of knitting. I read a lot of the *Seth* books. The *Seth* books, these were the metaphysical books I had found when I was 19 years old. They're a type of consciousness teaching. The Seth books by Jane Roberts were the first books that helped me understand my out-of-body experiences and put it into a context of consciousness. So that was very helpful for me. That supported me during this difficult period. I had very little contact with my father, none from my sister, and I didn't want any from my mother; it was just a few friends who helped me when I needed extra help. I was pretty much on my own, but I was also used to being on my own in life by then.

The treatment went from February to July. February, March, April, May, June, July. Six months. And then one day the doctors said, "Okay, this is your last treatment. You're done. Goodbye. You're healthy. You don't have to come back for treatment anymore, just follow up tests."

Amazing Synchronicity

The year I turned from 25 to 26, I was finishing nursing school. I had to drop out of nursing in order to go through treatment. When I was released from treatment, that was when another layer of emotional work began for me.

When I went back to school, the last semester was the semester that focused on maternity and psychiatric nursing. Half the term was in the hospital assisting in the maternity ward and the other half of my last semester was working in a mental hospital where people were locked up because of mental illness.

This was an amazing synchronicity for me in terms of what was going on in the inside of me and what was going on in the outside world. Jung talks about

synchronicity, about the co-incidents, incidents meaning events—the co-events—what’s going on in the inside world and the outside world.

The coincidence was that I started off working in the psychiatric ward 3 days a week. I was assigned to the men’s lock-up ward for the mentally ill; very disturbed people. The way that the state hospital worked was that the patients were locked in, so that they couldn’t leave. When I would go in to work, I would also be locked in.

At that point, I began to go through a kind of a depression. Another level began to be integrated, like, “I almost died. What died in me? Why am I alive? How did I happen to live through this? How did this happen?” So it was like a second round from the first 4 days when I was immediately diagnosed. Once I had made that decision to just be with it, I didn’t question anything anymore. I just was with it.

But now that I was done from cancer treatment, I also began to be very depressed. I began to have very dark thoughts and I began to feel this deep emotional pain that I had no image or word for. This was an incredible emotional sorrow that began to come to the surface of my awareness. I felt it. My heart was just breaking with sorrow. A lot of old emotional pains were reappearing.

I started having these images that there was a pain in my heart, and that my sorrow was so big that the only way to relieve it was if I could put a knife in my heart and let it bleed and all the pain would bleed out.

All the time, I was just walking around with this all the time. I was going to a mental institution every day to help others and getting locked up with them, but I got to go home every afternoon and they didn’t, even though I felt I was just as distressed as some of them were.

In the classroom, I was studying about psychiatric drugs and I was administering these psychiatric drugs to people in the hospital. So I knew what the side effects were. I didn’t want to take these drugs but I realized I was in a serious depression now.

So I went one day to a local clinic and it took 3 weeks until I got an appointment with the psychiatrist. He asked me a few questions and said, “Okay, I can see you have a serious issue.” I said, “Yes, I’m suicidal.” He said, “Well, here’s some drugs. I want you to take these pills, and then once they start to work—it’ll take a

couple weeks for them to be effective—then we can start some therapy for you with one of the social workers.”

I said, “That’s what you have to offer? I know what these drugs do. That’s all you have to offer me?” He said, pretty much like, “Next!” (meaning, the next person can come in now)

So I went home. This was already my third week feeling suicidal. I just looked at these pills and thought, “Is this what’s going to solve my life—my problem? Is this what’s going to make me feel like life is worth living? Is this how I’m going to get over this? No, I need to change how I think about things. I need to change the basic core way of thinking about things so I can feel differently.”

So, okay, I committed to changing that. I didn’t even know what I changed other than I absolutely decided to change. But it was really like the sun came out in me in that moment. I had been under dark, dark, heavy clouds. It was really just me saying this to myself that opened it all up, just deciding that yes, I can change. I had an appointment the following week with the psychiatrist. I went in to my appointment and I said, “Doctor, thank you so much. It’s amazing. You’ve really helped. Here’s the pills. I didn’t take them but I feel much better. You were very helpful. I’m all done.” (Laughter) And that was when I really began my inner healing process.

It began in me at that point. Like another level—my body had been healed by all the terrible things that happened, but now my spirit was being healed again. And I, at that point, finished the psychiatric rotation, then went into my maternity training. Now what happened was that all of a sudden I was watching new lives come into the world. I was watching babies be born, and I was seeing women in this kind of painful ecstasy of giving birth. I was just sitting there weeping every single time. All the doctors and nurses were very businesslike, “Okay, let’s push. Go through.” But I was like, “Oh, my God, it’s so wonderful,” just crying with happiness and awe.

It was like I was so much into life as it is beginning again, *right now*. So happy. It was a perfect experience that was completely matching what was going on in the inside. That’s the co-incident. That was the synchronicity. It was a very important time, very transformational time for me.

Soon after that, I graduated and applied for my first job. I spent the next 5 or 6 years being one kind of nurse or another, with the role of being a nurse never

really fitting me because I couldn't do it anymore. I had been a patient, and I couldn't practice nursing how hospitals required it back then. Because people (patients) were just things to be done to. Do this to the body, do that, roll over, pick up your arm. Do this.

I knew what that was like to be on the other side of the relationship. I couldn't interact with people that way, like they were a problem to be fixed. I knew now about the vulnerability that I'd never been taught or exposed to as a student nurse, nor did I see happening with any of my colleagues in nursing. At all. Or in the institution of the hospital. We were so incredibly overworked, understaffed, just running around doing one procedure after another on people. So I just kept trying to find where in the profession nursing could be the right fit for me and after about 5 or 6 years, I realized, a career in nursing doesn't belong to me.

First Marriage and an Angry Radical Feminist Possession

I got married to Charlie. Shortly after that period, I came across some feminist literature, and it was like the angry "I" in me turned on as I started reading the most radical forms of feminist literature. The angry woman in me couldn't read enough about this!

Then I was like, "Men are such jerks, are such assholes. I hate men. Did they know that men—blah, blah, blah." My poor husband, he'd go, "Uh-oh." Because he was really the sweetest, most gentle, kind person, he would never do anything like that, ever. I was completely possessed by this energy, a kind of Warrior Athena who wanted to shame and kill men! (Laughs)

I went through a period of a little less than a year of really being this angry radical feminist with killer energy; not good for our marriage! I was completely a problem. Just the most angry, self-righteous and hateful about men kind of person.

One night, it all came to a threshold. We had moved to a little house that we rented which was at the edge of town where there was a lot of light industry. I would see all these men going into these factories and they were real, blue-collar working class; not educated men, like, the worst kind in my fantasy life. I thought that all those kinds of undereducated working class laborers despised and used women. I

began to develop this fantasy that they knew I was in the house, and they were planning to rape me one night.

That night, I called out to Charlie. I had been reading in bed and Charlie was in the other room. I said, "Charlie," (whispering), "Charlie, Charlie, come here. I bet one of those men from across the street is looking into the bedroom window at me, he's hiding!" I thought I heard a noise by the window. "I bet it's one of these guys coming to rape me." He said, "Really? There's somebody out there?" For one moment, he believed me, my fantasy. I said, "Don't look out the window." He asked me, "Did you see him?" I said, "No, but I think he's out there."

By the way, what I'm describing to you is a little bit of a moment of going a bit psychotic, not really oriented to reality.

He said, "Well, what should we do?" He was starting to get a clue that I was acting crazy! He said, "Shall I call the police?" I said, "No, don't call the police because I think he might get angry and come back later. He'll be able to hide and come back, and be mad and be even more violent."

He said, "Well, I can go out there with a knife." I said, "No, don't do that, because he'll kill you and I'll be here by myself." He said, "Well what should we do?" I said, "Maybe we'll just stay here and we'll just keep the lights on, and we'll make sure the doors are all locked and windows are locked, and call if anyone comes into the house." But, he said, "Maybe what we need to do is get a gun for the future, in case we make it through tonight."

"Really? A gun? Wait a minute, no. I mean, if you have a gun, they might shoot you first." He said, "Well, we'll put the gun under your side of the bed so if anyone shoots me; in the meantime, you can shoot them." I thought about it for a few seconds. And I thought, "Well, what that means is I'd have to take a gun and shoot somebody. I don't want to do that. I don't want to do that to *anybody*."

He said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "Well, once again, the problem's my beliefs here. I'm having all these fears because I'm believing something that's causing me this fear. The only way I'm going to be safe is if I don't believe this thought anymore."

He said, "Okay, can you do that?" I was like, "Yeah, actually I can, because this is kind of crazy, isn't it?" He said, "Well, what do you think?" I said, "No

I think this is really kind of crazy, this whole thing I've been on for the last year. This is like the storm. This is the culmination. I think I have to be done with this whole thing because it's not leading to me any place positive. The only place it leads me to is feeling afraid in my house and needing a gun just in case—and that's just not the world I want to believe in. I've been educating myself for the last year that that's the world I live in. I'm just done with this. I can't do it anymore."

So I just stopped. I stopped believing it. It was like there was this thought that I had been really possessed with, but I just realized that the thought was creating my experience completely. I just decided to let go of the thought; not be identified with it anymore. It was just a thought. It seemed true until I decided to see it as a thought. That's exactly what we're doing in Voice Dialogue. It's completely gone. It's just like a thought, and, if the thought comes up, it's like, "That's just a thought that has nothing to do with the world I want to live in." There might indeed be some truth to this thought, but I can't act as if it's the only truth about the world, or about men.

I won't deny that women are raped. I *could* get raped by somebody. It was about just not holding the idea that this was imminent and inevitable or I that had to watch out for this at every turn, or that this was what was living in every man that I meet. I just decided that that was crazy thinking. I'd been reading books by women who were equally possessed, who were focusing on one aspect only. It's worth knowing these things but you don't have to live by it. It's both true and not true. I had just been on the side of it being true. So I gave it up. We just led an ordinary life together from there on.

The Beginning of Workshop Journey: Crystals and Lesbian's Festival

After I was done with all nursing jobs, I got a job from someone who introduced me to this guy who was a real hippy. He was opening up a crystal store down in the Village, which was a hippy-part of Manhattan at the time. I would go work and manage his crystal store and the crystals—they were beautiful.

One fun thing was that he would take me with him on buying trips at a big warehouse of crystals. The rule was, you had to buy them in prefilled wooden crates. Still, it was very cheap. I would go with him and help pick out the things for the store.

He would also allow me to buy a crate for myself, because I thought, “Oh, this is so pretty,” but you can’t just buy that one; you have to buy the whole group. But okay, it was still cheap. So I began having my own collection.

Now Charlie’s sister, Joan, was the only lesbian I’d ever met in my life. That’s how clueless I was then! Joan said to me and Charlie one day, “I’m going to this women’s music festival that I’ve to been before. If you, J’aime, want to come with me, they also have an area where people can sell crafts and stuff, and you can probably sell all those extra crystals you’ve been selling. You could go and sell them there and get rid of all your extra stock.”

I asked, “What do you think, Charlie? Should I do this?” and he said, “Sure, go. Have a good time.” So I went with Joan and her girlfriend. Now I know two lesbians! It was halfway across the United States, in Michigan. It was on a big piece of land in a forest and in the middle of the forest there was an open field. It was in the summertime, August. There were these big women who were guards to check to see who was coming, “Do you have your tickets?” “We have our tickets.” “Okay, you can go in.”

We drove in some more and more people checked our tickets. There was very high security. We drove 5 minutes to get inside to the interior. When we went to the registration table to get our things, everyone was naked, or they had just shorts on but no tops. I was like, “What is *this*?” And it was all only women. I asked my sister-in-law, “Why aren’t they wearing clothes?” She said, “Oh, because there’s no men allowed here, they don’t have to worry about being sexually harassed. So we can just be free.”

There was a music stage, and there were camping areas, and there was the area where the crafts people are. Joan and her girlfriend dropped me off and said goodbye. I didn’t see them for the whole 4 days. They just left me! Slowly I realized as I got in there that this is a *lesbian* women’s festival!

There were about 12,000 women that come from all over the country and other countries, and they were all lesbians. I never realized that there could be so many! I wondered, “Well, what will they think if *I’m* here? Maybe I shouldn’t tell them I’m not a lesbian or that I’m married. Maybe they’ll get mad at me or something or kick me out.” I decided to keep my mouth closed. “Oh, but I’d better take my shirt

off because otherwise they'll suspect me." (Laughing)

I ended up taking all my clothes off and I just tied a scarf low around my waist. I was NOT used to this idea of going around naked! I set up my booth, which was very simple. There were people who built up these fancy sales booths with wood and metal structures. I had a little suspended tarp for shade, using a little blanket that was being held up by some poles. That was it. I had some blankets on the ground to sit on. It was the most simple thing that was there, because I was completely unprepared to be there in every way you can think of.

It turned out that my booth became one of the most popular booths because it was right at this time that crystals were becoming super popular, and I was the only one that had them. I had, at all times, rows—three people deep, all around me, of women waiting to come in and sit next to me and ask me questions about crystals and to buy things. I mean, there were maybe 100 vendors there, and I was the complete newcomer who was the secret straight person, who was very shy, because she was pretty much naked and talking to lesbians all day!

On the third day, two women come by, and they said, "We're the workshop organizers, and we're having people ask us how come you're not in the workshop schedule. We're wondering if you can just do one, even though it's not in the event book, and if you'd be willing, we can put up a little sign board announcing it because people have been asking us." I was aghast! "No. I don't have anything to teach. I'm not prepared to do anything. I'm just here to sell these crystals."

They said, "Well, I mean, all you're doing all day long is answering questions about them, and maybe you can just go and answers questions about them to people as a group, at once." Again, I said no, "I don't think so. I have nothing important to say." I was also feeling completely shy. Plus, I was running this thing all by myself, and I was packed with people the whole time. "I can't go. I have to be here." "We'll bring people to work here for you while you're gone, and they'll be very honest selling things for you. The workshop period is just for 2 hours, please could you do it? There will just be a little sign. There will just be a few people. At least we can say we did it." So, I surrendered, "All right. Okay."

The next day, I walked by and I saw a little sign, "J'aime, crystal talk." I thought, "Oh, God." So I went over to Area C, and there was like a big group that was

just ending at 2 o'clock. I went over there waiting for them to go. I guessed that they were still just visiting with each other after the previous workshop had ended, and I realized it was already after 2:00. Maybe I should say something, so they could leave and whoever might want to come, we could find each other and sit together.

I was holding my little basket of crystals and speaking with low voice, "Excuse me. There's going to be a little gathering here now talking about crystals, so those of you who are finished with the earlier workshop, would you be willing to go elsewhere now and have your conversations there, so we can find each other for this one?" They asked, "What is this one?" I said, "It's a little crystal workshop."

They were like, "Oh," and they *all* sat down. About 100 women sat down, staring at me, and there I was, naked. I thought, "I'm supposed to talk now? How is this happening to me? How did I get to this place where I'm supposed to be giving a public speech, and I'm naked? This is a joke that people talk about. I'm not dreaming this. This is *actually* happening. I'm *actually* naked here, sitting in front of a 100 people who are looking at me, expecting me to say something interesting. I have no idea what I'm going to say. I wasn't planning on having a workshop. They asked me to talk to a few people. *How did this happen!?*"

They sat there looking at me, waiting. My legs were shaking. I asked, "Are you all really here for the crystal workshop? You are? Okay. Then I began to talk at rocket speed. Well, I brought a bunch of crystals here, and there's different kind of crystals here and in my hand I have an amethyst, and I have quartz crystals, and have—some of them are rutilated even, these come from places in Brazil where they're rutilated, and then there's more! I have aquamarines, and I have smoky crystals, and I have citrines, and" I was talking at this very high speed, practically incoherent with nervousness! My hands and legs were cold and I was shaking all over.

I looked up, and something in me saw some looks on people's faces. Then I heard a voice in the back of my head, "You're losing them!" I stopped talking. (pauses) Then I said, "I have never spoken to anybody in public before and I'm really, really scared; I can't do this right now like this. I have to stop and ground myself or I can't even stand anymore. I'm very nervous talking to you, and I'm going to sit down and just meditate for a little bit." And they were like, okay and they also began to sit upright in a meditation position, legs crossed. I closed my eyes!

Then I said to myself, “You do not have to stand up again. You can sit here and meditate for as long as you want. You don’t have to do any of this. Just enjoy the sun. Enjoy the feeling of the earth. You can sit here for the whole 2 hours if you need to. You do not have to do any of it or, if you want to, if you’re ready, you can do anything you want.”

So I just sat there until I completely calmed down for maybe 10 or 15 minutes, just breathing and hearing the wind in the trees, the smell of the summer grasses going by. Somebody coughed over there. I was just meditating on being right there. Eventually, I felt inside myself a little voice that said, “Okay. Let’s go, I’m ready.”

So I stood up again, keeping my waist scarf on! I said, “You know, I was not prepared to say anything about crystals, but the only thing I can do is tell you why I like them and what they mean to me. I don’t have any, like, healing voodoo to share with you. I’m not going to tell you that crystals cure cancer, because I don’t believe any of that. This is why I like them. That’s all I can do is just share with you what goes on with me as a person with my appreciation of crystals and what my journey is.”

I just began to talk about energy. We began to talk about mindfulness. I began to talk about having a relationship with the Earth as a conscious being. I was drawing from the energy work I’d been doing and the shamanic work I’d been doing. I was, for the first time articulating how it was all happens for me in a way that I never really thought about before, but it had already begun to form in me. I just talked about that.

I talked for maybe an hour, and then I said, “I think that’s it. Anybody have anything you want to share? Questions?” Then I began to facilitate a conversation amongst these people. After the time was up, I was mobbed. “That was great! Thank you so much! Would you ever come to my city to do this?” I said, “Do what?” “Oh, I would sponsor you to come and I’ll arrange a workshop for you.”—“A workshop on what?”—“Just whatever it was you said, whatever you do; that would be great.”

“Well, I’ve never done that, but if you think that this is something that’s helpful to people, yeah, I’d come and help. I would do that as long as I get to wear my clothes!” And they said, “Yes.” So from that day, that experience, I got invited all over

the place.

After that, I began teaching workshops, and I was also on the circuit for these festivals every year for almost 8 years. I learned a lot!

Three Main Different Strings

It was while I was still in New York that I began learning Voice Dialogue. At the same time, I also began to work directly with two other people. One was Michael Harner who was teaching cross-cultural shamanic studies, and Barbara Brennan, who is an energy healer. So there were three different strings that got started around the same time and stayed with me for quite awhile.

Also, I was still a strong reader of Seth books. Once, I was flying someplace, and I had a Seth book with me. I had met Jane Roberts and Rob Butts, her husband, because they lived very close to where I grew up. It was this lovely experience for me. I was a young girl, all nervous to meet my heroes. She was very sweet. I spent, maybe, a couple hours with them. Afterwards, I continued to correspond with them.

So a couple of years later when I was married to Charlie we had a Halloween party. Just for fun, I had sent Jane and Rob an invitation. I knew they would never come because they were in another city, many hours away, plus, I didn't really know them socially. I sent it just to say hello and say what I'm doing. I got a postcard back from Rob saying Jane had just died. That was a real shock. I hadn't realized she was that ill.

So anyway, there I was in the plane flying someplace, and I was reading a Seth book, and I happened to have that postcard tucked in the book and I read it again. In that moment, I opened up to my sorrow at both her death and, I realized, she was my way to connect with this consciousness teacher, Seth, who's really been an important teacher to me, and now that she's dead, that connection is over. Sure, there were all their books, but now there wouldn't be any more. I could feel myself start to feel sorry for myself, selfishly. I felt sorry for her and for Rob but I was also feeling sorry for myself.

As I was starting to feel that, I have this aware ego moment. I realized that

I was thinking about how I didn't have access to my teacher anymore, and I had turned it into a "poor-me story." On the *other* side I was remembering the actual teachings that I'd learned from Seth which was that your thoughts create your reality, which is also very much embedded in the work I do now.

I realized that, once again, I'm having a thought that leads to this whole way of feeling that I'm going to head down if I think it this way. Or, I could choose *not* to feel cut off and sorry for myself and instead, act on the belief that I have everything I need. I don't have to believe that life has robbed me of anything, and then feel that I'm being deprived. So there were those two selves coexisting in me. "I won't have enough /I'm being abandoned by what I need" *and*, "I have enough. I live in an abundant, full universe where everything I need and want is already there for me." I just felt both sides. I realized that I really do have a choice to make here in this moment about which of these two ways I'm going to go with. I decided I'm just not going to keep feeling sorry for myself; I let go of holding on to those poor me feelings.

I think the value of these experiences that I'm sharing with you is that—I'm just using my own experiences—I really do feel like what the Stones talk about with the aware ego process is something that's already available within the natural realm of human experience. That you can be in a crisis moment or what feels like a crisis moment, and that moment itself can wake you up, or you could somehow realize, "I'm either in this" or "you can stay with it" or "you could wake up from it." Voice Dialogue facilitation gives you a lot of practice to help you develop that insight.

So I feel like I've had several experiences with this already. So by the time I began to encounter the Voice Dialogue work, it was already somewhat familiar to me. The basic notion was already something that I had experienced as helpful, but without any framework or any kind of way of knowing of how I might actively cultivate that in myself, which is really what the practice of Voice Dialogue has given to me and to others.

It felt rather serendipitous that I had these kinds of wake-up moments. Back then, they originated a lot from my exposure to the Seth teachings. But I didn't have an actual engaged practice to build that with, which is what Voice Dialogue gave me later on.

Also, I had been in a small group with Barbara Brennan that met in her

Manhattan apartment every Wednesday for a couple of years. She was just getting started. Now she has a 4-year energy healing school. At that time, we were just learning about moving energy, training in that. Her offering was twofold. One aspect was that she said she was a psychic channel, the way Jane Roberts was. She would speak for this spiritual entity that would come through her and offer teachings sometimes. Through her ordinary consciousness, she used the yogic map of chakras Annie Besant's concepts about energy fields with the idea that you could manipulate someone's energy field to heal them.

So for her, as a clairvoyant—clairvoyant means you can see energy fields and auras—she would look at somebody who had a problem and say, “Okay, in the fourth aura of your third chakra there's a tear, and we're going to go in energetically and sew it up.”

There were four or five of us in this group that met with her a couple hours every Wednesday afternoon. We did a lot of meditation and a type of trance work. But what began to happen was that nobody, no matter how much they tried, could see anything that she saw, even though she was giving us all these lessons. However, we *were*, in our own ways, picking up on information. She wanted to teach us her way but we all would get it through different channels of perception.

In my case, I had the impression that I was actually seeing into the body and seeing the structures inside the body. It wasn't like auras, but it was like somehow I was seeing like a microscope sees. We each were practicing perceiving energy in nonordinary ways.

The value of that was I spent quite a great deal of time paying attention to energy, energy intelligence, energy perception. It turns out that I'm not that interested in being a “healer” doing energy work to do something to somebody. At a certain level, I don't believe it's possible. I mean, I don't believe that we have control over other people's body and energy that way. There's resonance, there's agreements where things can happen, but I don't think that that's healing. It doesn't mean that you can't do an energy number on somebody. You can. I'm more oriented to what does the person transform into *on their own*, and how do they transform their own experience in relationship to their own energy field and their own energy in the system? Whether it's psychological, physical, emotional levels. That's really what I'm most interested

in, how to support that.

I also got involved with Michael Harner because I happened to read his book, and his book was about his experiences with different shamans in South America. One of the things he mentioned in his book is how shamans would go out of their body and help people. I thought, “Oh, maybe there IS a helpful use for this. I could let this come back in if I could apply it in a way that was useful.” Because I’ve never had a sense of how to do this in a way that’s useful. So maybe he had something to share. So I started going to his trainings, his workshops. He used a different method that was not going out of the body but was an internal journey; kind of like a guided meditation where he tells you the route, and then they play the drums and you just imagine that you’re going on that spiritual journey.

For quite a few years, well over a decade, I either went to his programs or when I moved to Portland some years later I began to sponsor him and some of his teachers that he trained to come to Portland. I was the local organizer in all of Portland for anything to do with cross-cultural, modern shamanism. Shamanism also appealed to me because it spoke about a kind of a link with nature, which was always very important to me.

Reach out to Hal and Sidra Stone: Reconnected with Voice Dialogue

I wanted to do something more with Voice Dialogue. I realized that my time in New York hadn’t really been enough to prepare me to teach any of it. I couldn’t even really be a facilitator of it, so for me to try to introduce it to people was not right. I realized, oh, my thought that I wanted to share this really stemmed from the fact that I wanted to have this actively developing in my life still. So that was when I called Hal and Sidra and said, “I’d like to train with you. I’d like to become serious about learning this work and understanding it and using it for myself and for others in some way at some point.”

They invited me to come to their next training. This was when they were doing their SummerKamps, which were 2-week long immersions. I had it in my mind that I’d be learning it and that maybe I could pass it on. Once I got there however, I realized, “No, I’m here for me and my process.” This was way bigger than I could turn

around and pass on right away. In fact, they were introducing me to such a deeper level of what I encountered already, I really got more clear about how this was a consciousness work practice, not just the interesting play of different selves and energies. I mean, discovering inner selves was very interesting, but it really didn't make much of a change in me. When I went to the trainings, I began to watch people's sessions, and I had sessions, and there was much more focus to the work, and I was getting direct teachings from Hal and Sidra every night in a large group.

They had maybe 80 people at a retreat center and maybe 15 to 20 of them were people, most of them were psychotherapists already, who had just learned it with them for 2 or 3 years before, who were already helping to staff these events. So everyone was sort of learning together. I had a really rich time. It was very good.

At first it was more like I started with watching people make inner shifts and watching people make contact with different selves that the Stone's had been teaching about. I was getting to see the lived expression of these selves in a variety of people and see how they looked the same or different.

I also started to really be introduced to the whole field of vulnerability. This had never been in any of the things I'd done with Anna in New York (the first person who introduced me to Voice Dialogue). I also experienced the transformative potential of engaging and then separating from vulnerability as opposed to just reenacting things that you felt wounded around. I still had this idea in my mind—I don't think it changed for quite a while—of that idea that vulnerability was the same thing as your painful memories, your painful places. I still had those tied up together with the term vulnerability or being vulnerable. It took investing in my own work to be able to sense a difference.

What I was seeing is that people could go into a state of something that was very moving or very emotional, and then they could get out of it. It wasn't that they were shutting down; they were just sort of moving over and then being able to reflect on that and I was too.

There was a woman—she's still doing Voice Dialogue in New York. Her name is Dassie Hoffman. She's a contemporary and life-long friend of Sidra. Dassie was also on staff at the SummerKamps. Dassie had a background in dance therapy. She was playing with Voice Dialogue in a way where she was having people just

describe what they wanted to explore, and they would move over and she put some music on. She had a “boom box.” She had a big pile of tape cassettes, and she’d say, “I think this music would go good,” and she’d pick out a tape. Bzzzzz. She’d fast forward and she’d have you move into that internal self and then you just moved physically over AS that self in motion. The guidance was to just move in any way that that self wants to move, and here’s some music to support it.

I watched somebody else do a session, and I thought, “That’s for me. I have to do that.” So I signed up for one of my sessions with her. I had as many sessions with her as I could have, because I would go into just the energetic of the selves in the body. I really came to understand just how much those selves were real without words. They didn’t need language to explain themselves. That was just eye opening for me, that you could just move and be in self. If she saw that I was starting to shift to a different self; she’d say, “Stop.” She’d put a different piece of music on to kind of hold the space for the new one. Then she’d have me come back to “the middle” and shift my energy out of selves, to the witness state. Next she’d ask, “Now, what can you say about what happened over there.” *That’s* when I talked.

That was really good for me because I had such an analytical mind, a rational mind that was just always getting in the way of my exploration, and I hadn’t had any idea about that yet. My rational mind, as a self, hadn’t been facilitated yet. So it was very helpful for me.

My relationship with Hal and Sidra at first was distant, because it was such a large group; they weren’t that personally accessible to me. I was checking them out as much as I was exploring the work more fully; I really wanted to get a sense of what are they like as people. How do the founders of this work operate as people? It was kind of hard to tell because they weren’t that available interpersonally. But I felt intuitively that they were trustworthy.

In those days, my general sense about Sidra was that she was very smart, warm, and friendly. She had this very effervescent, kind, mother energy and while I didn’t interact with her much yet, I felt easy about her presence. Hal was a lot more introverted in himself, thoughtful and removed. I went every year to their summer camps and trainings, and I saw that difference between them for a number of years. It wasn’t until many years later that I came to learn from Hal that his very strong

impersonal energy, what everyone saw in him as being removed, was in part because he was also not well physically. First, being an introvert, and running such a big program like that takes a lot; it was very demanding and hard. It took probably every bit of energy he had to do this. He didn't have much energy left over to "schmooze" people with. There were a lot of people at the SummerKamps who were really taken aback by Hal's impersonal energy.

It was certainly not intentional to have this effect, but it had, I think, a potentially helpful effect for many people because coming in contact with that kind of impersonal or even withdrawn energy brought up all kinds of issues that people had in themselves with their own fathers or with cold people in general. They had a safe place to work it through. They inquired within themselves, if they were doing the work, "What is that about for me if I'm judging that? Some part of me is afraid of that."

As I got to know them both over all these years, I also continued to watch them evolve. Hal, as his health got better and his own life and work continued to progress, became very energetically accessible, sweet and masterful at teaching energy linkage. I certainly became less triggered by it as I separated from those parts of me that projected on him. I remember there being times when he would say to me (because sometimes I could also be impersonal or kind of withdrawn at times) and he'd say, "If you're not linking with me, I'm not that interested. I'm really looking to see who's capable of linkage, making contact." I understood this to mean that he wasn't implying not to have boundaries but, can I be present? He's really good at reading that and he's been helpful to me in calling me on that.

From them, I also learned a great many things about what it's like to be a teacher, because they were my first real teachers, my biggest, almost lifelong teachers. Not only were they, in their work, helping me in very practical ways to become more fully human, I also learned through observation, the kind of ethical and responsible and present ways that they carried the art of being teachers, and that was really helpful for me, because the teacher is an archetype that I've always had available to me my whole life. To have mentors in how to more consciously operate from this archetype was really good for me.

I had been on staff after having gone to SummerKamp for 3 or 4 years. I

was a junior staff person for the last summer camp, which was my first time being on staff. So, that means I'd been actively involved in learning and experiencing Voice Dialogue for 5 years or so. As I recall it, I believe that the Stones put all their staff members on junior staff twice before being senior staff.

After I'd been on staff with them for a while, I started to feel like I could share it with people. Well, I didn't know what I was doing really. I mean, *they* never taught you how to do this, they only modeled it. So through the store, I would just announce a workshop about "getting to know your selves," and people would come. I'd do a very short introduction in an afternoon and I would then demonstrate Voice Dialogue facilitation. In those early days, I was trying to get people to facilitate each other right away, and they didn't know what they were doing, because I was not a good teacher at all yet!

With Voice Dialogue, I was much slower at bringing it to Portland, because I really didn't feel that I was ready to teach it that much. My little attempts at it were not good because I wasn't giving people enough background. I was better at facilitating than I was at teaching. What I was starting to do was to facilitate some people with Voice Dialogue because I needed to practice.

I told people, "I'm learning still. I've been doing it, I've been experiencing it for this amount of time, but I know I have to practice here, and I need *a lot* of practice." So I did Voice Dialogue facilitation at first just for free. I also felt like people wouldn't get mad at or disappointed with me if I wasn't helpful yet! Because I could just fully say, "Look, I'm just learning, so I hope it's helpful, and maybe it's not but then you won't feel like you wasted your money on it, or you just wasted your time. Do it as a service to me." So I did it like that. Then I could always check with Hal and Sidra or more experienced facilitators when I'd bump into problems. It was helpful and very fortunate to have the creators of the work be my mentors.

Shamanism: Connect Human to The Nature

At the same time, I was also very involved with the shamanic group that I had started here. So these were quite parallel activities. I was hosting Michael Harner's work, Sandra Ingerman, Leslie Conton. They were all part of the Foundation

for Shamanic Studies. I had met Michael and done his workshop in New York in 1985, maybe, and so when I moved here to Portland, I was still interested in that work and still curious about what was it that shamanism might have to bring to modern consciousness, mostly in terms of having a kind of soulful relationship with nature, like having a kind of soulful creative, intelligent relationship with nature, and not from the scientific framework but from a very personal relationship. The idea of shamanism is very similar to animism. Animism is the belief that everything in nature has a spirit—the land and trees and water, the sky, the wind. Everything has its own kind of animating spirit. That's a kind of belief system worldwide amongst different kinds of tribal or original peoples.

Shamanism is one further aspect of animism which is the idea that some people are either born with or develop a gift for or can be trained in how to communicate with those spirits so that you can receive messages from the spirits to the people. You can also bring messages or requests or prayers to the spirits; so you can have this kind of conversation with nature. A shaman is really a go-between, between the spirit world and the human practical ordinary world. They do this usually through prayers or altered states of consciousness. They have different mechanisms for achieving those altered states of consciousness.

I was very interested in this. Over the long history of human beings, we can see all through history, archeology, and cave arts, that human beings have done this for some useful purpose. Why have we lost this? Could it be useful to modern people to have this kind of relationship, especially given how divorced people feel from nature? Could this be another way of bringing our heart back into relationship with the heart of the earth? That's what gave me a lot of juice for pursuing shamanism.

The other thing about that that gave me juice for pursuing that was early on, I'd had all those out-of-body experiences (oobe's), and when I'd read about shamanism, one of the things that Michael had written about was, in some places, the shaman would travel in his or her spirit body over distances to gain information. Because I had had all these out-of-body travels, I thought, "Oh, well, maybe here's somebody who can kind of give me an understanding of how that could have been useful. Not that I'm doing it anymore, and I'm not sure I *want* to do it anymore." But,

how was that kind of talent or gift that I somehow stumbled on, that is useful in different kinds of cultures, be useful in my own?

That was the reason that I was curious about this. Because that's the only other place I'd ever heard anyone talk about that people travel out of their body for some purpose that's useful for others. I mean, I had gotten a lot of mileage out of what it had done for me, but there's a certain point where it's just not about me all the time. So I was still doing many of those workshops through the FSS. I ended up creating quite a big community of people around that. My initial purpose of hosting groups was that I wanted people to play and inquire; I wanted to explore this, and I wanted to explore this with others. I didn't want this as a solo process.

I pursued that for maybe 12 or 15 years, from when I first started. Then I stopped it. I think the main reason was that Michael had a 3-year program where people met twice a year for 3 years on retreat. I kept waiting for when the "real training" would be offered where we do the out-of-body travels in service to others.

I thought this was going to be the place where that happened so I signed up for the 3-year program. On the very first day as we were waiting for everyone to arrive before we got started, I was sitting out in the patio with some other people. Michael wasn't there yet. People came from all over. I sat there listening to everyone introduce themselves, and every single person introduced themselves talked about how important they were back in their home cities. I was really disappointed. I thought, "These are going to be my colleagues for the next 3 years, people who need to impress others with how important they are?"

As I was sitting around these tables listening to these people brag, I felt, "That's not what this is about for me. I don't think this is what it is about in shamanic service." For me, it's like the more you do this, the less you take yourself seriously as a special or important person. I wanted to know, is there a way that this thing that I knew how to do be helpful to people? Then Michael came in, and I had a chance to talk with him alone, really, for the first time ever. I asked him, "Michael, part of my involvement with this work is because I had these oobe's since I was 11 or 12. They were very important for me, but I never had any teacher or guidance, and I've always wanted to have a sense of how do you help people with this. Now, I want to know, for you: What are your out-of-body experiences like? How long have you been doing

this? How do you do this for others?"

He said, "I've never had an out-of-body journey." "What do you mean never?" He said, "No, no, no, you don't need to do that; I don't really know what that is, an out of body experience." I thought, "This is why I'm here, and now I'm here in a 3-year program with somebody who doesn't have this experience at all, let alone is able to guide me if I were to allow myself to do this again in a way" I was not going to do it just to do it. If I do it again, it has to be something that's helpful. So I thought that this path was done for me.

I went back home, and I spent a little longer with my group that I led, and I realized that they all were looking to me to be their shaman, and to me that was not what I was about or doing. Doing this kind of work had set into motion the idea in people's minds that I had some special power and I was going to fix them. I saw that was the way that this system was likely to work, at least in a modern Western context.

I began to become really aware that because shamanism isn't really native to my culture anymore, it's operating in a fantasy world in many ways. The fantasies that happen with projection, "Oh, you must really have magic powers." Even though I would be saying was, "What I'm trying to do, in shamanism, is the shaman isn't the one with the power. The power resides in all of us, in nature. I'm trying to learn about being a go-between with that." It's not native in my culture to see the power in nature instead, most people see it in the human being, because that's what the Christian tradition is about, "God gave man dominion over the earth." That's in Genesis 1, of the Bible.

I had learned a lot about power issues in these groups, and I realized I wasn't comfortable handling those projections and I wasn't skillful enough or knowledgeable enough yet about how to dismantle them with people and still be helpful. I was faced with this: What is *my* way? How have I let myself go down this path that doesn't feel like it fully belongs to me?

I had many people who were in this community that I saw regularly, and I just said, "I'm done. It's your turn to keep the circles going. Other people can lead them. I'm not going to be the container for this anymore. Whatever it is that's of value to me, is going to return to my personal life and get reabsorbed and transformed into a new expression somehow."

Because side by side, I was holding Voice Dialogue and Voice Dialogue was “winning” now in me because it was more in alignment with how I prefer to be in service with people, which is: how do I help this person be more aware of what’s going on with them. I can help people with this; I can support this process. This process does work if people *actually do it*.

One important thing I got from shamanism personally was that I really began paying attention to nature as this kind of living phenomenon that’s always emanating truth and beauty. Now that’s been brought into my work with Voice Dialogue, *a lot*, with “the principles of nature and psyche.” It comes directly from that kind of sensibility that I was grooming in myself during those explorations, although I didn’t know it at the time.

The Experience of Aware Ego Process

Hal and Sidra had been teaching about the aware ego process, and that wasn’t clear to me yet. I hadn’t really experienced it, in the way that they teach. It’s hard, watching somebody else having a session, to tell what someone’s internal experience is. It’s more about how do people start to shift over time. There was this guy at summer camp, another participant, who was married and he had this total puppy crush on me. He was following me around and just gave me these big eyes, and he’d just want to hang on me. I was so like “Get away from me! What are you doing?” He had an unbelievably huge Pleaser self that was also incredibly invasive without him knowing it. Personally, I had really disowned that kind of energy a long time ago, so he just made me feel creeped out around him. Then, I defensively started getting really mean about this because I vulnerably felt, “Would you just leave me alone? I need a little privacy now.” I also wondered, “Wow, why am I feeling this?—I have something to do with this. This is mine to work on too.”

Part of me felt very unsafe around him. I finally told one of the staff facilitators about this, and she was having a session with him anyway. I had told him, “Look, I’m having to do some work around this. You might want to do some work around this too.” He, in his Pleaser energy, responded with “Really? What do you think I should work on?” “*Your Pleaser!*” I could feel this mean teenager in me

coming out around him. I wanted to stick a pin in him and that just made me feel terrible about myself.

He sat down for his facilitation and he said, “Well, I think I should work with my Pleaser.” I was watching the session with a couple other people. He stayed in his Pleaser everywhere he went, no matter what self he was supposedly getting facilitated around. Then his facilitator invited his vulnerable self to be present.

His Pleaser went over and started making this fake crying and wiping away pretend tears. I mean, it wasn’t even really crying. It was like he was making sounds like a person does when they’re crying, but he wasn’t really crying. He was faking crying. If I hadn’t been so triggered, it would have been very entertaining!

I was like, “Really? Isn’t she going to say something about this?” And she did. She said, “Who’s doing this crying right now?” and he was just kind of “caught in the act.” She ended up very skillfully facilitating the self that was doing everything and he got it. I watched him separate from that self. I watched his consciousness open up in relationship to that Pleaser self and I saw him separate from it; that is, dis-identify from it.

The moment he separated from it, I felt completely safe with him. I felt, “Wow, you’re a human being; I could get to know you.” I had myself now some freedom to let go of my own reactivity. That self in either of us wasn’t running the show anymore. I still knew I had to do my own work around this self because I had a button in me, saying, “Don’t be a pleaser that way around me.” In a man, in particular.

We became friends after that. I mean, really friends. After SummerKamp, he invited me to his home with his wife, and he and I went canoeing together, and I felt completely different. It was so clear what happens when someone separates from the energy; that’s when they really change. It was that dramatic.

It was the second year that I went there that I had my aware ego process really activated. It took me the second time of being at the 2 week SummerKamp that I really had a clear separation from a self, that big, primary self.

It was almost at the end of SummerKamp. We were in our small group morning circle. There, we could share dreams, or we could talk about things we learned or observed. It was my turn, and I was talking about something. The group facilitator said, “Excuse me. I just want to interrupt you for a second. I don’t know if

you noticed this or not, but there's a certain self that's telling the story." I hesitated, and I was a little nervous and embarrassed because I was just talking without any consciousness of who was talking. I was only conscious of what I was wanting to report.

The fact that she was even saying that there's a self telling the story, in that moment, captured my curiosity. The first experience was, "Uh, what is she seeing that I don't know about myself?" Then, I was a little nervous. I said, "Really?" High high-pitched voice.

She said, "Yes, I'm only saying this because I recognize this self because I also have had this self as a very big self all my life, and I'm very good at spotting it now. It's a voice that we could call the Rational Mind."

This woman was also a long time Buddhist practitioner and meditator. Because of that, I had a built-in respect for her, and I already had an experience of her basic kindness. I didn't feel like she was judging me.

Next she said, "When the Rational Mind gets to telling the story, it's like a drone, just like this boring monotone voice that's very much like reading a report out loud." I could have really taken offense at this, but I knew it was true. I felt like she'd really nailed me, that self. It suddenly felt like there was a big spotlight on it. Fortunately in that moment, rather than trying to defend myself or explain how she might be wrong or misunderstanding me. I blurted out, "Will you facilitate that self, please?" She said, "Yes, I'd be happy to."

What happened next is that, that primary self, the Rational Mind, because it was a big defense system, became really strong. I sat down with her, me as this Rational Voice, and I/it said, "You know, I'm not sure that I'm that clear about what we're talking about anymore, but I'm willing to go along with it, for you, in case it's helpful to people. I don't know that I know how to do what you're going to ask me to do." She said, "That's okay. I already feel that the Rational Self is here, so why don't you move over, and I'll just talk to this part of you."

I moved over to the right. Because I'd done all that work with Dassie, with the body energy before, I had this capacity developed in me already about how to energetically shift. As I moved over, I felt like one of those stone heads from Easter Island. I felt I was like this big stone head, planted on the ground, whose lips could

move and who felt disdain for this whole thing; “You don’t really understand anything because I’m J’aime. Yes, she has selves, but when you talk about talking to her Mind Self, the foundational nature of being *is* the mind, and there’s nothing to separate from or there won’t be anything left. I’m here to learn about those selves and to help her become a more *human* being, but I am the orchestrator. I’m in charge. I manage her life by making sense of it. I am the provider of understanding about the nature of reality, her personal reality in the world. That’s not a self. I’m the basic living force that she came into life with.”

And bless her heart, Berenda says, “Uh-huh. So do you have a sense of how far back you go in J’aime’s life?” And this Rational Mind self says, “You know, I know that’s a trick question. It’s a question that’s designed to make it seem like I’m a self that came in, whereas I’ve always been there. I will be there when she’s dead. I’ve been there before she came into life. I’m always here. Sure, I’ve been very helpful when she was young because her family life was really kind of crazy, and I helped her make sense of it but I am always there.” It had a kind of finger-wagging attitude.

I don’t remember what else she asked that self, but at some point, she said, “Do you have any objections for me to try and facilitate if there’s something that happens in her when you’re not there orchestrating?” This mind self had this kind of, “Does not compute!” feeling, (in deep computer voice). Like the computer mind was searching all the data fields, scrolling through: “There is nothing besides me.”

So this magnanimous Rational Mind self said, “Just to prove my point, I’ll let you try and you’ll see that there’s nothing else there but me.” She said, “Okay, well, thank you, and if it doesn’t go anywhere or you feel like it’s not working for you in any way, we can always stop it.” So she’s really talking to the Rational Mind but also as a protector, because all primary power selves have that function: being a protector/controller about reality.

So I moved back to the center, and I didn’t have a lot of separation from it yet, but what I did have was this feeling of some sadness. There was just this vague feeling of sadness. She spotted that, my facilitator. She said, “Well, could you just move over and be with whatever this other energy is that’s here?” So I moved over again to a new place, feeling into the sadness but I’m also now really preoccupied with sensation. I really started to feel this thick lump of living clay that has not been

enjoyed fully for a long time or engaged in a particular kind of way. It doesn't mean I hadn't been physically active but, through that inner self, I was experiencing life primarily as a sensate creature that's also an emotional creature. It was the part of me that was touching into life as a body and as an emotional field. Sadly, I had already gotten away from those kinds of experiences of life!

I was flooded with a feeling of my hand on my leg, the movement of my hand on my leg, and the sensation of touch and proprioception. I could feel my body sitting there in space and if I turned my head, I felt as if space was holding my head, turning itself with me. It was like currents of life moving all around me and through me and I started to feel quite ecstatic. It was almost so overwhelmingly joyful to just be breathing in life.

Then I—this new self—looked at her, and was struck by how beautiful it is to sit in the presence of another human being. My eyes welled up with tears, and I looked around. There were all these people staring in rapt attention. I felt like there was this love streaming from my body to be with them and I felt like I was being bathed in their energy field in return. It was really apparent to me if somebody was making contact with me or not. I was experiencing 2,000 percent linkage. It was just like a gorgeous feeling; it was really taking my breath away.

Then I started to feel dizzy. I felt that this dizziness was coming in from somewhere else, as if it was trying to make me pass out; like not experience this anymore. I somehow whispered to her, "I think I'd better go back," and I went back to the middle. Now I was out of that field of energy, but I was still dizzy a little bit, and it took me a while to ground and somehow became more solid and paradoxically less identified with my body as an energy field.

It's like somehow I was withdrawing all this—all these millions of antenna that had spread themselves out through every hair follicle and skin cell. All that was withdrawn, all that attention from there, and it was all going back up into my head. Berenda saw this, and she said, "Well, let's go back and check in with the first self." So I moved back over to the Rational Mind, and there was this sense of just pure composure.

This part of me said, "See, I told you there's nothing over there." And as this was said, I woke up. I felt the sadness just spark, like ripples throughout me;

whereas I, as the mind, had felt dizzy and disoriented by this physical/emotional experience. Now I felt this sort of wave of sadness now penetrating the rational mind and destabilizing it. I woke up then knowing, “This is a self.” There was this sense of awe in realizing how predominant this had been in defining nearly every single experience for a long time, except when I was doing hallucinogens or except when I was in some of those peak moments. My mind had sought to protect me during all those traumatic childhood moments. And those hallucinogens, in alleviating me from that protective rational mind, had allowed me the healing access to my sensate body and healing physical /emotional linkage with nature.

As I came back to the middle, I was speechless. I was stunned at the fact of it. I also unavoidably appreciated the difference between these two. I really got it at that moment that depending on the self you’re in determines literally how you experience reality and how you will filter everything that’s going on. You will arrange your perception of reality depending on the self that you’re in. It was a direct means too, for experiencing the Seth teachings and also certain Buddhist teachings that I was now familiar with. ‘I’m not this. I have this moment of experience, appearing like this.’”

I was just so happy, but I was also calm. I felt like very much that I just woke up to something about this Rational Mind that I’d been being, and it had been doing all of my consciousness work. That Rational Mind had been doing the work of becoming aware, and it just could never work as long as it’s not aware of itself. But it couldn’t be, and now there’s something else—that is, the Awareness that doesn’t have an “I,” that could just hold space for that Rational Mind self to be there.

As that was blooming in me, I was aware of this sense of astonishment that this Rational Mind had about itself now. It was like “What? I am a Self? Oh, no!” But it was actually safe because awareness isn’t doing anything against it or for it or anything. That Rational Mind still gets to be there, but now it’s been put in a perspective of greater wholeness of being.

From that session on I had a lot more work to do, because that awareness and insight didn’t stick. I mean, pretty quickly, in fact, I’m positive. I don’t remember but I can pretty much guarantee that by the end of the day, if not an hour later, I was fully back into it! But I knew the difference now, and I had awareness now about all

that I had been missing that now started gradually to become more available.

Like when I was doing all those movement energetic sessions with Dassie, at the end of the session, the mind would just wrap it all up into a self and define it and label it and go, “Okay, got that one. Now what?” It’s like the mind always came back in, not awareness. The mind thought it was awareness. It was such a relief to know that awareness and the mind are two different things. It’s very hard to describe until you experience it.

A Big Awakening

There was a big awakening that happened for me about 2 years ago. I had this experience that began with a dream, and in the dream, the dreamer is observing, and J’aime is standing. The dream is

“I’ve just arrived. I’m in the country, and I’m standing at a crossroads in nature, where two roads meet. They’re like country roads and there’s nobody on the road; there are no people; there are no cars. There’s nothing but these roads set in nature in a field-like environment; a meadow. The J’aime person in the dream has just arrived there, and she has to decide which way to go. Is she going to go straight through? Is she going to turn right, turn left, or go back. That’s the four choices. Right now what she’s doing is she standing in place, which is a fifth choice, a fifth option. Go nowhere. Stand here.

And so as “I,” the J’aime figure is contemplating these options, it becomes apparent to her that no matter which road she goes down, just a very short distance away there’s another crossroad and another one and another one, and that goes in all directions, forever. From the ground view, it seems like she’s standing on a grid of roads. And only a few steps on, there’s another choice to make, and that’s life. This is what’s appearing in the mind of this dream self.

But then what happens is that it all changes so that now, as I'm experiencing myself standing in that place contemplating these choices, now there's something else—it's something like the observer was, but it's more like it's nobody. It's really a complete awareness without an "I" that simply observes reality unfolding. It's not really this (pointing) up in the air, but it's as if this awareness is everywhere at once and now it's observing the J'aime that is standing. From this awareness, it's no longer that she's standing on a road, within a grid, but now it's like every intersection, every crossroad is a luminous point of light. And at every single point of crossroads, there's a J'aime standing there.

It appears more as an undulating web that, at each crosspoint, is a luminous moment-place, and at each luminous place is a J'aime, standing at her choice point, and it's an infinite and simultaneous field of possibilities that she's in. I can also say that there is no difference from the appearance of a J'aime and of the whole endless illuminated field of possibilities. And then, the dreamer is experiencing both these states at the same time: It's experiencing standing there on a road in the country as one J'aime, looking down and seeing that there's more, and also experiencing this other state of all possibilities at once. So there's two dream perceptions of the same event going on at the same time."

Then, I woke up. What next happened was that from then on, about every 10 or 15 minutes, that started happening in "real life." I would just be living life, doing my ordinary business, doing whatever I did and then suddenly everything cracked open and I was both doing what I was doing as I always did *and* I was pure ego-less awareness beholding all that was. Seeing this J'aime and seeing everything. And seeing/knowing that J'aime was no different than the chair or the tree or the cup of coffee in your hand or the floor she's standing on or the dog that lives with her, or her

partner. It's all consciousness, becoming itself.

While that was going on, J'aime who was living her life suddenly felt that everything in life was beholding her/ itself. It was like all of life is looking with dispassionate compassion as it was becoming itself, and J'aime was just one object of expression. "She" felt herself as one discrete object within this web of life as a separate being. And so there was this experience of being both separate and an individual being in relationship to people as a separate entity, a unique entity, and at the same time, this separate entity was aware that everything was watching itself as her—just beholding with no judgment *and not separate*. Just life was watching her/itself. There was this state of being the watcher, being the sense of eternal beingness that holds all things, all possibilities, manifest and potential. In me, as J'aime, there was a sense of utterly waking up.

While I was having this experience, it was hard to talk. It was hard to do anything. Everything would get arrested for some time. It would last for a few minutes, this deeply interconnected observing presence simultaneous with ordinary perceptual experience, and then it would all gradually fade away and "I" would be back to being familiar J'aime, a separate entity immersed in and enthralled with life. Then about 10 minutes later it would all happen again. For about 6 months this went on. No matter what I was doing: working, shopping, driving, sitting on a toilet, talking to Winky, drinking wine with friends, sleeping. It didn't matter. There was nothing immune, nothing that was away from this at all. There was no escaping this truth.

This was so stunningly different from anything that I had experienced before so I began to try to describe the experience as it was occurring, as a kind of scribe, as a reporter. Just like, okay, this is going on. And also what was going on in the selves in J'aime, because all my inner selves were having all kinds of feelings and insights and reactions, and "Whooooaa!" and just all kinds of stuff.

I have no idea what to call it. It's kind of a waking up is what I called it. That's what it felt like. The other piece about this was, when this would go on, this state, spontaneously, it felt like also the most intimately familiar state that I've ever been in—a basic fact of being. The truth of this experience is always happening.

I would try to record these experiences in word, in a journal. I quickly realized that I wasn't responsible for it. I didn't have a self who made this happen.

That's a really important thing. The selves do not make awareness come. Awareness is always there.

All my Voice Dialogue work was helpful because it helped me to not become inflated about this to think big of myself, like somehow I get to take credit for this, that I'm so great, blah, blah, blah, like I'm special now. I completely understood that I did not make this happen; that this is something that happens all the time. And I had been cultivating in myself, through the Voice Dialogue Work, the ability to not be frightened by it, or to immediately lose consciousness of it.

So my Voice Dialogue work did not make this happen but it helped the person that I think I am to be better prepared for this to be perceived by a "me." If it should happen, I was more ready to perceive it and allow it and surrender. I really got it that the aware ego process is not just about making more conscious choices about how you manage your life; it's also about consciously surrendering, allowing. That's also a choice: to let go and to be with.

One time when "this" opened up -- I always called it, "Oh, this is opening up again. This awareness is opening up." my mind was flooded with all these images in rapid succession of things that were so incredibly beautiful and things that were so horrible, nightmarish. In my mind's eye, I witnessed the most exquisite, beautiful, tender, loving images, all together, the beautiful and the grotesque, all pouring out in my mind, shhhhh, with this open state of awareness. And the J'aime who says "I have an 'I,' knew: everything belongs to life. Everything." These experiences cleared away any push that I have, to somehow be perfect in order to be deserving of this state of awareness. Everything already belongs. There's a centered place of just holding the truth of What Is.

I can hold the truth in my own little life too. I don't have to feel that somehow I *should* get to the point where I'm incapable of getting in an argument with Winky over something trivial. I also know that there's another ground of our relationship where we're not different from each other, that J'aime is not a discrete individual that is separate from Winky or separate from this couch or this plant or this dog or you or anything else; that we're all the part of the field of living presence. I've been shown in a sense but not by anybody. Life has shown me, this awareness has shown me; it becomes apparent to me. I experienced the paradox of how we are the

experience of separateness and complete oneness at the same time.

I would be in this state of Awareness, of being both an object (J'aime) and a wave of all of life. In this dual awareness state, I would try to put this experience into words, writing what was going on. And then as it would fade, I would realize, "Oh, I have a little, slippery mind that'll come in and just try to keep writing it as if it were still happening, but it's not. So stop writing. Just wait. If that's how it's supposed to be in 10 or so minutes, it may just happen again anyway."

I was walking along the beach—driving along the beach, and I had a self percolate, like a thought bubble, rising up to the surface saying, "Why did this happen to me?" (Isn't that always the question that this mind keeps asking?!) I looked over at the ocean, and it—this experience—was opening up again. And the ocean, the trees, the mountain, everything that was there responded, "This didn't happen to you. There is no 'You' for this to happen to." Look at the surface of the ocean, there's all these waves that ripple temporarily and then they disappear. The wave is the ocean. It's never separate from the ocean. Ever. It's just a condition of the ocean of being. There is no you. You're not separate from anything. This happens all the time, everywhere, this is part of the living paradox of ultimate movement and stillness happening; this happens everywhere, all the time. Little 'waves'/occurrences of beingness."

Waking up and falling asleep are not different from each other. I'm both awake and asleep at the same time. So for J'aime, this person, I don't feel this urgency, "I have to wake up." Because I know I am awake and I'm asleep. I feel this in a very true way now. And if/when, I fall deeper asleep and I'm immersed in a self for a while, which I do frequently, I know I'm waking up also. How do I know? Because I wake up and realize I've been asleep. That's just the way it is. It's okay. I don't have this feeling that somehow being awake means not being asleep too.

I have an incarnation here. I don't know why. I don't have answers. I just have the proof of this moment being in existence. So if there's an aware-ego process question: It goes in two directions at the same time. One is, how do I surrender to this moment? Can I surrender to *this*? Or, how do I want to live this? What does life want to live through me, through this person called J'aime? This wave, this temporary wave on the surface of the ocean that somehow has the audacity to call itself J'aime, as if it were separate. The beautiful image of the rose appears in my imagination, right now,

as I speak this.

So actually part of how this affects me is, it's a kind of experience that makes me smile because I have this feeling that sometimes, when I'm speaking out loud, it's just a part of the noise of nature in the way that nature speaks to itself through human beings talking and birds singing and trees rustling and dogs barking or whimpering. When I'm talking to you, it's life talking to itself, as if there were two separate beings. It's like two manifestations of life having communion with each other, and we're no different, even as we appear to be so. So it's kind of a funny feeling sometimes because I think, well, there's no need to say anything.

Main Practices

I practice Voice Dialogue more regularly than meditation, but meditation is more important to me now than it was earlier in my life. For me, I think that meditation is about as important to me as gardening. It's a way of showing up for life, an interior mindfulness; a way of settling my experience if and when I get noisy inside. It's a way of coming back to just being in practice. I practice gardening. I practice being in relationship with my partner, with my friends, and with you. Practice being present.

So it's helpful for me to meditate mostly if I feel like I'm more fluttery than still. If I don't actually pause and stop and spend some time in contemplation, whether it's in meditation or being present in my garden, I feel unsettled. Being in a garden for a period of time, being in meditation, those kind of practices, it's like emptying the bowl and getting quiet and that makes me more receptive, more vulnerable/open. I enjoy that.

I have selves that can garden in a very pushy way. "I've got a job to get done." It's not very helpful. But there's another way of gardening for me that's very much about being very present and being in a place of love and gratitude and service to and relationship with nature, that actually empties any kind of feeling like having to pay attention to "me." It's like letting go of "me-ness." Letting go of a sense of attachment to me. I'm actually attending to something else.

And in meditation, I'm letting go of all these "me's" without a sense of

work, or of trying. That's the same kind of feeling of letting go of these me's where the right kind of gardening has that same effect.

Dreams also have always been an important way of linking into a deeper consciousness in the course of my life and they still do. Dreams have this kind of a breakthrough of imagery of this "not manifested in *physical* reality" but manifested into an *interior* reality that's somehow also not separate from what the physical reality is. They interpenetrate each other. Dream, fantasy, memories even waking reality, they are all cut from the same cloth.

Dreams aren't something I have. It used to feel more like that than now. Now, I am a part of the dreaming. When I say, "I had a dream"—which I will still say, it's a habit of speech, or a habit of thought. But much more now it's a feeling that everything is dreaming itself into being. Everything, this awareness is a consequence of this aware being-ness that is an infinite, timeless, ultimate, still, and dynamic state of being. This lively awareness dreams itself into (a) being, into many, countless beings. And I am one of the ephemeral expressions that is dreamt into being. And I just happened to think of myself as somehow separate from this. But I'm not.

So now, because I, J'aime have paid so much attention to dreams in life, I'm more aware of how I'm dreaming and being dreamt of, all the time. Anytime I turn my attention in that direction, that experience is very available. That this moment is being dreamt up. And not only is physical reality being dreamt up, but coexistent with that is the kind of dreams that we have when we're asleep, they're actually running alongside with this all also. All I have to do is pause and pay attention to it. If we just relax and drop down into it, dreaming is going on.

I have all the kinds of thoughts that different selves have, but now I perceive that they can rapidly assemble themselves into a type of dreaming fantasy. All of a sudden, I realize that I'm in a reality that's not in the here and now (when I'm immersed in a self). I'm in something else, thanks to the fantasizing of selves. Depending on how much I have a group of selves trying to run with my fantasies depends on how entranced I can get. They're not much different from what I have in my sleep states of dreaming, because there's usually almost no self-awareness in the dream state. Just the dream ego is the governor that sometimes says, "Okay, I don't want this anymore. Or, I'll wake up. Or that's not how it should be." If I do become

self-aware within a dream, I usually wake up, although occasionally I do have what are called “lucid dreams.”

I have this feeling that, in psychology, what we call psyche or soul energy is in direct relationship to the Being state of Awareness. To me, at this point, it seems as if Awareness has the property of emptiness—empty of personhood, empty of choice or of values; there’s an Awake Unrestricted Presence of Being without an I—all things can exist because of this Empty Awareness. We can talk about the emptiness of awareness, and then Psyche /Soul is the fullness—the creative wellspring out of which all things are manifested. That’s the paradox. It’s hard to imagine how these are both the same thing, but right now, it seems that they are. We want to think it’s either or, but I sense that they’re not divorced. Every time that kind of state opens up in me—which it still does, but not at that same frequency, then, I’m privileged to notice or to experience life in this way that’s beyond duality. Paradoxes are a true condition of reality and there’s no discomfort with it; there’s no surprise with it. It’s just that the essential nature of reality is both empty and full, awake and asleep to itself.

There’s a place where our mind can try to conceive that or believe in it or hold it as a possibility or talk about it, but then there’s a direct experience of it. And for me, dreaming mind, dreaming consciousness, is like the fullness of awareness, manifesting itself as reality at all levels of expression. And then at the same time there’s this empty awareness that’s the space out of which it all exists. Spaciousness. The presence. Again, language is so miserable for trying to speak any of this. I am properly defeated!

It finally dawned on me that time is just an element in the material world, that when you transcend this material world and you’re operating with spirit perception, there’s no old or young. No one is older/younger. And once I realized that, I had to grant that to every person I met, that we’re all the same. And that became a practice. That’s that term *namaste*: The divine in me sees the divine in you. That’s a practice. That’s not just a salutation like, “Hello. How are you? Bonjour. Aloha. Sawadeeka.” And when you practice that consciously, as opposed to just unconsciously saying it because it sounds nice, because it sounds respectful or it sounds spiritual—if you actually practice that, it completely changes the relationship

you have with somebody, with everybody. So I've had a lot of teachers and a lot of practices.

How Do I Live My Life Right Now?: Choices From Aware Ego Process

Isn't that the great question? That is the hundred million dollar question. Live life with compassion. With compassion and acceptance.

And I have to make concrete lived choices. Every action has a consequence for this moment. I mean, that's karma, right?

So I'm just aware of that. I'm aware that I am always in the world of making consequences. My every action, every breath has an effect. My thoughts have an effect. My actions have an effect. My words have an effect. I am aware of that. I became more conscious of this.

Now, some people become sort of paralyzed by that awareness. "I can't do anything. I can't walk without sweeping the path ahead of me in case I step on a bug." "I can't eat this. I can't do that." And they become paralyzed with the fear of somehow taking the wrong step, of causing karma.

I remember one time years ago, there was a little fair in town, a little festival, multicultural festival. And there were many different cultures. And there was a Tibetan group there, and they had a Tibetan monk there. He was doing fortune telling. He was also a Tibetan fortune teller. You could offer some money as a contribution to their community, and he would do a little fortune telling reading. He did a fortune telling reading for me, and he said, "Oh, you've been living a good life, but next time you're coming back as a goat."

Okay what's the matter with that? But it was kind of like a warning, because it belonged to a whole system of thought about the progression of entities that can have a chance for enlightenment, and goats don't have that chance. That was the idea. It was kind of a little bit of a finger wagging: Be good. You have a good chance of coming back as a goat.

And I could feel the part of me go "Uh-oh." It hit a fear spot. What if he's right? The little child who believes in Santa Claus thinks these kinds of thoughts! He was a kind of a religious parental person shaking his finger at me saying, "Be good or

bad things will happen to your soul.”

I also felt this kind of absolute love of nature that says “everything in nature, belongs.” I could be a goat, what’s wrong with goats? Maybe I already am a goat somewhere. Because I also don’t really believe in linear time on a soul level either, although that’s how my body experiences it. But I don’t really think, in the big picture of how things are, that one event follows another. I often behave that way, but I don’t actually believe that way. Not anymore. So what does that mean if you’re actually part of everything that exists simultaneously and there’s no fixed “I”? It’s only when you separate yourself into you’re a human and you’re a goat and you’re good and you’re bad that you have all this fear and the cause-and-effect fears. What if it’s all going on at once? It’s also a possibility. There’s also a part of me who thinks and even perceives in those ways.

So again, it’s like the conscious process. You’re aware of this *and* that, so, how are you going to act in this moment? That’s the aware ego process. The aware ego process is, for me, about just being present with what’s become apparent within this collection of inner selves, various aspects of the Whole, and not feeling like I now have to be a wiser captain steering the ship, a smarter guide to have on the ship. I can just also know that I am becoming more aware, and to use Buddhist terms—I have karma to experience, I have consequences to experience, and it’s not a bad thing. It’s not a punishment. It’s just a condition of living in the material world, of living life, of being a part of the manifestation of All That Is. And I’m not separate from that. This thing that says “I” is not separate from any of this.

This is just where I am at, as a Voice Dialogue person, now. Obviously, not all of my growth and transformation has been channeled only through that means. It really becomes hard to differentiate. Voice Dialogue philosophy and practice is the main orientation I use for consciousness process. It’s like if you want to be a musician and you just practice the scales and you practice certain songs over and over again and you practice trying new things, you become a more fluid, musical entity, capable of being an expression of music. That’s what I’ve been practicing. I practice gardening. I practice Voice Dialogue. I practice meditation. I do these things because I enjoy them and because they help me to better express and surrender to life.

I get to enjoy it more. What’s the outcome? Do I get to experience it more?

I was having a conversation last night with a friend. Probably because of what *we* were talking about, I was telling him about some of my experiences recently in the last couple of years. He is a practicing Buddhist himself. He'd trained at Naropa, and he said, "Do you still suffer?" and I said, "Parts of me absolutely do. That's where it all happens. That's life. I'm not exempt from that." I just don't hold onto it quite the same way I used to because I'm not identifying with the selves the same way.

When I'm identified with a self, as long as I'm holding onto being that self, that kind and form of suffering is also held onto. When I let go of that self, I let it wash through me, just becoming a state of being, and nothing persists. It's like the way the weather doesn't persist, the way the wind or the air doesn't persist. I can be in a self and yet at the same time I can say, "Even if the weather changes, it has habits." Here in the Northwest of America, it rains in the winter. That's the personality of the Northwest. It has built-in conditions of how it's going to be. It's very different than if you live in Thailand or in Africa. They have different conditions that's living out those places. And J'aime is a place. Like you are a place. It's a place-moment within All That Is.

So I'm not exempt from being the rain now or the sun now or the stagnant air sometimes. That's just a part of the conditions. I don't have to make it wrong or right. I'm not always going to be "good" or "bad." I'm not always going to be kind or selfish. All of those things are possible, depending on how you look at things. Everything has consequences, right now.

In one way I'm seeking to both be mindful of these things, knowing I'll experience consequences, and also to surrender to these things. That's probably more of what I'm balancing these days, is a deeper, more mindful process of control and release. Control and surrender.

Psychic Fingerprint

So after this initiation that began in me a couple of years ago, I really had some selves that were kind of turning over the question, "Well, given that everything all belongs, how should I behave? How should I seek to behave?"

For me, what that meant was feeling into that question of what's the basic

condition of this person's life or the "psychic fingerprint" or the way that imagination will flow through this person, the fate or destiny? Just to feel into that and enjoy alignment with that.

I know if I look back over the course of my life for evidence, there're certain tendencies that have always reappeared, or we could say archetypes of expression have always reappeared without me trying to make them so. They're not even "mine." It's just what happens. In my case, I can recognize that I feel more alive when I'm sharing, when I'm serving or when I'm taking actions that help me to feel more related and compassionate and less judgmental. Sometimes, I feel a part of me that feels very angry or selfish; that's real too. But if I have a choice between feeling these two things, I don't do it because it's right or wrong; I do it because there's a trust, a feeling of how does life want to happen through me, now. Sometimes that means being angry and being like a windstorm, and other times it means being lovely and they are related to each other. I can trust that.

I can look back over my life, sampling memories, and I can see this kind of impulse to teach or to share or to engage people or to bring people together. I seem to always do that. I don't have to try. I don't have to attain that. It's something that I'll do anyway, whether I have permission or not, whether I have praise or criticism, I'll do it. Sort of the same way that that little bird we saw by the pond will just go and gather some grass to go build her nest. I just do that. That just happens through this person. And I've done that since I was a little girl. I didn't have any encouragement or support or praise for it. I didn't even have criticism for it. I didn't have any direction or "this is something you should do." It's just something that I just happened to do anyway.

I would think of something that seemed like fun to do, and I'd get other little children, "Let's all do this together," I would organize people together to explore something for the fun of it; I've done that all my life.

Or I would learn how to do something. I would discover how to do something or someone would teach me, and I would turn around and pass it on. It's just this impulse respond to. I think this is true for everyone what I'm saying. Everybody has things that they just do.

The Letters: Ritual Action for Initiation

There have been points in my life where I felt something needed to change and I didn't know how to do it. That what needed to happen was beyond my current capacity or imagination; I had reached the limit of the selves I was identified with, their capacity to function in a life-fulfilling way. It's in those moments of crisis that I have sought help.

I really went through what they call the "dark night of the soul" as a teenager, and I was extremely depressed. I was really having a difficult time, and I was having these nightmares. Every night, I had these terrible nightmares. I was afraid to go to sleep, so I was sleep deprived. Every time I'd start to fall asleep at night, it would happen, nightmarish imagery, so I was very scared. I was really messed up. One day, living in my apartment by myself, the doorbell rang, and there were three people in the apartment hallway, and they said something to the effect of, "We're going door to door to see if we can help anybody who needs help."

This was the only time anyone, since I'd come from my grandmother's house, had asked me, "Do you need any help, honey?" and I was like, "Okay, yes I do." I let them in the house, and they were very surprised, because almost everyone says no to them because they were Jehovah's Witnesses, and here in America most people don't like Jehovah's Witnesses because they're just these people who just try to convert you to their particular, very conservative branch of religion. And they were very excited that they found somebody that would let them in. They came in and were very dedicated. "We're going to help you. We're going to pray with you." They listened to my problems, and they said, "Oh, Satan has you; that's what the nightmares are. We're going to banish Satan from you and cure you and help you, and we're going to care for you and your soul."

So now, these people are coming to my house for hours every evening and anytime I was home from work, praying over me and telling me how to become a Jehovah's Witness, trying to help and "save me."

I was a very confused young person, so I was going along with it, because I was so desperate. Part of their brand of religion was that they basically felt that anybody who wasn't a Jehovah's Witness was somehow infected by Satan and operating with Satan's evil purposes. Nonbelievers were seen as "soldiers of Satan,"

whether they knew it or not. Even if they were nice people, it was just Satan's way of seducing you.

So their instruction was I had to cut off any connection from anyone who wasn't a Jehovah's Witness. I had to stop seeing them or talking to them because even if they seemed nice and friendly, they weren't. They were really Satan. I had to start dressing differently, very, very conservatively.

Different members of their church would come to my house every day. Everybody in this community was excited, "Oh, we have a soul to save!" and they were all busy working on me.

I did have some other friends at the time who I liked. And I was like, "Really? My friend Steve, he's evil? He seems like such a good person." And they said, "No, you can't trust this. He doesn't know it, but Satan is working through him unless he's saved." And I'm like, "Yeah, I think my mother's probably Satan." (Laughing) "My father, maybe. But this person? How could it be?" I hadn't cut off from everybody yet, so I was kind of guiltily hanging onto my friends and I was just very, very conflicted.

My friends were trying to warn me. "J'aime, be careful. What are you doing? Why are you talking to those people?" I was having a confused foot in every world. I got to this place where my life is still so messed up, and I don't know who to trust. I didn't know where to go. I didn't know who to listen to. I felt that I couldn't trust my family. I didn't know if I could trust these Jehovah's Witnesses, although they really tried to help me. But I don't know if what they said was really useful. I couldn't know if their ideas were really good for me; they seemed so extreme. Or my friends? Are they *really* Satan? I was just really confused. And I thought, "I really need help from somebody," but I didn't know where to turn.

Where could I possibly turn? I felt this deep ache inside my heart about this, "Where can I go? I need help, this was a crisis. I need to transform my life. I have no idea how to do it. I'm really unhappy with everyone. I'm not really happy with the Jehovah's Witnesses. I'm not really happy with my boyfriend. I'm not happy with my family. I'm not happy with my job at the factory. My life: Where's it going? I don't know anything."

So I felt, "Where could I find the person I could trust, and it suddenly

came to me, this thought out of nowhere said, “Someday this will be all over, and you’ll be in a better place. All of this confusion is just temporary and some day you’re really going to be at peace, and you’re going to feel clear about your life—not so much in control, but you’ll feel good about how life is happening.” I somehow knew that this thought was true.

Then I thought, “So, if that’s true, then there is a time in the future that I’ll be this person. I’m going to have to trust *her*. I trust her. She is me. And so I’m going to write a letter to her and ask her to figure out how to get to her.” I did just that. I sat down, and I took some paper out, and I wrote this long letter to her, explaining all the difficulties I was having on every front, every aspect of my life, that needed to “transform.”

I wouldn’t have used that word—transform; I don’t think I would have known about that word, but I knew that in all of this that I was facing, there was this deep, painful ache that was trying to manifest change, and I didn’t know how to make it happen or support it to happen. This is where I began to turn. I wrote this future self a letter. I explained my conditions. And I said, “I believe in you.” Right *there* is the beginning of a transformation. First, I imagined that something different could be possible. “Someday this will be over.” That imaginative process was the beginning of transformation based on what was not working or stagnant or the initial condition; in that suffering came the imagination that something else could happen.

Then, as I imagined it, the next piece was that I believed it was possible. I didn’t dismiss the imagination. Then, because I believed it was possible, I took an action in alignment with that belief; I wrote that future self a letter. Nobody had ever talked to me about future selves. Never. Everybody I knew was way more ordinary than that. Nobody was metaphysical. The Jehovah’s: Your future life is in heaven, and you either work your way being good to get there, or your future life is in hell with Satan, where you belong. I somehow “knew” in that moment that I could have this future self that lived in a state of peace. I was going to believe in it and take an action for “me” to become that person; that was my ritual action for initiating transformation.

That’s what the ego can do in alignment with imagination. The soul is imaging life into being, and the ego is part of that imaginative process. The ego is not separate from soul. It’s just one aspect of soul or psyche. The ego can work in

alignment with or somehow against its own nature, in rebellion to it or cut off from it. But now I was taking an action, this ego self that I have, in alignment with what's imagining itself into my life, into my perception.

I asked this future self for help. That's the transformative process that began there. I pleaded with her, "Please help me. I don't know what the conditions are going to be like. I don't know how this future life looks. Where you/I live or what kind of job or friends there will be. I don't know any of those things. All I know is that the basic feeling of being you is peaceful and joyful and happy to be alive and engaged with the world in a happy way, in a good way. That's all I know. That's all I need to know about you." I was pleading with that future condition, what seemed like the future to this person, for any kind of imagination that will guide me to being there. Then I signed the letter and I put it in an envelope and sealed it up. I wondered to myself, "When in time will this future self be? When do I believe that it's possible for her to be true?" I want her to be true tomorrow! I want to wake up and *be* her, but I actually don't believe that that's going to happen, so what do I believe is *possible*? Next week? No. Next month? No. I don't believe that.

If I did believe it, I bet you it could have happened. But I only had the imaginative capacity to believe it would be about five years away. I still had that kind of grueling feeling about life that affected my potential to imagine something.

So just to continue with the story, I sealed the letter. I addressed it to a time 5 years ahead on a specific date, and I put the letter away in my dresser drawer. Then, I just forgot about it. I just kept taking one step at a time in life.

My life kept changing, and I moved, and I got a different job, and I moved again. I moved a lot at that time, from apartment to apartment with different roommates. I had different boyfriends, and I started going to college. Every time I moved, I would see this letter. I'm packing my things, and I'd go, "Oh, I remember this letter. I can't open it yet." Eventually, although I could generally remember why I wrote the letter, I forget what was in it.

So one day, I was moving again, and I came across it again. "Oh, I can already open this now." I opened it up and read it, and I felt, "Really? Wow. My life is so different from what it used to be." I almost forgot about how bad it was then. Every problem that this 19-year-old girl was talking about, with tears in her eyes and a

shaking pen, was resolved. Life was not “perfect” now, but I felt excited about life, and I was in school, and I felt good about the boyfriend that I had then, and I had good friends. I didn’t have those Jehovah’s Witnesses coming around anymore. But she—this past self—was asking for help, and I couldn’t think of how would I give her help. All I knew was, it was mostly true what she thought about me, but I didn’t know how to give her help.

So I thought to myself, well, I liked that I’d been doing this, so I put the letter back in the envelope, and I re-addressed the time-address, so it was way far into the future when I was “really old, and I would have good things to say to her. I would be much smarter and wiser when I was 40. Because at 25, 40 seemed *really old*.” (Laughs) I would be in the fullness of life, mature. So I sealed it back up, and I started thinking, “Well, that was such a good idea, I’m going to keep doing it.”

So I started doing these letters to the future on a regular basis, at least once a year or so. Anytime I started to feel stuck or uncertain and I couldn’t find normal sources of help from the people around me or the teachers. If they can’t really help me, I have this sense now that somehow I’m going to get the help. It’s going to happen for me. What I need is going to become available for me, if I believe it. I started having a box where these letters were kept and I’d periodically go through it, “Ah, this one I can open.” I really enjoyed the fact that somebody in my past is imagining me into existence.

It doesn’t feel like I am *making* it happen. It’s more like there’s something in me that’s deeper than my conscious mind that’s imagining a bigger realm of possibilities, and I’m just turning myself with hope in that direction. Because I really don’t know how to get there or else I wouldn’t be writing this letter!

One day, it turned out I was already 40. I happened to be going through an old box in the back of my closet. I was cleaning things up, throwing things away, giving away old clothes. “Here’s that old box. Oh, and here’s the very first letter, and I can open it now.” Again, I had forgotten what she had said. I remembered the feeling of it but I didn’t remember the details. I eagerly opened it up, and read it and my heart just felt so soft for her. I really felt that, stretching back into this other place on the ocean of life, is this girl, 19 years old, barely holding onto a life raft, and the life raft is me, her imaging of me. I felt such empathy for her and, I also felt like I am completely

different than her. I'm not her anymore. I really felt that.

She and I are not the same person really because it's the way the caterpillar and butterfly are not the same kind of creature anymore, and yet we're related intimately. I sat down right then, and I wrote back to her.

"Dear J'aime. Thank you for imaging me. I'm so grateful that you have done this and my life is so good." I told her all the good things about my life, not the details, the facts, but the feelings. Then I wrote, "You have imagined me into being, and there are some very definite things that you can do differently that I am now free of, that you can make changes with. So here's the first thing. Tomorrow when the Jehovah's Witnesses come by thank them very much for their sincere help and then don't let them back in your house. Tell them you've changed your mind. If they want to believe that you're going to hell, they can have their belief. It's not yours. Don't let them in again, ever. Don't ever go back there. It's the wrong path."

"Break up with your high school boyfriend. It's the wrong path. He's not a bad person. He's as confused as you are at this point in his life, and you're not going to find clarity together. Just tell him it's over and no matter what, stick to it. Someday, you'll make touch with him again, and you'll be on friendly terms. You won't be in each other's life again, but you will make peace with him. So don't worry that he's going to hate you forever or that you have to hate him to break up with him. You can just let him go. You'll both be glad for it in the end. It may take some time, but it'll work. It may feel dramatic and painful in the moment, but go through that and do it. Because I can guarantee you, he is not in *my* life. Thank goodness. He has his own life. I have my own life and our paths are not the same."

"Quit that job. You have so much more potential. The most important thing to start with is, there's a really good book I want you to read, and it's called *The Nature of Personal Reality: A Seth book*, by Jane Roberts." As I wrote that down to her, I got chills all over my body, with really big goose bumps that rose up in my skin. I realized that as I was telling her to read this book that, "Oh, my gosh, it was right around that time that I first discovered the Seth books!" I remember forlornly walking in the library wondering, "What can I do for help?" and seeing this book—*Seth Speaks*, what does that mean? Oh, *The Nature of Personal Reality*. I *do* want to know something different about the nature of my reality, and I remember taking this fat book

off the shelf of the library and committing to it without having a clue about what it's about, just feeling, "Maybe this will help."

Reading that book brought a complete 180-degree turn for me on so many levels. I had this feeling right then that the reason that 19-year-old girl found that book is because I was now telling her to go look for it. For her, there was simply a vague sense that something was guiding her to find it and that "something" was me, in the future, who helped her to see *that* book out of the thousands of books in the library and pick *that* one. It seemed at the time like a totally random choice but actually, it wasn't. I knew that I was changing my own fate in the past and making my own now possible because of what I was doing for her in the past.

It was completely not logical, but it felt true. Then, I sent her all kinds of love and encouragements. I finished my response to her with, "I love you," and I sealed, signed and dated it. Then I thought, I bet when I'm *really* old, like maybe when I'm 75 or 80, I'll have even more guidance to offer her. So this original letter, I'm going to keep passing it on. I sealed it back in the envelope, re-addressed the time-address for the future again, even further out.

They're all in the same envelope. The original letter and the response were in the same envelope, but now I'm sending it forward.

I went about my day and then the next day, I thought, "Oh, wait a minute. I forgot to say something." So I went back, and I opened it again, and I wrote, "P.S., one more thing. When you are feeling your most dark and desperate, I want you to know that I'm here for you in your future. I want you to believe in me and write me a letter, and I will help you."

I realized: Where did she get that original idea? I already knew that writing these letters was something that works, so I was going to tell her: Write a letter.

Our whole life is not starting at the beginning and making its way to the end. Our whole life is happening all at once. All the selves that you will ever be are all happening, all at once. I'm here in your future telling you, way over there, to what seems to be the past, "I'm here. Notice me. You can rely on me. You can reach for me. Write me a letter. Send me a thought. Let's make the connection." All of the me's and whatever this me is, whatever this life force is—is saying, "Open up to the whole life." So that's a true story about selves talking with selves within the field of being life.

Future Goal and Life Intention

I'm going to stick with my intention I made when I learned that I had Hodgkin's disease. It's just a dream image, the rose, but it's a beautiful one that spontaneously came to me. It signifies my intention to be present and in joy with "what is." Whether things are painful or things are pleasant, just really live in deep gratitude with "what is." It's already present in my life but it's a goal I have, to keep letting that bloom in me and also, to appreciate each person I meet, to experience what the bloom of their life looks like, which often appears very different from mine. That's what I really want to be or continue being or to keep allowing. That what happens through me is living in loving gratitude with "What Is," as it appears; to be at peace with it, no matter what IT is.

Gratitude is a sentimental feeling; I could also say, "in clarity"—I'm going to be impersonal about it here now—My intention is also to live in clarity with what is. That can sound a little mental. I could also say just to live in the present moment—just to live, to be this, and, at the same time, to *feel* and *know* this. It's like as I'm speaking with you now, I know it's my ego selves speaking. Some parts orient towards gratitude, others, toward clarity. Some self in me has done its very best to try to imperfectly capture a description of this awareness state that I have somehow had the wonder of experiencing. I feel a deep connection—I know that there's a deep connection between me and everything else. I'm not a separate being from everything I experience, and it's kind of a trippy thing to say to you, because it has, at this level, the appearance of me talking to you, but I also know that it's consciousness speaking itself to/with itself when we speak with each other.

It's back to that *namaste* feeling. My other goal, if I had to put it that way, is to continue to experience receiving how everything and everyone, no matter what they're doing, is saying *namaste* to each other, to everything. It's the divine recognizing the divine. What a state of both ecstasy and deep peace! Included in this are the ordinary actions of everyday life—making dinner, walking the dog, taking the garbage out.

I feel I understand the Bodhisattva vow a little bit—for my friends who are Buddhist monks or priests or those who have taken vows, even as a layperson, there is a Bodhisattva vow. I feel like that's alive in me, very much, without having taken any

formal vow. It's already there, that one doesn't reach this without everyone reaching this; without the experience of everything being at that same level. So it's a hard thing to describe, but experiencing everyone reaching this is something that the experiencer has. So when I'm a "me," I don't really experience it because I have an experience of separation, like I'm reaching some goal but others haven't and/or I haven't.

But when the "me" is erased or gone, then everything belongs in this state of interlinked awareness and connection, everything *is* enlightened into being-ness; that state already exists. It's only my limited ego-perception that keeps me from experiencing it.

When I'm blessed with the dissolution of that fixed ego state, that Bodhisattva vow is fully realized. All beings are in *namaste*, divine being with divine. No matter what we/they're doing. We're outside of duality. It's an invocation or alignment that is alive in me to somehow continue to surrender, not to try and *make* that happen but to surrender to the truth of it already being.

CHAPTER V

LIFE TRANSFORMATION

AN INTERPRETATION OF LIFE STORY

When I started working on this chapter, I had just finished my 2-year Transformational Arts Program with J'aime in Portland. I felt that it was just the right time for me to continue writing my thesis after completing the program that J'aime offered. The length of time (3 years) in which I gradually came to know J'aime as my teacher, facilitator, mentor, and as my dear friend despite our almost 20-year age difference, is sufficient for me to continue working on the interpretation part of this thesis. Three years seems not that long when compared to the entire life of a person, but a 3-year period of relatively close relationship is adequate for establishing a strong relationship between two people. I believe that it is enough for me to witness her life and her being and see the trustworthiness, authenticity, and integrity of how she lives and engages in life. The important message to bring forward in this chapter is about the transformation itself, not about how I appreciate her and the work she does, even though I do. I have been reflecting on how to present this chapter in a way that is meaningful, inspiring, and yet easy to understand.

Even though my thesis question mainly focuses on life transformation through Voice Dialogue, I discovered from J'aime's life story telling that there were many periods in her life that she was interestingly transformed through other means and events before she fully engaged in Voice Dialogue. Sometimes her life just reached the point of transformation by itself, and she was able to be with the transforming period gracefully because of her Voice Dialogue practice.

I divide this chapter into three main sections.

5.1 Overall Life Transformation

5.2 Life Transformation Through Voice Dialogue

5.3 Individuation Process and the Transformative Image

5.1 Overall Life Transformation

J'aime's life is dynamic and includes many moments of substantial change. She went through many meaningful personal experiences. If we look at a life of a person as a movie, her life has quite an interesting plot. Starting from the difficult times in her family and a relationship problem with her mother since she was young and going through many lows and highs, she finally arrived at her current peaceful and joyfully vivid life.

According to the three main stages of the individuation stage of Stein (2013), she went through the unstable stage of containment and nurturance in her childhood. She was raised by her mother who was not a nurturing mother but rather a punitive and emotionally abusive one. In order for her to survive psychologically and emotionally in the undesirable environment of the family, she entered into the stage of adapting and adjusting quite early when she was young. She has felt as if she was a grown-up since she was 4 years old. As a result, her main personalities as responsible for others and herself, independent, and self-protective were developed and strengthened through the course of her childhood and teenage life. These personalities become her main ways of being to survive in any confusing situations and unpredictable environments until she reached her adulthood. Apart from those personalities, she also has her natural ways of being as a curious, adventurous, and introverted child.

I also have the sense that as a 4-year old, I was a grown-up now. I should be responsible for the other children.

I was feeling much like, "What can I learn to do that can help the family, and help me?". . . I felt that I needed to protect my sister. She was very frightened by how our parents were.

I began to have the sense that I really had to be on guard all the time around anything she [mother] said to me about me.

You [her mother] can ground me all you want. Leave me alone so I can explore this [out of body experience]!

(Interviewed on Feb 4, 2013)

I have a curiosity about my own nature since I was very young . . . I used to keep diaries when I was little.

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

These main personalities helped and supported her in many ways throughout her life. She knew how to manage her life in order to survive in many high-risk circumstances such as being in a life-or-death situation as a result of encounters with criminals a couple of times in her life. Being an introvert and having few friends because she moved so much from school to school, she spent a lot of time being alone. Thus, it is likely that she had a higher chance to develop contemplative skills and to journey into her inner world since youth.

All of the difficulties and challenges that she faced in early life are like precious assets that have much value and essence for her present life. Those difficulties created a strong foundation from which to stretch her ability to tolerate and to have high resilience under any unpleasant or suffering situations. Also, the struggles that she faced in life since youth is one important factor that helped promote and accelerate her personal growth and transformation as she grew up.

There were a couple of times that she stood up for herself in the midst of a seemingly deadend situation. These can be seen as temporary transformational moments (Metzner, 2010) during the pressure and discomfort of the situations she was in. She was able to empower herself and sought a way to get out of the trapped or unpleasant situation even though at that time she was extremely depressed and had a complete emotional breakdown from emotional trauma and abuse, or was experiencing a dark night of the soul. As examples, when her mother sought to commit her to an institution for the mentally ill, or when she was on her own after finishing high school and desperately worked as a laborer in a factory, she finally was able to demand support from her father, who feared his wife, to stand up for her and take her side, or when she was able to manage herself to pursue higher education in nursing school and not spend the rest of her life in the kind of job that has no future.

As a young teenager, J'aime had the intention of changing herself in the hope that she could change the overall situation of the family and also herself by hypnotizing herself into being "a good daughter." Unexpectedly, what she got from that intention was another hugely important experience in her life, which was the out-of-body experience. Along with the out-of-body experience that accidentally happened to her, characteristics of being a curious, adventurous, and introverted girl made her passionately pursue and fully enjoy her adventures in another realm, beyond the

physical body. She explored and learned so much through this out-of-body experience, that it can be seen as her first and sudden moment of transformation.

Regarding the out-of-body experience, it was a sudden and abrupt moment of transformation. This gave a peak experience and inspired revelation to her. As Metzner (2010) notes, a sudden experience can bring about profound changes in a person's life. J'aime's inner life and worldview completely changed from this incident. Her focus in life shifted to include what was happening in another consciousness state rather than struggling only with what was happening in her daily life.

As explained by Smed (2014), out-of-body experiences are usually brief experiences in which a person's consciousness seems to depart from the body and be able to observe the world from a point of view other than that of the physical body and by means other than the physical senses. A person seems to perceive the world from a location outside the physical body. As written in the website of the Monroe Institute (2014), according to research and studies conducted by many highly respected physicians, the transformative qualities of out-of-body experiences are limitless. There are both psychological and physical life-changing benefits derived from out-of-body experiences. According to Buhlman (2014), there were many benefits reported worldwide in the last three decades on out-of-body experience. It expands the states of consciousness and develops a greater awareness of reality. It helps accelerate personal development and psychological change because with this experience, there is unlimited knowledge that can be accessed and a more expansive vision of their current existence. The entire picture of human potential is dramatically expanded beyond all current concepts and comprehension. It also helps increasing spirituality of a person since he or she already has a connection to their spiritual essence. Out-of-body experience brings personal knowledge concerning the spiritual interconnectedness of all beings. It can increase self-respect, self-responsibility, and inner dependence for a person so that they are completely responsible for their actions, both in thought and deed.

J'aime's out-of-body explorations provided her with knowledge and insights about life. She learned much from that state, and it completely changed her belief about the human realm. It was a rich period of her personal growth and her perceptions deepened. From her out-of-body experience, she gradually learned that thoughts and beliefs create both reality and limitations for humankind. Also, this experience gave her an opportunity to objectively see her own physical body from

another state and then she had a different kind of connection and appreciation for it. The physical body does not represent her in the same way that she is accustomed to define herself. Her view of the reality of her existence has been shifted since then. She discovered another reality in which being human exists beyond a physical body. That was the important discovery which is a pure knowing insight. Even though she was young at that first experience, it was the starting point that later in her life she referred to as she looked for the meaning of this ability that she happened to have, and tried to seek ways to understand her direct experience and be able to explain these phenomena. Her spiritual dimension has been opened since then, as an inner awakening and connection to the spirit/soul. Her out-of-body experiences led to her seek a path of consciousness in life. Later, she began to study about shamanism, energy study, and also psycho-spirituality.

I know somehow in some way that I have never known before that how I think and feel affects with the body experiences.

I began to discern that what affected it is my belief. My belief navigates my experience, not anything else.

When I was in this state, I began to see other people when they were out of body When people are sleeping, there will be the energy body right next to the sleeping body, just kind of hovering, or sometimes standing nearby. But their energy body was like not related to me. Both sleeping.

Every once in a while in that state I met somebody else who knew it. We just basically looked at each other because in this state it would be a kind of a telepathic communication.

I learned a lot about thoughts, beliefs, and energy—the power of that in that state I have the innate trust of the universe now. I have no fear of this state. I have the experience also when I'm out of the body state of a certain kind of clarity of presence.

(Interviewed on Feb 4, 2013)

According to the stages of transformation of Casto (n.d.), the beginning of any change for an individual is in recognizing an error in judgment or a dysfunctional pattern of one's own and in beginning to awaken to the need to change. This is then followed by stretching oneself and experiencing new ways of being and thinking. J'aime also had a couple of times when she recognized her dysfunctional patterns of thought that trapped or misled her and began to contemplate them. She just opened herself up to experience a new way of being or thinking. These can be seen as awakening moments from the strong beliefs/patterns or obsession of some unhealthy

I heard myself thinking a thought "I should take some acid and figure this out." Then, there was the very next thought came up, "What? You have to solve your problems by taking drugs to figure this out? That's not what this is for . . . They'd done me a lot of good and now I just had to learn from ordinary life and become more mature through trial and error." So I just stopped taking drugs.

(Interviewed on Feb 4, 2013)

Is this [psychiatric drug] going to be what solves my life—my problem? Is this what's going to make me feel like life is worth living? . . . No, I need to change how I think about things. I need to change the basic core way of thinking about things so I can feel differently.

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

Another transformational time is when she experienced the dark night of the soul and sought help from her own future self, in that she could imagine writing a letter to herself in the future. This shows her strong belief and trust of the new thoughts and new being even though she could not experience the new being at that moment, and she stretched herself towards that image. The desirable future self was an

image that she held on to that helped strengthen her power from within and thus she was able to move on through tough and difficult periods in her life. Writing a letter asking for help from her own future self can be seen as a way to objectify this future image of her, and made that image become more real and powerful.

I felt where could I find the person I could trust? It suddenly came to me, this thought out of nowhere said, "Someday this will be all over, and you'll be in a better place. All of this confusion is just temporary and someday you're really going to be at peace You'll feel good about how life is happening." I somehow knew that this thought was true. . . . So, if that's true, then there is a time in the future that I'll be this person. I trust her. She is me. So I wrote a letter to this future self and asked her to help me to become her.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

One time, she was possessed by a very angry radical feminist energy and thought. At that time, she reported that she was a little bit almost gone psychotic because she was not really oriented to reality, imagining that some strange man was preparing to come into her house and rape her. She woke up from that possession of energy and thought when she recognized her dysfunctional patterns of thought. She became aware of what she locked herself into and contemplated on the cause and effects of such beliefs. Then the insight from within bloomed and released her from a prison that she originally created, which was the pattern that she fully identified with. This moment is another moment of awakening—a transformational time.

Once again, the problem is my beliefs here. I'm having all these fears because I'm believing something that's causing me this fear. The only way I'm going to be safe is I don't believe this thought anymore. . . . I just realized that the thought was creating my experience completely. I just decided to let go of the thought; not be identified with it anymore. It was just a thought.

It seemed true until I decided to see it as a thought. . . That's just a thought that has nothing to do with the world I live in or want to live in.

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

Throughout J'aime's life, there is a theme of gradual transformation, step-by-step changes. The gradual transformation is normally supported by healing, psychotherapy, meditation, or in learning of any kind (Matzner, 2010). Her gradual transformation shows how life gradually emerges, realizes, and reveals itself to her throughout the continuous learning of all kinds of consciousness work and practices over her life. When she was 19 years old, she came across the Seth books that talk about human consciousness. The content in the books seemed like a doorway leading her to the deeper and wider consciousness path. Before coming across the Seth books, she never had any chance to understand and to make sense of her out-of-body experience. The out-of-body experience she had was a known direct experience just to herself with no further explanation from other outer sources. After that, she started to explore many kinds of consciousness and spiritual works, including Voice Dialogue, shamanic studies, and energy healing. It took over a decade for her to gradually transform from one life path to another, from typical daily survival and success-seeking type of work to a deeper and meaningful work that belongs more to her. It is like a big life vessel steering itself gradually from one direction to another. She went from being a factory worker right out of high school to earning a professional nursing degree to successfully working as a nursing supervisor and becoming a top office manager of a private nurse placement agency, to eventually turning herself towards the consciousness path. From there, she became a person who devotes herself to the consciousness process and also supports others in the same direction. All of what she studied, both self studying and taking classes with various teachers, has been embedded in her life and helped to bring about what she has become as a psycho-spiritual teacher active in teaching and supporting the transformational processes of many people around the world. As Stein (2005) mentioned, those who have been or are being transformed can be agents of further transformation.

An ongoing or gradual personal transformation normally occurs when a person pursues a disciplined path of development. As Stein (2005) stated, transformation requires the full participation of the conscious person to take the process forward. Throughout J'aime's adulthood, she has been putting her interest and focus towards a path of consciousness and also has engaged in various kinds of consciousness practices unceasingly. Slowly and steadily, over several decades, she discovered a path that is lived, deepened, and will be enriched throughout the remainder of her life.

It turns out that I'm not that interested in being a "healer" doing energy work to do something to somebody. I'm more oriented to what does the person transform into on their own, and how do they transform their own experience in relationship to their own energy field and their own energy in the larger system, whether it's on the psychological, physical, emotional levels? That's really what I'm most interested in, how to support that.

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

I was faced with this: What is my way? . . . Voice Dialogue was "winning" now in me because it was more in alignment with how I prefer to be in service with people, which is: how do I help this person become more aware of what's going on with them?

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

Transformation can also occur because a person has gone through a transformative crisis. A strong mishap can awake the consciousness of a person. According to the transformation theory of Casto (n.d.), transformation occurs when one can raise one's awareness and live by purpose. Very strong life's purpose showed up when she contemplated why she had Hodgkin's disease, a transformative crisis that she had encountered in life. It was a kind of life-or-death event. The purpose that she decided to live with became her lifemyth with an image of a rose and her presence

with it. That sequence of events can be seen as the strong origin of her devotion to consciousness practice in life.

Okay, I'm going to get the treatment. I may not live to be 86, but I am going to start practicing being present to what is, right now.

(Interviewed on Feb 4, 2013)

A couple of years ago, there was a new inner experience that happened in her life. She experienced it as a big awakening of consciousness. It did not change in any way how she lives in daily life. But the inner realm of her aware, awakened consciousness has revealed itself to her. This kind of transformation may stay invisible to others and only manifest within her awareness, unless she shares the experience outwardly. As Metzner (2010) described, the transformation may occur through grace. Experiences of heightened consciousness, of mystical oneness or rapture, may be accompanied by a sense of them having been given freely and unexpectedly through gratuitous grace. However, they can come from the intention of spiritual practice and conscious efforts to bring about desired changes in consciousness. In the case of J'aime, she perceives this experience as consciousness just naturally revealing itself to her, not of her having put in any special effort to bring about this experience. However, with the support of all the practices that she has been doing, it allowed her to experience these phenomena in a more natural and humble way, not in a sense that it is a special state that she has achieved or arrived at.

I would just be doing my ordinary business, doing whatever I did and then suddenly everything cracked open and I was both doing what I was doing as I always did and I was pure ego-less awareness beholding all that was. There is the seeing of this J'aime and the seeing of everything. It's all consciousness, becoming itself.

Every time that kind of state opens up in me, then, I'm privileged to notice or to experience life in this way that's

beyond duality

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

5.2 Life Transformation Through Voice Dialogue

In this section, I divided J'aime's experience into two subsections. First is using her direct experience of one facilitation session to explain the phenomenon of her experience as compared with the consciousness model in Voice Dialogue. Second is the impact on her life transformation after engaging in Voice Dialogue practice over a period of time.

5.2.1 Comparison of Direct Experience and Consciousness Model

Within the framework of consciousness in Voice Dialogue theory, as Drs. Stone (1989) described, the aim of this work is to develop an awareness level that can witness and to develop an aware ego that can embrace opposing energies and the power and vulnerability in one's personality. The three levels of consciousness model include the level of awareness, the level of experience of the selves, and the level of aware ego process. Within this theory, consciousness is divided into three levels, and in general, is considered as a process rather than a state. Simply, consciousness is a process in itself that is comprised of three distinct levels.

Even before J'aime experienced Voice Dialogue, she remembered a moment in her life that she later recognized as "the aware ego process" as Drs. Stone term it. It is a moment of awakening/separating from the selves she was in and also at the same time feeling and embracing the opposites. The aware ego moment gave her a real choice for her to live her life at that moment. It liberated her from the prison of a one-sided identification or being locked into a fixed view or feeling or sensation. When she contemplated her out-of-body experience that might be related to Hodgkin's disease, it seems like she made a decision from her aware ego since she could hold both her vulnerable feeling of the loss of the enjoyable experience that she decided to give up and the power that could help her moving on in her physical life at the same time. She did not lock on to a feeling of pity towards herself when she faced such a big dilemma.

I consciously decided not to pursue the out-of-body state anymore. That had been very enjoyable, but I don't need to do that right now. I could also feel in me, some part of me feeling really sad about giving that up. Another part of me was like, "let's not simply just be in physical life. Let's invest some of this same kind of adventurous curiosity, joy, into discovering what this physical life is."

(Interviewed on Feb 4, 2013)

While she was in the healing process from Hodgkin's disease, she started practicing being present to what is, right now. This also creates the aware ego process of holding and feeling both sides, physical suffering and life appreciation, at the same time. With the practice of being present with what is, a person can come to accept everything that arises from moment to moment. By entering into that state, nothing is discarded or repressed. All senses of being and feelings are accepted and honored. It gives a person the true freedom of being with life itself. Real life deep appreciation and compassion would not be allowed in any other state unless an awareness is there to behold everything that a person momentarily experiences all at once. That is the direct benefit to a person from a moment of the aware ego process.

This is life. This pain. This suffering is life. Be present with this. And I felt all this terrible pain and ecstasy at the same time And there'd be this way that my body was suffering, but I was not suffering, because I was just so appreciating being in life.

(Interviewed on Feb 4, 2013)

After she began her Voice Dialogue training with Drs.Stone, it was not until the second year when she went to SummerKamp that she really had the aware ego process activated. It happened in one facilitation session. That was the first time that she really had a clear separation from a big primary self, the Rational Mind.

When a person is being in a self with no awareness of it, it is almost impossible for that person to recognize that pattern of being as something else, rather than an “I,” the ego. It is almost like a possession of a certain type of energy that creates the delusion of a sense of “Who I am.” The world will be perceived through a special lens of that energy pattern/self. It may create faults or incomplete perceptions of reality and claim that it is the only absolute truth there is available. Once a person wakes up to the self with the unconditional awareness of it, it brings revolution to the consciousness of a person. There will be many more possibilities available, rather than limitations. When a person can integrate another possibility (opposing self), the more whole human being the person may become.

J’aime’s facilitation session of the Rational Mind clearly demonstrates the consciousness process as active in three distinct levels as found in Drs. Stone’s consciousness model. At the beginning, when the facilitator asked to talk to the Rational Mind, J’aime as the Rational Mind moved over, and what happened was that she began to experience the feelings, gestures, energy, beliefs, and attitudes of the self. This is *the level of experience of the self*.

I felt like one of those stone heads from Easter Island planted on the ground, whose lips could move and who felt disdain for this whole thing: “. . . I’m J’aime. Yes, she has selves, but when you talk about talking to her Mind Self, the foundational nature of being is the mind, and there’s nothing to separate from or there won’t be anything left. I’m here to learn about those selves and to help her become a more human being. I’m in charge. I manage her life by making sense of it. I am the provider of understanding about the nature of reality, her personal reality in the world. That’s not a self. I’m the basic living force that she came into life with.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

All the time, there is *an awareness level* happening that is witnessing the self that is expressing itself. Whether the person is conscious of this capacity of the

witness awareness or not, it is there all the time.

When she moved back to the centre position, she reported that there was the vague feeling of some sadness coming up. Then the facilitator asked J'aime to move over and be with that sad energy. After she moved, she was really preoccupied with sensation. At that particular moment, she was experiencing the other self with some neutral awareness witnessing it. There were both *the level of experience of the self* and *the level of awareness* going on at the same time.

I really started to feel this thick lump of living clay that has not been enjoyed fully for a long time or engaged in a particular kind of way . . . now I was experiencing life primarily as a sensate creation that's also an emotional creature. It was the part of me that was touching into life as a body and as an emotional field. . . . It was like currents of life moving all around me and through me and I started to feel quite ecstatic. It was almost so overwhelmingly joyful to just be breathing in life.

(Interviewed on Feb 4, 2013)

After she experienced being in and witnessing this sensation self and she moved back to the center position, there was a short moment of *the aware ego level* that occurred as she sat between the Rational Mind primary self and the Sensing/Being self. There was an accepting and honoring moment that occurred when she could sit between the opposites and feel both sides at the same time. This is a moment of awakening from a deep sleep in a big primary self. The light of insight from within was shining and shed light on another reality that she might not have much chance to experience, a disowned self. With both sides available to her without judgment, she then had more choices about how she would go on in her life. Her more aware ego would have a bigger impact in making decisions about how she would engage in life rather than running her life on autopilot, being in the primary self most of the time.

This part of me [the Mind] said, "See, I told you there's nothing over there." And as this was said, I woke up. I felt the

sadness just spark, like ripples throughout me; whereas I, as the mind, had felt dizzy and disoriented by this physical/emotional experience. . . . I woke up then knowing, “This is a self.” There was this sense of awe in realizing how predominant this had been in defining nearly every single experience for such a long time.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

J’aime reported her direct experience from this facilitation session which clearly explained the nature/quality of *the aware ego level*. The insight and awakening moment occurred in this aware ego level. Everything is allowed and there is no guilt, shame, or judgment about the way we are. There is no attachment to those selves in the moment of aware ego. However, a person still remains energetically connected to both selves and is conscious of them.

I felt like very much that I just woke up to something about this Rational Mind that I’d been being, and it had been doing all of my consciousness work. That Rational Mind had been doing the work of becoming aware, and it just could never work as long as it’s not aware of itself. But it couldn’t be, and now there’s something else—that is, the awareness that doesn’t have an “I,” that could just hold space for that Rational Mind self to be there.

As I came back to the middle, I was speechless. I was stunned at the fact of it. I also unavoidably appreciated the difference between these two. I really got it at that moment that, depending on the self I’m in, this will determines literally how I will experience reality and how I will filter everything that’s going on. I will arrange my perception of reality depending on the self that I’m in.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

This story shows the aware ego process that happened throughout one

facilitation session which had a transformational effect to the person's consciousness. However, one single facilitation session is not enough to hold the processes of awareness and insight. Because consciousness is a process, it needs frequency of practice in order to strengthen awareness itself. However, the first time of awakening is very important to catalyze the process of becoming more aware of that particular pattern/self. Drs. Stone (1994) describe that as the consciousness evolves, the ego becomes more capable of experiencing this aware ego process. The aware ego process grows little by little as the person continues to experience separating from primary selves and learns to embrace their opposites. The aware ego process puts a person in a better position to make real choices.

Aware ego process moments can happen throughout the day. It can happen a couple of times or several times a day, or it can be countless times a day. This depends on how regular the person is in the consciousness practice that can help strengthen one's own awareness. It is a moment of waking up from falling asleep and dwelling in a self without awareness.

Stien(2005) explained that the process of transformation happens when a person takes the process forward consciously by moving ego-consciousness out of and beyond its established personal traits and habits and its culture-bound attitudes into a much wider self-understand and wholeness. Dirkx (2000) stated that transformation as individuation involves differentiating and becoming aware of the presence of the different selves operating within the psyche. By differentiating from the set of primary selves, there will be much more chance for a person to embrace the lost/forgotten parts that have been disowned or rejected, and thus become more whole. The aware ego process is essential to encourage a person to become more self-aware and self-understanding, then a person may move closer to wholeness.

The aware ego process is about just being present with what becomes apparent within this collection of inner selves, various aspects of the Whole, and not feeling like I now have to be the wiser captain steering, that is, controlling, the ship. I can just also know that I am becoming more aware.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

5.2.2 Impacts on Life Transformation After Engaging in Voice Dialogue

With rich experience from over 29 years of practicing, being a facilitator, and teaching Voice Dialogue, her life has been transformed in many aspects. This can be seen as outcome of the continuous and extensive engagement in the work and practice. Voice Dialogue approach supports the dynamic process of lifelong transformation because it brings personal and collective unconscious content into the consciousness of a person and assembles them into the whole new distinctive personality. Stein (2006) frames this transformative process as Individuation. Her life story telling clearly illustrates her personal transformation after engaging in Voice Dialogue and practicing the work continuously. Each transformational impact after she engaged in Voice Dialogue is listed and discussed as follows.

Presence of choice. As Erhard (n.d.) described, in the moment of transformation, there is the presence of choice as the phenomenon of creating possibilities which bring freewill to the way people live their lives. After J'aime had been engaging in the work of Voice Dialogue, more possible ways of living life opened for her. Limitations from a fixed point of view from a certain set of primary selves are no longer there. Her life is richer, vivid, liberate, and peaceful because of the presence of various choices that become available to her. Also, the purpose of her life was changed due to the dis-identification from the Rational Mind that has a fixed purpose for life. She is now more opened to the mysteries of life expressing and becoming itself.

I have more selves available to me in an everyday way. I have more selves available, selves that I used to disown completely. Just to use one example, like my pleaser, I can have a pleaser now. It's not taboo. It's not shameful. There's nothing wrong with it. Before I would feel, "Never. Forget about it." I'd never ever do that. To be a pleaser, it just seemed like the most insipid, weak, kind of way of being and I don't have that attitude anymore. I don't judge people for it. It doesn't even land that I

have to correct it when it comes in. I can just enjoy that and embrace it in myself and others.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

I think about how it was before Voice Dialogue, not knowing how limited my life was. Being run by that Rational Mind self. I have this kind of Mind that's both very rational and analytic but also can be very judgmental, and that had been completely unconscious to me before. Before, it just was the smart way to be, the adult way to be, the safe way to be, the evolved way to be. It had all these badges of medals of war about how good it was. I could be curious because that was allowed in my mind. That's a high attribute. I can learn. If you'd asked me before I'd began Voice Dialogue, "What's the purpose of life?" The Mind would answer "To learn." I don't have to do that all the time anymore. I can live through more selves, more ways. I can relax and let things reside in the "unknown and unknowable."

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

Compassion and humanity. With the work of Voice Dialogue, Drs. Stone (1989) explain that we cannot avoid being more compassionate because nothing in us is discarded. As we embrace all that we are, we naturally become more fully human and more compassionate. Also, Stein (2006) stated that one who individuates becomes more accepting of one's complexity and feels less alienated from all of humanity. More and more work of separation from primary selves and embracing the disowned selves that J'aime has been doing over a decade, has given her an ability to have true compassion towards herself and others. Becoming a less judgmental person brings about positive benefits towards herself and people around her. It is a huge impact that one person can make to the world.

I'm far less judgmental than I used to be, towards myself

and others. When I have a judgment come up, I can feel it. It's kind of like a trigger for consciousness for me. Before, a judgment used to solely trigger a feeling of righteousness. . . . Now judgments can act like little reminders to wake up because I "catch" the experience of judgment when it happens more and more and more.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

When I have an Aware Ego Process around something with my partner or a friend, I pause, and I just stop for a second. . . . I feel that life is taking us all in together, and I feel from that state a great deal of simple compassion for our humanity and what this person is presenting; there's a self that has some strong urgency to it about itself.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

Everything that's happened in my life I completely honor and embrace as part of the amazing fabric of this life. . . . Having the opportunity to hear so many people's stories and the depth of joy and suffering that have gone on in their human lives just reduces my life to a dot amongst a million dots. I just don't think any more of myself as anything special. I just feel a tremendous amount of compassion and linkage with everybody when I hear all these stories.

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

That gives me a lot of space to honor the special uniqueness of the people around me who live life very differently than I do. It doesn't mean that I am without judgments—I have them, because I also live through selves. But they don't go unexamined for long because I have more and more presence with an Aware Ego process. I know now that my

judgments are about how I'm constructed, not some kind of final, objective truth about the other person. I never would have truly felt or lived this insight if it had not been for Voice Dialogue in my life.

(Written email response on Nov 3, 2013)

I have a lot more compassion for the human limitations of my parents at that time in their lives and how little resources they had available to them to help them change and transform. I totally understand that now in a way that I couldn't have seen as a child.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

Awareness and Dis-Identification from Selves. Practicing Voice Dialogue is practicing awareness because unconditional awareness is one important element of the Consciousness Model in Voice Dialogue. There is a moment that can appear during Voice Dialogue facilitation which is the moment when a sense of an "I" disappears. The awareness comes in and replaces the sense of an "I" that normally is attached to a certain self. Intentionally actively practicing awareness can offer a chance for the awareness to be available naturally more and more in daily life. When the unconditional awareness presents, it gives an awakening moment for a person and a chance to transform oneself. With this awareness, one can further practice the non-attachment from the illusion of being a "me" and attachment of an "I" that bind a person in a limited realm of life. When one can separate/differentiate from a certain fixed primary self (subpersonality or energy pattern), one can be free from certain constraints and go beyond established personal traits, habits, and culture-bound attitudes to then arrive at a moment of choice, and become more whole. J'aime has been in Voice Dialogue practice for almost 30 years both by having facilitation and offering facilitation for others. Both keep her in a daily practice of becoming aware over and over again. Regularly being in the practice strengthens her awareness in her everyday life. In practicing not only awareness but also the dis-identification with a self, it opens up her life towards the gradual process of transformation, becoming more

whole, and not living life in a fixed attitude due to certain patterns that lead her life only in one direction. Because of this opening up, the chance for the opportunity for life to bloom and reveal itself becomes larger.

There's this experience of the Aware Ego Process that happens, which is that I stop. There's this pause that happens in me quite frequently now. It used to be that it happened because I was engaged in a Voice Dialogue facilitation, and so my chances for an aware ego were tied to the activity of facilitation. . . . But now it's *also* brought by things like seeing my subtle (or not so subtle!) judgments or looking at my red bracelet which I choose to use as a reminder for myself to stop and pause. Awareness is more available than it ever was before. The Aware Ego Process happens for me in terms of how do I engage on a human level with that awareness. Because for me, awareness, my experience of that state is that it's almost indescribable . . . but I can say that there's a sense of stillness and quiet and presence and just peaceful allowing that happens.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

The state of awareness isn't me. The moment I think of it as me, I've distilled something into a self, for example, now there is a thinker. Still, any "I" that I'm being can be beheld by this awareness. It's always there, always omnipresent. And so to pause, to stop, brings me into consciousness that there are these selves that all belong to this person, this life and they can be seen from this state of awareness. They all reside within the field of awareness. Nothing is judged. Everything exists within the state of awareness.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

As the Stones said, "Embrace your selves." We don't have

to permanently and rigidly identify with them. You will be identified with them at times and so you're going to keep becoming conscious that you've been sort of locked into something, and then you can become aware of that. That's what the Voice Dialogue method facilitates. Now you have a choice to be in that self with awareness or to fall asleep to this knowledge. Sometimes we as life fall asleep. That's also a natural. It's also what's always going on.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

For a long time in my life, a kind of guiding sort of mental question was the word "why." I don't feel that that's so true for me anymore. "Why" isn't calling me forward the same way it used to when I was younger. The whole energy system of questioning, inquiry, I have some separation from that. I go into it but I don't live in it the same way that I used to.

(Interviewed on Feb18, 2013)

Changes in interaction with others and the world. Every Aware Ego moment shall bring some changes to the seemed-to-be-dead-end situation. There will always be a presence of choices available for a person to interact with the situation they are in. Voice Dialogue was developed from the personal relationship between Drs. Hal and Sidra Stone, as husband and wife, as coparents, and as work partners. Voice Dialogue is obviously also for relationship work. Every human being has to face relationship between themselves and others and the world. Transformation in oneself can bring about the transformation of a situation and impact the change in others and the world as well. We are all connected and impact others even though we may not be aware of the effect of it. When we are on a consciousness path, the interaction between two human beings or everyday situations that trigger us can be a useful exercise for us to learn and practice how we can choose consciously to engage in life. J'aime also unavoidably encountered those kinds of situations. Changes from practicing Voice Dialogue gave her a chance to awaken from the trap of a self that she was in that

created an awful or even harmful feeling towards herself and others. When she realized and woke up from that self, then differentiated from it, the whole situation shifted. There is a better way to relate to other people with conscious compassion. The conversation or situation will go beyond the matter of who is right or who is wrong. It helps deepen the relationship and also gives a chance for that relationship to transform. J'aime also learned from her direct experience of the out-of-body state that everything has its own energy. Our different thoughts and different actions create different kinds of energy that express and effect things around us. Being more responsible and becoming more aware of the consequences of the thoughts and actions that one has may have many benefits to others and the world.

In relationship to another person, I'm aware that they're also a bundle of selves that they may or may not be aware of . . . or become more aware, more conscious, that has an effect on the quality of the experience with others. Just being a conscious individual is a contribution. The contribution is that you become less harmful or judgmental towards others, and that's huge. You act with more compassion for yourself and others. You just enjoy the benefits of living with more acceptance of yourself and others.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

Voice Dialogue has certainly helped our relationship unbelievably and significantly because I'm bringing everything I do as an individual in Voice Dialogue as my contribution in our relationship and she is bringing other things.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

One day, my partner and I were having fight. I don't remember any detail about it now, but we were really mad at each other. We were both in what Hal and Sidra would call a "negative bonding pattern," a big one. We were both feeling

very angry and righteous about our positions. . . . I had just been seeing her this whole time as mean and cold and uncaring and punishing and judgmental, and here I was just trying to explain and defend myself and trying to get some love and understanding. That's what I felt I was doing, but actually I was also being mean and judgmental. I didn't see it. And so anyway, it was her turn, so she was talking, and she was just passionate about it. I suddenly realized, "Wow, this is a self in her! Her anger is stupendous. It's fabulous. She's really passionate." I suddenly shifted, and I started seeing her as this amazing force of nature; it was like I was now watching a big thunder and lightning storm. She's a beautiful person who is angry right now and she has hurt and scared feelings. Three seconds ago, she was this mean, terrible person that's just hurting my feelings and refusing to support me in something. I just paused and shifted. I shifted from being in that one self to another self. I started to feel that other side that can just appreciate her for who she was and not judge her anymore. Unconditional awareness came in and I could see her in a completely different way. I saw this, and I just stopped, and I started smiling, because I'm smitten by her magnificence and her beauty and who she was as a person in that living moment. Right away she noticed and asked, "What are you doing?" I just smiled and felt, "Oh my God, I can't believe it. I'm not angry at you anymore. I'm just so appreciating who you are." And she said, "I'm not done being mad at you." I said, "Go ahead. I'm okay. Lay it on me. I'm sorry. I'm going to listen to everything you have to say right now. I'm open to you because actually I really love you." She said, "Don't love me right now. I'm really mad at you." I said, "Okay, Go ahead. Anything." She was like, "I can't be mad at you if you're feeling this way." I said, "So, maybe we just need to stop for a while so we can readjust how we want to talk this

out with each other.” That’s an example of how something can switch in the moment. Very quick. I don’t usually go into those kinds of fixed angry states as much because I see it coming.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

We were mad about something with each other Then I realized suddenly I was in a self and this self was not going to say kind things. This self had a singular point of view and it didn’t represent all of how I felt at that moment . . . I suddenly woke up to a whole bunch more of me going on here than I’d been aware of when I was just being in that self. So in those kinds of situations, I would say to my partner, something like “You know what, I just realized I’m in a self, and I want to stop our conversation for a moment so I can readjust, and bring more of how I want to be with you right now because this is not how I want to be with you. You don’t deserve that from me. I don’t deserve this. We both deserve more. I want to show up with you differently . . . in a way that’s more respectful to you and me. And she said, “Okay, that sounds better than what we’re doing.” So that kind of thing can happen in relationship too.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

There are other things that are very helpful to just paying attention to everyday life, there’s so many things that I can get triggered around. . . . There are consequences for that energy. So my conscious path is to feel the energy. Feel the anger. Feel that. Try to become aware of what are the selves that just got activated or the complexes that got activated. What is it about someone littering that brings up my vulnerability and leads to some reaction?

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

Changes in fundamental beliefs and worldview about life. According to Metzner (2010), consciousness is transformed when any of the following occur: changes in thinking, worldview, beliefs; feelings, motives, impulses, values; as well as altered perceptions and sensing. What has changed in J'aime's consciousness shows from her way of thinking, believing, and engaging in the world. With various kinds of consciousness work that she does, and especially with Voice Dialogue practice, it eventually transformed her in many areas that show in the change of basic core beliefs in life or expanded her consciousness to cover the direct experience of awareness and aware ego process.

As she practices her consciousness work and practices differentiating from the self over and over again, insights about life occur. She understands and embraces the impermanence of life. There is no fixed idea of this is the way she is or who she is. Everything is always changing including herself. With the awareness capacity in her, it sees the whole process of what arises and what she is comprised of. When she practices being mindful and being conscious, there is a witness awareness seeing the dynamic of the energy patterns/selves in her changing all the time. There is no fixed stage. That gave her an insight that she is none of the phenomena that are happening in her. Yet, she is comprised of all of them. It is such a significant insight about life that totally changed the way she looked at herself and also perceived the world around her. Also, she knows that even as she is practicing becoming a more conscious person, there is still a lot of unconscious material that she hasn't been aware of that moves her life forward. However, she has a trust in the process of life because she knows that those unconscious materials are part of life itself. They are just a part of her that she has not been conscious of.

As she continues on the consciousness path, someday there may be a chance for her to become more aware and practice from those unconscious materials that may later come in life. It will be useful material for her to practice that can help her transform further and deeper. Also, with the experience of transformation, she clearly knows that this path is not going in one direction which is upward, higher, better all the time. Transformation is dynamic and unpredictable. By trusting and surrendering to the process of transformation, this brings a person close to the truth of

life itself that always shows its inconsistency and impermanence, and paradoxically, the person may have more trust and be more at ease in the processes of life.

I have a basic trust in life, meaning including that 99% that I'm unconscious to. I don't feel that my unconscious nature is going to damn me. I feel that the basic unconscious process that is always going on is part of life itself. It's not broken apart from life itself; life itself is what I trust.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

The biggest thing that happens with people who are practicing Voice Dialogue long term is you no longer have any fixed set ideas of what you think you are, and it's safe enough to hold that. . . . So you don't say, "This is who I am. Don't change me. Or I have to change. Or I'm this, I'm not that." Instead, we are many things, many ways of being. That's what this kind of non-attachment feels like to me, or separation from selves.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

Voice Dialogue practice is transformational work. It's not like getting a college degree because there's no graduation. Transformation is not a unidirectional path. It doesn't happen in a linear sequence of advancement. It's circular and emergent and chaotic.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

The steady practice of Voice Dialogue has worn away at many of my fixed attachments to "my identity." That's not to say that I don't have a more and more flexible identity that brings me life experiences. I see transformation as a natural way of experience. With the practice of Voice Dialogue, I continue to learn and practice how to be and go with transformation,

rather than defend or hold against it. I practice being more consciously with these ever-changing bodies (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual). As long as life goes on, there's a natural impulse to open and close, to wake up and fall asleep, to know and to forget, to expand and contract and I am at ease with this more and more. I also have inner selves that like fixed certainties! Still, I don't have parts of me who are fixedly in charge any more that insist I be consciously awake, open, knowing, expanding, light/illuminated, loving, etc., in order to be valid. I now recognize them and the opposite (asleep, closed, ignorant, contracted, dark, apathetic) as all belonging to Life, and this life. It all belongs. Voice Dialogue practice has been the main means for helping me arrive to this point.

(Written email response on Nov 3, 2013)

I'm much less likely to seriously hold things in terms of "right" and "wrong" for very long, but more in terms of "this" and "that."

(Written email response on Nov 3, 2013)

So there is a kind of this dance between being erased and being recreated fresh in every second. Somehow psyche and ego was making itself fresh, remaking itself in every moment, drawing it back into the fabric of life, and awareness is just easing everything. There's nothing permanent here. There's no "you" that's permanent that you exist as. There's just clear empty being-ness, awareness.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

I think that any kind of consciousness work is very threatening to anything in us that wants to maintain permanence or stability. If you are really doing the work and you really

embrace impermanence, there are all kinds of things in your everyday life that you have notions about that will change: your habits, everything. If you really take impermanence for what it is and use it to open up into the present moment . . .

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

Readiness to participate in a life long process. When looking at life as a whole, life is transforming, revealing, and emerging throughout the lifetime of a person. As Stein (2005) said, transformation is a major single process of becoming. A transformed person does not mean they are finished or have reached the top of life. Rather, they are a transforming person as a work-in-process. So transformation can be seen as an ever-ongoing process throughout a person's lifetime. Even though J'aime has transformed in many ways and in many areas, there are still unrevealed and unconscious materials in life that will eventually show up in the future in order for her to experience them and work them out consciously. As Stein (2006) explained, according to Jung's writings, individuation is never finished or completed, because there is always more unconscious potential to bring into the personality's full integration. The images/materials that have already emerged are also required a person to deepen, to ripen, to add detail and substance to it continuously. Jung (as cited in Stein, 2006) viewed transformation as a profound process of changes that take place in the depths of the psyche. It is a complex process with many possible outcomes, of which some can be judged as positive and some as negative. J'aime explained herself in process as showing that she is in a journey of revealing and becoming. There is much more in her life for her to experience and integrate to become whole. She surrenders to the process of life itself so that she can experience much richer and deeper life with gratitude towards life itself, both of others and her own.

Right now I have this feeling that I don't have to be perfect in every moment. I can be in the process. I feel that we are all being in a state of continual evolution or becoming-ness, however that looks in any individual. The life process feels like nature and the beauty of nature. It's not a rule that I have to do

be conscious and in aware ego process all the time.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

I'm in the childhood of old age, in the beginning stages. There are going to be challenges that I'm going to have to work through as part of that stage of life that I didn't have to deal with when I was younger.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

I felt a kind of sense of the richness and depth of a living life that will normally be triggered by life events but I have a way of working through it to bringing it to consciousness Life is always going to be working me and in that regard, I'm really grateful. Life is bringing us things to just keep unfolding and bringing to life more and more of what we can be, and more and more kindness and humility and compassion for that.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

5.3 Individuation Process and Transformative Image

I would like to touch a bit here on transformative images and dreams. It may be a relatively new idea that dreams and images can transform a person's life, especially for people who did not specifically study psychology. In depth psychology and in any work that has its roots in depth psychology and Jungian psychology, such as Voice Dialogue, dreams are an important element that has been widely studied and is an accepted means to deepen the life process of a person. In J'aime's life story telling, there were many times that she narrated her dreams or dream-like images as being significant moments in her life that had tremendous effect on her life transformation.

There is a theory of transformative images described in Stein's (2005) book, *Transformation*. Throughout a person's life, one is often impacted by some important images. These images can be anything that has an effect upon a person's

life. It can be a real object, dream image, fantasy, poem, painting, religious symbol, film, or even concert.

From the moment these images appear, they take possession of a person's consciousness and, at least temporarily, change it, sometimes dramatically. Dream images, for example, sometimes will haunt a person for days and continue to draw out emotions and memories, incite desire, and even stimulate plans for the future. . . . For a moment, one almost becomes another person; in the long run, one actually does. If these powerful archetypal images are strong and impressive enough, the whole fabric of a person's life can be transformed. Their effects are not only momentary. Over time they become irreversible. This is because these images reflect psychological content that is emerging in a person's life and give it shape (Stein, 2005, p.41).

In depth psychology, the "way of the dream" is one approach to the problem of discovering effective transformative images for the modern individual. Dreams are constantly changing, symptomatic of the continuous change in one's psychic process. Occasionally, a symbolic dream occurs that stands out from the rest. Thus, Jung distinguishes dreams as little dreams and big dreams. A big dream is one that has the potential to become a transformative image (Stein, 2005, p.63).

Stein (2005) emphasized that a transformative image is one that channels psychic energy and will into specific attitudes, activities, and goals. A transforming dream image is an archetypal image that manages to capture the element of wholeness in an individual's life and give it specific shape and direction (Stein, 2005, p.63). Even though dreams offer potentially transformative images to consciousness, the outcome depends upon the work a person does with them. If the dream image is taken up by consciousness, retained, and worked on regularly over a period of time, it has the potential to transform conscious attitudes, behaviors, and motivation. The psyche has the capacity to regulate itself and to provoke its own development (Stein, 1998, p.65).

Thus, when talking about transformation as individuation, it is impossible to discard the aspect of the transformative image. As Stein (2005) described, individuation is a dynamic life long process of transformation wherein both the personal and collective unconscious are brought into consciousness and the parts are assembled into a whole new distinctive personality. Then it becomes the new form that is lived, deepened, and enriched throughout the remainder of a person's life, or until it

is transformed yet again. Transformative images need to be brought up from the unconscious to consciousness so that a person can benefit from the image given by the psyche and process it in further transformation.

Because Voice Dialogue has its roots in Jungian psychology, J'aime always engaged in dream work and benefitted from it. She spoke often about this and explained how the dream is related to life, especially inner life, as a dream is a connection to the deeper places of the soul.

Dreams aren't something I have . . . I feel that everything is dreaming itself into being. Psyche dreams of me, not the other way around. Everything, this awareness, is a consequence of this aware being-ness that is an infinite, timeless, ultimately still and dynamic state of being; a lively awareness that dreams itself into being. I am one of the expressions that is dreamt into being. I just happen to think of myself as somehow separate from this, but I'm not. So yes, dreams have always been an important way of linking into a deeper consciousness in the course of my life and still are. And there's a kind of waking-up experience—when I woke up into a clear state, a really clear awake state that can observe all things. Dreams have a breakthrough of imagery that are not manifested in physical reality but manifested into an interior reality that's not separate from what the physical reality is. It's like they kind of interpenetrate each other. So because J'aime has paid so much attention to dreams in life, I'm more aware of how I'm dreaming and being dreamt of all the time. Anytime I turn my attention in that direction, that knowing is fairly available, that this moment is being dreamt up. And not only is physical reality being dreamt up, but coexistent with that is the kind of dreams that we have when we're asleep, they're running on together all along. Like all I have to do is pause and pay attention to it. If I relax and drop down into it, dreaming is going on.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

J'aime viewed her life events as a dream—a dream of life. A strong image that happened in a single life event can transform life as a whole, from one direction to a completely different direction. One scene in her life that she viewed as a dream-like event is when she gave a speech in front of hundreds of people at a women's festival in which no one had any clothes on, including her. After that event, her life changed and gradually redirected her towards becoming a teacher, holding group of people, and sharing her knowledge and experience with them as she does today. It turned her life path from being a nurse towards becoming a consciousness teacher.

I have somehow, without trying to be like a teacher or a group leader or anything, I've kind of found myself inadvertently in that place. Now I accept it and I say, "Okay, this is what I am now." My first introduction teaching to a group of people couldn't have been more traumatic. I couldn't have tried to refuse it more if I'd tried. I did not want that fate that I had to be stripped naked to meet it. That's how the dream of life presented itself to me . . . now what do I get from this? Everybody exposes themselves up right to their core.

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

Another strong dream image appeared to her after she had cured her Hodgkin's disease. It was an image of the pain in her heart that needed a knife put in to let the pain out. This can be seen as an image that not only represented her current stage of being very depressed and in deep sorrow, but also showed that there would be another level of cleansing which needed to let something bitter in her soul out so that she could be free of that dark feeling. After she was with this deep painful sorrow, light eventually came out in her life as if she was born again.

I began to be very depressed. I began to have very dark thoughts. I began to feel this deep emotional pain that I initially

had no image or words for. This was an incredible emotional sorrow. I felt it. My heart was just breaking with sorrow. Later, I started having fantasy images of the pain in my heart, and my sorrow which was so big that the only way to relieve it was if I could put a knife in my heart and let it bleed and all the pain would bleed out. That's a dream, a fantasy image. I needed to have another level of purging; I had vomited daily for months from the poisonous and healing radiation therapy, you know, but now I felt like something else had to come out. It's not rational. It's just this deep, deep, deep, painful sorrow—hopelessness. All the time It actually just began in me at that point, another level—like my body had been healed by all the terrible things that happened, but now my spirit was shaking it all out. At that point, coincidentally, I finished the psychiatric rotation, and went into maternity training (as a nursing student). Now what happens is that all of a sudden I'm watching new life come into the world!

(Interviewed on Feb 18, 2013)

J'aime's big awakening of consciousness experience also started with the dream. The last scene of the dream shows

J'aime standing at her choice point, and it's an infinite field of possibilities that she's in. And so now the dreamer is experiencing both these states at the same time: It's experiencing standing there on a road in the country, looking down and seeing that there's more, and experiencing this other state as a person-less observer.

This can be seen as one of the big dreams in her life. As Stein (2005) mentioned in his book, some dreams need no specialized psychological interpretation. The dream speaks for itself. If one penetrates into its message, it can be

transformative.

I woke up and it was morning. What happened was that from then on, about every 10 or 15 minutes, that happened in real life. And while “that” was going on, J’aime who was living her life suddenly felt that everything in life was beholding her. It was like all of life is looking with dispassionate compassion and it was becoming itself, and yet she was just one apparent and inseparable object (of attention). *She* felt herself as one discrete being within this web of life, as a separate being. There was this experience of being separate and an individual being in relationship to people but as a separate entity, a unique entity and at the very same time, there was “a” presence that was aware. *Everything* was watching her—just beholding with no judgment. Life itself was watching J’aime and she is also Life. There was this state of the watcher, of being That Which Watches, a sense of eternal Beingness.

(Interviewed on May 6, 2013)

The most important image that can be interpreted as a transformative image was this—

At the point of my life could be something as simple as when I’m 86 years old, there’s a rose blooming in front of my neighbor’s yard, and my whole life’s purpose is to be present with it and smell its aroma that morning.

It was the image that occurred to her when she was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. This image gave her a strong intention in life towards a path of consciousness and to be in the practice of being present. After that point in her life, it gradually pointed the direction towards a specific goal, as it transformed her life as a whole. It is as Stein (2005) wrote: the transforming dream image serves as an archetypal image that manages to capture the element of wholeness in an individual’s

life and give it specific shape and direction. The ending questions I asked J'aime before we ended the story telling were: "How do you see your life in the future? What is now important to you? Is there any purpose in your life?" The answer I received clearly shows the image of "*that rose*" is her main transformative image.

I'm going to stick with my intention I made when I realized I had Hodgkin's Lymphoma. It's just a dream image, the rose, but it's a beautiful one that just came to me which is that my intention is to be present and in joy with "what is." Whether it's the things that are painful or things that are pleasant, to just really live in deep gratitude with what is. It's already present in my life and I have a desire to keep letting that bloom in me and to appreciate each other person I meet. What does the bloom of their life looks like—which might be very different from mine? That's what I really want to be or continue being or to keep allowing, that what happens through me is living in loving gratitude from being with what is, as it appears; be at peace with it, no matter what it is.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

CHAPTER VI

REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL JOURNEY

It has been over 3 years since I first encountered Voice Dialogue, and my life has changed in many dimensions. Changes addressed here are those I mainly regard as a result of changing in the way I perceive my life and this world. In the past, I had trapped myself without knowing that I was trapped and locked in by my belief in the set of “selves” I was really identified with. Actually, I did not even know that I was in a self. I was just that “self” and never woke up from it. I held that self so tightly with every breath of mine, and I strongly believed that “this” was “who” “I am.” The set of primary selves that I was in created my world, my perception, and my reality, always distorted and deviated from true reality. It became only “my” reality. It does not mean that the reality that I hold on to is wrong, but it might not represent the whole reality that I was then presented to when I was in a set of selves.

Even though I was taught about non-attachment in Buddhism, I barely understand what is actually meant by “do not attach” or “let it go.” I could only understand it conceptually as a way to liberate humans from any suffering, and I never truly understood the experience. With the practice of Voice Dialogue, it not only showed me what is meant by “non-attachment” or “nonduality,” but also let me experience the state of “non-attachment” and “nonduality.” Insight occurs inside of me with a feeling of awe every time such a moment just appears to me directly either through Voice Dialogue facilitation or everyday life. I would also call it according to Drs. Stone as an “Aware Ego Process” moment. In that moment, I am neither in this, nor that. There is no holding on tight to some thoughts/ some selves in particular. It is just the feeling of openness to the field of possibilities and the feeling of peace in the moment of not identifying with anything, but yet, at the same time everything is allowed.

Drs. Stone refer to the Aware Ego as a process, and I also see my life as a journey. It is a journey or process of gradually awakening from “who I believe I am.” Of course, I have some tendencies to behave in particular ways. However, when I start recognizing those tendencies as a part of me, not who I really am, it is like I start taking off some sticky clothes that I always wear as “me” little by little. Then my life becomes lighter as time goes by. I become more human, and that means I become just as ordinary as a human can be who has all kinds of feelings and actions. This helps to cultivate compassion within me towards myself and towards others.

Now is just the beginning of my consciousness journey. I am aware that at my age (turning 33 this year), most likely there is a long life ahead and many things to be experienced along the way. Yet, I cannot really tell how long my life is going to last. It can be just today or tomorrow, but as of now, I appreciate my life as it is and feel at ease as I have never felt before. I am certain that it is mainly because of Voice Dialogue practices, especially the facilitation that has brought my life to this point. However, other kinds of tools such as meditation practice or contemplative tools that I have learned and experienced are also very beneficial, and laid a portion of the foundation of a path of consciousness for me as well.

I would like to share my personal reflection from three perspectives and end this study with the conclusion as follows:

- 6.1) My Reflection Towards J'aime onaPangaia
- 6.2) My Voice Dialogue Consciousness Journey
- 6.3) My Personal Process of Working on the Thesis
- 6.4) Conclusion

6.1 My Reflection Towards J'aime onaPangaia

I would like to begin this part with the letter that J'aime wrote for me on the last day that I completed the 2-year Transformational Arts Program (2011 - 2013) with her.

Dear Soy—The first thing I want to acknowledge about you is your great thirst for learning, self-awareness and

practice—so much so, that you would sign up for a program here in America, in addition to all my programs that you attend in Thailand, and on top of your ongoing work for your Master’s Degree in Contemplative Education! Just last year, we spent 6 weeks together in my various programs—some that you attended, another that you helped significantly in by being my translator. I’ve been very impressed with your abilities to study this work, both with me in person and through the readings, knowing that you are doing so across language and cultural differences, and you’ve done such a beautiful job of it! I’ve seen a tremendous change in you over this time, in particular, your growing ability to discover your capacity for solitude (in the sense of peaceful privacy) while caring for the one you used to call your “lonely child”). It is such an endearing pleasure for me to also see the way in which she can be so playful and connecting.

I want to also acknowledge your continuous generosity and helpfulness. I know that it’s not all self-serving; you’ve been one of the three people who have been very helpful to me and to others in bringing me and Voice Dialogue to an expanding Thai community. You have also been good at balancing kreng jai enough to ask me for what you want or to point out when I might have missed something while at the same time, treating me in a respectful manner. I see in you the presence of an Integrative Leader and I look forward to seeing even more of how this will actualize in your life. Thank you too for all your help in explaining Thai words and customs to me so that I’m not so completely ignorant! If I were the Wizardess of Oz, I would give you the Pen That Never Runs Out, to write with as you continue to author your creative life story on your own terms. I’m glad to know you and I hold you in my heart with love and respect.

I put the above message here right before my reflection towards J'aime, because it reminds me of how she has been supporting my personal growth journey over time since we have met. It shows what I have changed since we first met from her perspective, and also, how I related to her in person from her point of view.

Unavoidably, I have been noticing and observing J'aime all along since the first day we met. I realized that it was my protector who checked out and evaluated her, looking for how skillful, trustworthy, accountable she was, as well as her integrity in the work she is offering and teaching. Over a year, she gradually earned my trust.

I experience her as a dynamic human being to engage with. Surprisingly, I notice myself that I can relate and interact with her freely, which is quite different from the feeling that I have towards my other teachers. If she was in a fixed teacher role all the time, I feel that it would be quite difficult for me to really learn from her as much and as deeply, especially in Voice Dialogue. I experienced her in many aspects and many circumstances and I do not feel that she holds on to a certain fixed role, such as teacher or mentor, when she relates to me or even to other students. I feel that I have more space to express myself in various ways. This is the way that I can learn how to be a more complete human being by learning from or being with her. Our relationship is dynamic. It seems like this gives a place for all of "the selves" in me to live and to breathe. For me, this is every essential for my process of personal growth. I notice that I relate to her not in only a fixed pattern of relationship between teacher/mentor and student. If I was allowed to only relate to her in a teacher and student relationship pattern, I could only learn how to be a good/bad student and a good/bad teacher, not how to become whole. It is very important for me to have a full learning space without judgment. J'aime allows that and handles and supports my process skillfully which affects my ability to grow wider and deeper. Because of that, I can gradually learn how to become a more conscious person.

The first time that I joined her retreat program in Portland, was the second time I met her since we first met in Bangkok in her Voice Dialogue Workshop. I was very surprised and impressed with her being. At the beginning, I only personally related to her as a teacher of Voice Dialogue, but the second time I met her, she was offering her retreat program at Manzanita beach in Oregon. I remember myself being a good and obedient student and also expected her to be a good, proper, and respectful

teacher. On the day that we were going to return to Portland from the beach, she took me to walk along the beach. I was very surprised that she brought with her two bubble blowers. She gave me one. Then we walked and played like two little girls having fun together. At that time, I suddenly felt that this is not the J'aime whom I know as a teacher. She freely enjoyed the beach and enjoyed spending time with me as another human being. She was completely out of her teacher role and became just another lively human being as I energetically felt. I have never experienced this feeling with anyone, especially one who is in the role/profession as teacher. At that moment, she earned my trust and my complete respect as a person who teaches Voice Dialogue.

As I observed her as a teacher and mentor, everything she teaches, she already went through herself, and still she keeps herself in practice for nearly all of the 30 years that she has been engaged in the work of Voice Dialogue. She gets facilitated regularly even though she has long years of experience. Therefore, that is a good indication that she teaches through her deep direct experience with the knowledge she has accumulated. Her teaching is not just only from knowledge she mentally studied. I am very grateful to have her as my teacher, my mentor, and as an ordinary evolving consciousness human being accompanying me through a consciousness process in life. It is such a gift in my life to come across J'aime and our relationship grows deeper, wider, and richer in many dimensions.

6.2 My Voice Dialogue Consciousness Journey

As I began this thesis, I offered the way that I made sense of me to myself in the introduction chapter about “the mirror theory” that I created when I was young in order to explain about my personality and relationships between me and other people. The mirror theory could help get rid of the pain and confusion that the “little girl” once had when the relationship turned bad because of her own actions. She used this mirror theory to explain things to herself without knowing that she pushed some of her feelings away and rationalized the situation through explanation of the theory. By then, in early elementary school, I felt like I was a grown-up. I could deal with feelings, emotions, and problems that arose in my life by rationalizing and

understanding the situation and answering for myself questions of why and how people behave towards each other like that when things turn bad.

Then, I began to be interested in observing the behaviors of people. I wanted to understand how and what people are constructed of. But it was not until I reached my teens that I started to learn about meditation and began my consciousness journey in a Buddhist path. I did not really understand my experience gained through Buddhist meditation practice, only that I felt that I could be a better person. I would be smarter. I would be able to concentrate more on my study. I tried to seek for a better way to develop myself with self-awareness and get to know myself more. When I turned 27 years old, I set myself to take a Master's degree in Contemplative Education and Transformative Learning program because I also felt that I would like to learn more about myself as a human and practice mindfulness. From there, I got a chance to know Voice Dialogue and that completely changed my life.

I began my Voice Dialogue journey by studying and understanding what was thought by J'aime in her workshop and by reading Drs. Stone's books and listening to their VDOs. When I look back, it was very helpful and fascinating to learn the theory. But now, I realize that it is even more helpful and important for me to be engaged with the practice of it. The practice, as well as the knowledge, can really take me from one place that I used to stand on my consciousness journey to another place as I am now. It is a step-by-step of one's inner journey that can eventually transform a person. For me, one of the first important elements as taught in Voice Dialogue is about "vulnerability." I started to realize that everyone has vulnerability/feelings and it is not shameful or bad or weak to have such a multitude of feelings. When I look back on my life, I often avoided my highs and lows of feeling. Being a grown-up person meant being stable and controlling one's feelings. Even worse, I did not allow myself to feel any pain, sorrow, grief, hurt, sadness, or even fear. Rather, I fought with these feelings inside. As a result, I also could not enjoy the feelings of joy, happiness, fun, loving, or openness as much as I would wish. I had never been present with the feelings happening in me. Rather, I controlled, managed, tried to forget, or unconsciously dwelt on those feelings and later on blamed and judged myself for having those feelings. The first time that I was really in touch with my vulnerability through Voice Dialogue facilitation, I started to realize that the vulnerable part of me

is real. It is not something to be controlled or discarded, but rather to be consciously aware of and present with it. It took me over a year to allow myself to really feel all kinds of feelings that are happening naturally in me.

For awhile, I came to know parts of me that are vulnerable, meaning open to any feelings whether it is a kind of pain or joy, and accepted that part as the way they really are. Inner judgment towards myself diminished. By that, real compassion arises. This kind of compassion is one that I had never experienced before. At the moment that I totally accepted the vulnerable part of me, I suddenly knew that I had never had compassion towards myself. I have lived my life by forcing and controlling myself all along without realizing it.

Compassion towards myself that naturally arises in me has a positive effect toward how I interact with the world. I have less judgment towards others. I am more able to feel and sense vulnerability in other people. The compassion that arises in me can be shared with others, too. With the quality of compassion, I can be more present with another person who I am with, meaning being present with body, mind, and soul, unlike before, when often times I had tried hard by finding ways to be very present with others in which mostly I was just there in physical appearance but not my mind and my soul. What happened inside mostly was the attempt to help or not to help others, or the desire to get away from them because I could not handle them, or pretend that I could but actually I felt overwhelmed.

What I have noticed since the beginning is that as I came to know my vulnerability and accepted it, instead of believing that things would get worse or I would become weaker, rather what I got in return was a natural way of being. The heaviness has turned into lightness because I no longer deny or suppress the vulnerable parts of myself like I used to.

In the first year that I started to work with my vulnerability, I could feel that my energy started to flow easily within me. Before, it was blocked somehow by having a set pattern of behaviors/selves. My hands and my feet were always cold. I had a lot of tension in my shoulders and my neck. I always had a headache because of the stress. I always had a stomachache because of the fear. My heartbeat was very fast and loud, almost 100 times per minute, because of my being in a busy life and constantly doing things. I always felt that I could not breathe deeply. My breath was

quite shallow. These body symptoms have decreased noticeably. My body temperature is warmer than it used to be. I can feel that the life force (Chi) circulates better within my body. My heartbeat is back to normal rate. My breathing is deeper. When I am less identified with a certain self that creates stress and fear, it helps in releasing the tension in my muscles, brain, and stomach. My health is simply way better when I live my life more consciously. I experienced some body symptoms directly in my facilitation sessions that came together with particular kinds of self, and also had a direct experience of the release of such symptoms when I separated from that self. These experiences gave me wonderfully direct insights about how each self operates and affects my physical body.

Another thing that surprises me is about the fear. I know that every human has fear, but we do not like the fear and want to get rid of it by fighting or running away. Actually, fear never goes away when we try to fight it or run from it. The fear is always there waiting for us to feel it. I used to try my best to cover all the fears that came up. I hid and suppressed it, but I always felt it all the time. When I began getting facilitation with J'aime regularly, I started to realize that the fear inside of me faded down. It does not mean that I have no fear, but that the fear does not run me. I no longer suppress or deny the fear. Instead, I would rather feel and be with the fear. At that time I could not explain how this happened. It was clearly noticeable for me that I no longer was extremely afraid of heights or lizards. I used to have a phobia about those two things. Now the phobias are gone. I still do not like the lizards but they do not freak me out. Then I started to realize that other kinds of fears such as fear of not being good enough or fear of not being loveable also faded. I thought that it might be because I have a more stable, peaceful, and balanced state within me. I also found that what really impacts my internal state of fear is the attachment to something. I went through the process of separating from a certain set of selves, mostly my primary selves that I always hold on and attach to, by getting Voice Dialogue facilitations. I now understand that attaching to a certain "being" brings about "the fear of no longer being that" or "the fear of turning into a totally opposite being" at the same time. It is risky and fearful to leave the same familiar pattern of being or what someone may call a comfort zone. Practicing separating from my primary self and embracing the opposite and then being in an aware ego process brings me to a new level of

experiencing life, and gets me out of the prison of those fears that used to run me.

The primary selves that operate in me always tell me: What kind of person do I “have to” be? What do I “have to” do in my life? How “should” I behave? I “have to”. . . I “should” . . . so that I will be loveable, respected, reliable, admired, and physically and emotionally safe, and so forth in return. I was 100% just a human of conditioning. I could not get out of the same old patterns that were called “me.” At the beginning, I started to realize that these primary selves are running my life all along. I did not even know that I was identified with them. I just only knew that this was what I have to be, this is what I have to do, this is what I should be, this is what I should do. I did not know that those beliefs were like rules governing my life and I had no freewill to choose how to live my life. Sometimes, if I did not do according to the rules that the primary selves strongly believed in, I would be punished harshly by my strong inner critic, and that was very painful and created accumulated stress, worry, and fear inside of me.

The feeling of ease and the decreasing of fear are not the effects of being a totally new person by discarding my old primary selves and becoming the opposite beings. Rather, the acceptance and honoring of the existence of those primary selves, that were well-developed through a person’s life via the way a person was raised and taught by parents, schools, society, and religions, are very essential in creating a door way to enter into the new territory of the psyche.

When I have been facilitated over and over again, I started to really feel that all the parts/selves in me are like many separate real people taking turns occupying so-called “me” and claiming itself that it was “me.” It was an eye-opening moment for me to hear each of the parts of myself saying the same thing, and claiming that it is “the real” me.

By separating from the set of primary selves that ran my life, there are a bunch of other selves/qualities that I never knew before starting to show up and letting me experience them as also parts of me. Here is one real example of how Voice Dialogue facilitation and accessing the Aware Ego Process contributed directly to my personal transformation that impacted my life a lot both in the inner world and the outer world.

Since I was young, I saw myself as a friendly and sociable person, always spending time with other people. When people invited me to join them, I always accepted their invitation. I always followed other people's advice and suggestion. For almost my whole life, I had never spent time alone or made any decision solely by myself. When I was free, I would find someone whom I could hang out or spend time with. So I have many groups of friends that I feel close to. Life has always been good without knowing that there has been some hidden problem that I could not see. During the time I started to study Voice Dialogue with J'aime was at the same time that I broke up with my ex-boyfriend. It was like I woke up from my hectic life. I started to realize that I could not stand being alone. I never ate alone. If I was by myself outside, even if I was very hungry, I avoided spending time eating by myself. I would prefer grabbing a cup of coffee and drive somewhere or do other things to keep me busy. I realized that I had never taken care of myself and my body well enough.

From the facilitation, I found out that my primary self had always been in charge of taking care of me and not letting me spend time alone and feel the loneliness which is a big pain that I was used to experience since I was young. I used to be the only child in the family until almost 12 years old when I gained a younger brother. It was so painful every night waiting in my bed for my mom to come back home. I waited and waited until I fell asleep. Sometimes, my mom was so busy at work and forgot to pick me up from school and I was the only one left at school. It was so scary being left at school alone and it became darker and darker as it got later. From those repeated events, the Pleaser started to develop to help take care of the pain from my loneliness. I learnt about this pleaser from Voice Dialogue facilitation, that it does its best to help take care of me by pleasing others and doing things according to other people's needs. It never let me say "no" to any request or invitation so that other people would love me, not forget me, be my friends, like me, and want to spend time with me. It seemed like I was an easy person to be with but actually this part of me was developed to protect me from any pain from the loneliness that had rooted deeply in my psyche since I was young. When I grew up, I never understood the word loneliness or felt lonely again because the primary self did its best and whatever it could in order to help me stay away from the lonely feeling. That part even helps me in not experiencing eating alone by myself!

In short, I feared feeling lonely or experiencing lonesomeness. So I tried my best to have someone to spend time with all the time by pleasing them so that they liked me and wanted to spend time with me. However, what I lost was the freedom and inner authority to make my own decisions and live my life independently.

If I could not separate from the part of me that always needs connection, I would not be able to embrace another part that knows how to set boundaries and have my own space. Now, I can spend time alone and am happy with the solitude. I do not feel that I need to struggle to find someone to alleviate my loneliness. I can still be happy without trying to please others when I spend time with them, and the ability to please others is still with me and available for me to use more consciously. It no longer runs my life totally, and if it shows up, I wake up from it quicker than before. I have an ability to take care of myself and set a better boundary when I need to without any following inner critic attack that I am selfish. It is a peaceful feeling when I have both opposite qualities/energies available for me to choose consciously in each moment.

From the previous example, it is only one set of opposites that I chose to demonstrate my experience from Voice Dialogue facilitation and practice that I worked with regularly for quite awhile. It is a pair of opposites between the primary self, the pleaser who helps in protecting the need for connection, and the disowned self, the self-caring and boundary setter who can help in protecting the need for my own autonomy.

By holding the presence of the opposites at the same time and accepting both sides without judgment, it creates a direct effect on the balance in my psyche because everything is allowed and nothing is discarded. Quite a while after I had been facilitated for many sessions, I started to experience what is called "Aware Ego Process." I had a direct experience that none of the selves is "me" but those selves are parts of me. It is an amazing experience to have.

For me, it is a practice of letting go of any attachment to oneself. By practicing this way, life's process flows easier. There is no fixed pattern to follow and no suffering from holding on to something tightly. Trust in the process of life increases. The results of working on any pair of opposites are relatively the same since the Aware Ego Process creates abundant possibility and freewill for a person. It

enhances one's ability to witness each self as it is and the ability to hold the experience of the opposites at the same time which brings about the moment of coming out from duality.

6.3 My Personal Process of Working on the Thesis

It took me almost 3 years to finish this paper. I went through various up and down times with the process of finishing it. There was somehow a resistance for almost the whole process. Writing an academic paper is very challenging, at least for me. Actually, just "writing" itself is very difficult. Writing is not the main channel that I use for my learning. I notice that I have a tendency to fall on the experiential learning style and keep my learning experience ripe and rich inside myself. I had a belief that it is difficult to distill the experience into words, and I also felt that it is more precious to keep it inside and let it process without trying to understand it logically. I felt that I enjoy taking action and experiencing rather than thinking and writing. I have a voice in me that says, "it is a waste of time writing things down." Moreover, I found out that I had a big fear of writing. Part of me fears fixing myself in words. I see myself as an evolving being. So when I tried to write something down, I start to feel that I fix my evolving process. When someone reads it, I would be fixed in their eyes and perception too. That was extremely scary to that part of me.

At the beginning, I struggled a lot just to start writing the draft of this paper. I can feel that I am passionate about Voice Dialogue but once it is required to write it down, it is no fun. Luckily enough, I decided to choose this topic that I really enjoy. Before I finalized my topic, I changed topics a couple of times. None of the previous ones were really a fit for my deep interest. I could not even start writing anything with the previous topics. However, for this one, Voice Dialogue, I was finally able to start reading and researching and began to write something out. I still needed to force myself to do it though. It was not really enjoyable at first. Deadlines helped by pushing me to finish it on time for the draft of proposal. When it came to the time to write it out, I always fell into the feeling of getting bored, having no energy, no interest, no excitement to do anything about it. Other things in my everyday life were more interesting and tempting. I felt that I was responsible for other tasks, not the

thesis paper, especially something that is related to other people. I found that I have a tendency to put myself last and other people first.

There are many people who encouraged and supported me during the whole process of finishing this study. I would not be able to do it unless I really realized by myself how important and precious this thesis is for me. To add more complexity to the whole story, for me only knowing how important this thesis is was not enough to get it done, being able to separate from the same old patterns/selves that block the whole process is even more crucial.

I addressed my issue regarding the difficulty of writing this paper to J'aime in private sessions. I usually have personal private sessions with her twice a month. From time to time, I was stressed out with this thesis. I could not get myself to work on this paper. It was desperate sometimes. Fortunately, I have another primary self that helped with balancing the desperate feeling that says, "I can do. Never give up. If I want to do something, I will be able to do it."

I would like to briefly reflect on the whole process of working on my thesis from the beginning until the end. At the beginning, I felt that I did not have a private and appropriate space to write my paper. It took me quite a while to work with myself by finding the right space so that I could start working on this thesis. It was very hard though because at first it seemed like my mom could not understand what I meant by wanting to have my own space. I had many sessions with J'aime just to work on the "having my own space" issue. I found out that for my whole life, I never let myself be alone and I did not know what it meant to have one's own space. My Chinese family culture is very group focused, and it is unusual to ask for a totally private space. Every room in the house was shared. I realized that to be able to work on my thesis I really needed the right space for myself. I talked to my mother about this and finally she understood and allowed me to live by myself in a separate place. Once I got my own place, I could finish the draft of proposal.

Later on when it came to the process of conducting the research, I hit another obstacle. I was too busy with many other things and had no time to sit down and do my work. I then brought this issue to J'aime to work on in many private sessions. She facilitated both primary parts and disowned parts and strengthened my Aware Ego Process of holding the balance between many opposites such as chaos vs.

order, connection vs. boundary, knowable vs. mystery, or control vs. release. Surprisingly, I found out that most of my primary selves did not support me to get my thesis done. My tendency fell on chaos, connection, known, and control. My normal life was very chaotic and I needed freedom but to complete the thesis, I needed to embrace the opposite which is order and discipline. I always need connection and want to engage with people all the time, but to complete the thesis, I needed to be alone, clear my busy time with other people, and set the boundary for myself so that I can have my private and quiet time to write. I always want to know everything in advance before taking any action, but to complete this thesis, I needed to learn to start from a vague idea and put myself in a comfortable place of mystery and unknown so that I could discover something new and be creative. Lastly, I always have a pattern of being in control and put myself in tension, but to complete this thesis, I needed to learn how to surrender to the process and relax while seriously working. Literally, it was easy to understand what qualities were needed in order to finish the academic paper. In reality, it was very difficult to train oneself to have such proper qualities when their primary personalities are totally opposite. Actually, it does not take much time to finish the whole thesis if a person is very dedicated to work on it. Yet, it takes so much time to gradually process oneself to get close to that ability to finish it.

I learned a lot about myself by just bringing all the problems that I had during the period of working on my thesis and addressing them with my mentor, J'aime. She supported my process with care and compassion. The gift from this thesis is not solely about finishing up and passing the defensive examination, but also about how much I learned about myself and transformed along the way from the beginning of the process until the end.

While writing this reflection, I no longer feel the resistance within myself regarding writing. I now know I have a part of me that loves to write, and when I write, I do it from that part. If not, I will feel right away that I force myself to write, and it was not fun! That is not a healthy way to write also. So why do it? Speaking from the part of me that loves to write, writing is something that shapes my understanding and turns my direct experience into tangible assets. I no longer blame myself about taking so much time to complete this paper. When I look back, I really know why this process of mine required such a long time. It has its own process and

timing. I also appreciate and honor the limit and timeframe that I was given to complete this thesis. Without the time limit, it would not be as challenging. The experience may be too diluted or may evaporate from my memory. I am grateful to go through this challenging process.

6.4 Conclusion

The main focus of this study was about life transformation and Voice Dialogue. The thesis question was on how life transforms through Voice Dialogue. By using a limited case study and extensively interviewing a well-qualified person, J'aime ona Pangaia, who has been engaging in Voice Dialogue for almost 30 years and is also a direct student of the creators of the work, Dr. Hal and Dr. Sidra Stone, this provided deep and rich information to demonstrate how a person's life can transform through Voice Dialogue.

Transformation happens naturally throughout an individual's life. Life itself is something to experience and it has its own twists and turns. Life always shows its urge to transformation by itself through some kinds of signals and important incidents in life such as a loss of relationship, a loss of beloved one, sickness and body symptoms, problems and difficulties, or a deep desire or longing for something that is missing in life, or even important dreams. It might be seen as the nature of the Unconscious revealing itself and showing how each life has its own needs to yearn for wholeness through transformation. There are some kinds of natural forces that create this flow, variously named as the Intelligence of the Universe, God, Karma, Fate, Destiny, Organizing Intelligence, or Tao.

It is important for an individual to learn how to go through and be with the period of transformation with trust and consciously engage in the transformation process itself without resisting it. By fully participating in the natural transformation consciously, it creates a powerful impact on a person's life. People need change but the change process itself is very mysterious and scary. Therefore, people always deny or resist the change process unconsciously. Transformation is an unknown and complex process. It takes courage along with being able to be vulnerable to face it. Change can be stable and last when a person undergoes the process of transformation

consciously.

Becoming a more conscious human being is the fundamental and essential element of life transformation. Transformation does not cause anyone to be superior rather it brings a person gradually close to the wholeness of being a full human as part of nature. It takes the whole lifetime of a person to transform. Transformation is not a one-time incident but rather is an ongoing process, termed Individuation by Jung.

It is also important for a transforming person to have the right support of practice along with the right support of community. Voice Dialogue is one of the powerful transformational tools/approaches that offer supporting means for a person to practice. Main essential elements in Voice Dialogue for a person to practice with includes getting Voice Dialogue facilitation from a skilful and experienced facilitator, doing dream work, and working with bonding patterns. However, just as no single tool fits everyone, Voice Dialogue may not be for everyone.

Over time, ongoing practice of Voice Dialogue can bring a sense of impermanence to one's life that will liberate a person from a fixed attachment of being in certain kinds of selves or subpersonalities. Also, natural compassion will emerge because nothing in life is discarded. Everything is included. The process of Voice Dialogue practice helps a person to become more aware of who they are and who they are not. It is also a tool to practice and strengthen awareness for a person. The ultimate goal of the work is cultivating Aware Ego Process, that is to separate from a self and to be able to hold and embrace the opposite, can let a person experience freewill and have more choices to engage in life and not be stuck in the same old pattern for long. One's consciousness will expand and evolve and a person can go beyond their established personal traits and identities and become more whole.

I would like to conclude with the last paragraph from J'aime's interview to remind myself and the readers regarding the practice of Voice Dialogue for life transformation that it is mainly through a consciousness path that can truly support a transformation process of a person. The true transformation will bring a person closer to their wholeness. Without an intentional consciousness path, a person will not be able to develop human consciousness and become more aware of all of the realities that belong to the human realm.

One of the things the Stones talk about is that Voice Dialogue is a consciousness path. It's not essentially a spiritual path. Spiritual path usually includes certain kinds of religious practices aimed at ultimate end-state goals: heaven, nirvana, God-realization, etc. and is often concerned with rules, right and wrong, sin, karma, and an afterlife existence. The Voice Dialogue consciousness path is something that consciously embraces the parts of us who are religious or spiritual and the parts of us who aren't without making one side good/correct and the other side bad/wrong. It includes both being awake to "what is" and at the same time, recognizing that we are also, in many ways, asleep to "what is." We begin to more deeply appreciate that we exist in duality and at the same time, we practice a nondual perspective. Nondual in the sense of experiencing life from a both/and perspective rather than an either/or perspective. The Sanskrit term "Neti-Neti" captures this nicely. We are ultimately neither this nor that and at the exact same moment, we are both this and that. Nondual consciousness grows in us a comfort with experiencing paradox. The Voice Dialogue consciousness process also recognizes that I (may) have a "spiritual self" that manages and supports spiritual experiences. And, I can have a very different part of me, another inner self that doesn't even think about those things. Many people in our community refer to Voice Dialogue as a "psycho-spiritual" process simply because this psychology includes a deep level of mindfulness. Our process trains us to embrace the reality of All That Is, that we are All a part of, as it steadily is revealed to our conscious mind, and it encourages us to seek that revelation.

(Interviewed on May 7, 2013)

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