

Section 1: Healing and Wholeness

Vignettes: Only 1-2 paragraphs each

- A. Includes "Anxiety becomes a friend" and four others
- B. Includes "Looking for raisins in a hardware store" and four others
- C. Includes "Mother Mississippi" and four others
- D. Includes "Work on Wonder" and four others
- E. Includes "I found my 'twin' in prison" and four others
- F. Includes "Music soothes my soul" and five others

Poem to inspire this section:

Falling in love with God

Attributed to [Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ](#) (1907-1991)

Nothing is more practical than
finding God, than
falling in love
in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.
It will decide
what will get you out of bed in the morning,
what you do with your evenings,
how you spend your weekends,
what you read, who you know,
what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in love, stay in love,
and it will decide everything.

A. Anxiety becomes a friend

How absurd, to think of anxiety as a friend. And I certainly didn't when I first had to contend with it controlling my life. Thanks to a wise counselor and my spiritual director I decided to view my anxiety in a spiritual context and ask what it was trying to tell me. What I found out was that the real "disorder" was not my anxiety, it was my life. I was running a business and overdoing it, plus running a non-profit as an executive director that included a strenuous fund raising event. My body just made me quit. It was speaking loudly to me.

After much inner work, a slow recovery and plenty of compassion for my anxiety, I learned to see it as my truth teller, my early warning system—and if I follow through on its messages, I am rewarded with wisdom. I now live a smaller, calmer, more conscious and intimate life (on my good days!) and with God's insistent grace, I can see my anxiety as a companion, a friend, and even a gift. Lord have mercy.

I left church to find God

Sometimes my experience of church and God coincide and at other times they seem like sandpaper rubbing against one another. Over the years I've found much healing and love from God—mostly outside of the church through spiritual direction and groups in which more depth and healing are invited. I continue to periodically struggle with church, especially when it becomes isolated, patriarchal, or shame-based. I've left church on sabbatical, I call it, several times, from months to years. The essential things for my faith are intimacy with God, prayer, Eucharist/communion and community. Two or even three of those I can get outside of church. I find "church" in coffee shops, at musical events, in deep conversation, in healing moments. I also feel it is important to give back, and not focus solely on what I get. I give back by bringing my time and gifts to the community and by being a healer in my daily life. A friend calls it stand-in church. I agree.

So why do I still seek a worshipping community to be part of? Because I feel a special touch of the spirit in a word, in music, and in the quiet moments at most of the services I choose to attend. Because I love to kneel at the altar while taking communion and feel Jesus feeding me with the bread and wine. Because I desire the regular rhythm of a community of people worshipping together on the way, walking hand in hand and caring for one another.

More to our lives than we are willing to admit

It's so easy to get pulled down by the weight of the world or our own lives and the lives of those we love. Lord knows there is enough pain in the world to drown out joy forever. Yet I notice that God at times tempts us or entices us with little spurts of joy that we could not orchestrate. And usually right when we need it most, God gives us a really big dose of surprising joy. The writer, Margaret Silf, calls this sweeping consolation. It is such a showering of people, incidents, messages, or miracles in a relatively short time period that we can't write it off as just a nice day or a good week. We are so embraced with goodness, meaning and

joy that we may be tempted to start believing that there is something more to our lives than we are willing to admit and that we are called to bring something more of ourselves to the world as a gift, or as a generous contribution.

Love your enemies

What we learn about our enemies can change our hearts. Sounds impossible but stranger things have happened! One little reminder of that for me is that, in the mid 1990s another woman and I worked on a national program to help heal domestic violence. Our goals and methods were quite different from the prevailing groups within the movement and we began getting strong pushback from a group of leaders we came to call the “big mamas.” At one point the opposition became so strong it threatened our very existence as an organization. We called for a face-to-face meeting with the two top leaders. Needless to say we were both frightened of the outcome, so in order to soften the intense feelings, we asked that, as a way to start the meeting, each of the four of us could talk about how and why we’d gotten involved in the domestic violence movement.

The second person to speak was the strongest leader in the national movement. She held all the purse strings on the national grants! Yet her personal story stunned us. She said that she got involved because her mother-in-law was murdered by her husband and that she, this leader, had not been able to do anything to prevent it. Her candor and her sadness were palpable. I can’t say honestly that we came to love her (as our potentially worst critic) but we certainly developed more understanding of her and had more compassion for her. We still had to hold our own strength in relation to our work, but we changed our stance in relation to the other leaders and decided to honor their achievements at our event, no matter how they treated us from that point on. They backed away from their most intimidating threats. And this experience changed the way we led, moving us from leading from the front where there were endless confrontations, to leading from the middle where there were few.

“My body doesn’t lie”

I think most of us don’t consider ourselves liars, but we do hide the truth for many reasons. And it usually works, at least for several years. But eventually the truth seeks attention. That covering of the truth, I’ve found, doesn’t work with my body. My body is my honesty, awareness and integrity barometer. It is absolutely uncanny to the point of seeming unbelievable, even for me at times. For example, I have a muscle over my right shoulder blade that gets tight and

aches whenever I am being abused or when I'm around emotionally abusive people, who I am vulnerable to. As soon as I am aware of the pain and I look at my life to see where the abuse is coming from, even if an unlikely source, and I name it and move away from it, my muscle releases. I think it has to do with cellular memory but who knows? Is there a medical proof or an explanation? Probably not one that Western medicine can quantify. Yet this happens to me with such frequency that I've come to trust in my body and its messages in new and respectful ways. I think my body has wisdom, and that it knows more than I do.

B. Looking for raisins in a hardware store

Wisdom for the ages. A seasoned therapist who taught me and several of my friends how to navigate the big waves, had several key concepts or truths that she helped us understand. They were indispensable to our wellbeing. I use one of her key ideas to this day when I encounter troublesome relationships with people who are toxic or even lethal. Somehow I thought if I just worked hard enough or became kind enough, or found a way to "fix" us, things would be different. Her gentle advice to me was this: "Quit looking for raisins in a hardware store."

Resentment is like carrying a pocket full of rocks

One of the more difficult necessities in my life is forgiveness and its aftermath. My forgiveness goes two ways: towards myself and towards others. When I seek to forgive myself, it can be difficult but it is a big relief. I feel cleaned out and loved. When the forgiveness involves others it gets complicated. In some cases it's possible to make amends to those I have harmed. I usually do that by what I call clean letters, in which I apologize and try not to add barbs or subtle blame. If I desire to forgive others or ask them to forgive me in person, it can be even more complicated. Even though I forgive, it is not always safe or possible to expect reconciliation since that takes two people. Yet I believe that the process of forgiveness short of reconciliation is also life giving.

In fact, Matt Linn, a well-respected priest and healer, cited Harvard and Yale research that showed that the two most prevalent characteristics of people who experience health and well-being are gratitude and forgiveness. Still, it is easy to let resentments build because there are so many ways to feel hurt, scared, angry or slighted. But counselors have taught me that holding on to resentment is like carrying a pocketful of rocks. Who needs that?

Sacred yes, sacred no

Some of us say yes too easily and get ourselves in trouble. Others say no too easily and get in other kinds of trouble. I've found, it's not simply the yes or no that are issues for me, but the intention behind my yes and no. So if I want to say no but I'm afraid to, my intention is to avoid conflict and over time this reeks havoc in my life. An example is not being willing to say no to being with a toxic relative at Christmas but instead being angry or afraid while being together. If I say no when I know I would grow with a yes, I am protecting myself from taking a risk. An example is being asked to teach something that is a stretch but not being willing to try stretching. Thomas Merton wrote about what a sacred yes or a sacred no means. It allows us to be thoughtful and clear about our intention because we bring God into the intention. So our first sacred yes could be inviting God into our intentions.

"Who knows? We'll see"

The phrase interior freedom may sound abstract but it's really clear when you feel it. It's a surge of relief and an inflowing of personal power or wellbeing that results from making life-giving and courageous choices in difficult, even threatening situations and acting on them. It feels exhausting yet liberating. It takes effort and invites new levels of strength. God is always present as an invitation to interior freedom. It may mean leaving a job or relationship. It may mean saying no to abuse. It may mean facing fear or finally standing up to your mother or brother or family system. It may mean saying yes to self worth.

And when I finally tasted a bit of interior freedom, and started engaging it more as a way of life, it felt like I could invest more trust in God to be in charge of my life. It allowed me to let go of more control, to let go of outcomes, to embrace more honesty and humor, to trust the process and approach things with the bigger picture in view. Jung calls it individuation. Ignatius calls it active indifference. Buddhists call it non-attachment. Some call it loving detachment. I've tried to think of something simpler to call it when I'm in the middle of wondering or thinking about what to do or how to do it. I just say (on my good days) "Well, who knows?" or "We'll see."

"But who do you say that I am?"

I feel this is the question that Jesus has asked me gently and continuously most of my life. For the first eighteen years when Jesus was presented to me in a frightening way, I would give the church's answer that I felt I had to adhere to. Then I was opened to actually thinking about this question more freely and I went on an excursion, including doubting and even taking a sabbatical from asking the question. After that I read widely, went to lectures, talked to a lot of people, reflected, wrote in my journal, talked to my spiritual director. I had healed my image of God and I was intrigued with the Holy Spirit, but Jesus still felt unsafe to me and no image or idea of him resonated with me. I didn't even want to read the New Testament unless I had to.

Finally I exhausted my external search. I had a holy inspiration. I felt led to ask Jesus directly who he is for me. That was daunting, to say the least, to ask Jesus who he is. But I did it. In the quiet of prayer. He gently spoke to my internal apprehension, saying he never needed to be the fear or shame induced image my church taught. He didn't even need to be any of those alternative images served up by the theologians, who I felt left him sterilized and impersonal. I said, "Well, what's left?" He gently suggested three images that could be intentional, relational and transformational for me. I was eager to hear them. "Well, dearie. How about best friend (BFF), brother, or lover?" I chose all three.

C. Mother Mississippi

Nature is balm for my soul. Trees speak to me. Birds are my totem. Woods and water surprise me with their gifts. Flowers and colors enthrall me. Even storm clouds fascinate me. I don't study nature. I absorb it. So it is no surprise that the mighty Mississippi River near where I live is a place of wonder and hope for me. The river moves, it has deep undercurrents, it makes life-giving sounds, it is home for many birds and critters. It supports life. The river holds special meaning for me in two major ways. I go to the river to make big decisions and commitments. I release what I need to let go of into her current. I claim what I need to embrace as I stand on her banks. And my holiest experience of the river is that my friend, Michael, and I meet there to share our lives. And when we are not there together, we each feel the spirit of the other there with us. Mother Mississippi is my river of life.

Notice the moment healing happens

It's usually easy to notice the things that hurt or injure or embarrass us, shame or frighten us. We recall the stories in some detail, even years later. In fact, telling the story of how we were hurt or misused is a vital part of the healing process.

And so is noticing the fact or the moment when we know we have forgiven, released or healed. When we heal, forgive or release, something shifts within us. We have a satisfied calm, a sense of understanding or completion, sometimes even resolution.

I, for instance, noticed the first time I had an unprompted humorous recollection of a difficult friend who hurt me as she was dying. I remember the moment I felt my anxiety was not a disability but a gift, my early warning system. I noticed a forgiving shift when I was casually chatting with a deceptive former business partner at the dessert table at a wedding. I noticed when I could worship in a church again without feeling guilt or shame. I remember looking forward to Christmas again. I noticed when I could say God loves me and mean it. I noticed when I was not afraid of being afraid. I remember the hush in my soul feeling safe and grateful when visiting a former home in which I had felt both searing pain and utmost joy. I remember trusting the depth of two truths I have come to embrace, "All is gift" and "All will be well."

The white coat syndrome

Some folks love doctors. Doctors offer a splendid care-taking function. They even help us heal. I don't actually dislike doctors. I'm just afraid of them. It's called the "white coat syndrome." I stay as healthy as I can to avoid them. Why? It's not entirely clear but has to do with a few bad experiences. On the whole it's more about the tests they prescribe, the clinical nature of the relationship, the false positives and added tests, the bleak examination rooms, and prescribing pills instead of teaching me how to stay well. Underneath it all, I'm sure is the fear of dying, the whole dying process. Yikes.

So how do I reconcile these fears with the fact that I'm likely to need a medical team to help me stay physically fit and to help me die someday? I wanted to get started on all of that before an emergency. Here's where God stepped in and directed me early one morning to go as a walk-in client to my neighborhood clinic so we could heal my fears. I was so scared I had to ask a friend to go with me. But as only God could orchestrate, the doctor and her assistant on call that morning were angels. I was stunned. I told her about my fears and a bit about my experience. She said that they don't do all those tests unless they are necessary, that I didn't have to undress and wear a paper dress, that I did not need to have a shot. She just listened, asked wise questions, and mostly reassured me. She gave me a great referral for the grief situation I was experiencing. But the best surprise of all, after initially finding out that this

doctor was not taking new clients, was that she asked me if I would like to be her client, since I was the kind of client that she liked to work with. I said “YES.” Her name is Dr. Pleasants and I don’t even remember if she wore a white coat or not!

Gratitude trumps everything

I’m not a Pollyanna although some might accuse me of that because of the optimism and hope I carry. I’ve had my share of loss, pain and sorrow. What I’ve learned is that on my really bad days, one of the things that keeps me from caving in totally is to remind myself what I am grateful for or what I can count on that day. Sometimes it’s as basic as gratitude that the sun came up or my building is still standing or that my car started. It helps me to see that there is still something stable in my chaotic world. And if I can stay with those basic gratitude thoughts the list begins to lengthen, like I can list those who I’m pretty sure love me. This in turn gives me a slightly different perspective that enables me to slowly move forward. I’ve found that gratitude, especially during challenging times is one of the most sacred and effective antidotes for hurt, fear or anger.

The most essential way I weave gratitude into my life is to ask, at the end of each day, “What am I most grateful for and least grateful for, and why?” I ask God into those memories to enrich or heal them. It’s called a daily examen. I am so impressed with the impact it has on me that it has become as important as washing my face and brushing my teeth. But by far, the sweetest challenge that gratitude can offer me is the call to be grateful for everything—knowing that “all is gift,” as Teresa of Avila so adroitly suggests. Now that kind of gratitude trumps everything.

Feeding our souls

We all know our bodies need healthy food and exercise. I suggest that our souls need daily feeding as well. Soul feeding varies by the individual although some basic things help most people; quiet, nature, inspirational reading, prayer, a daily check-in to see what was life giving, soul/body rituals, close friends. My soul is hungry for these things every day. A sampling of other soul feeding things I love and need are intimate conversations, spiritual direction, creativity, writing, walking, singing, Eucharist, generosity, community, and baseball. Feed your soul. Sounds soul-indulgent doesn’t it? Yes!

D. "Work on wonder:" "Grieve the losses, deal with what is, and work on wonder"

I keep coming back to a few core truths that guide my life, particularly in times of confusion or distress or loss. When I recite these truths to myself, sometimes over and over, they have a way of calming me and pointing me to a larger perspective. I've mentioned a few light hearted ones already (oh well, we'll see) but my deeper ones are these: "My entire life is in God's hands and it all unfolds as God intends," "All will be well," "O Love that will not let me go," "Joy emerges from pain well attended."

One of my all time favorite guidelines for my life, my way to process the journey in a practical and healing way comes from a quote that I learned years ago, written by an 88-year old Jungian analyst (name unknown). It is so simple yet so profound. "*Grieve the losses, deal with what is, and work on wonder.*" It makes me *almost* (I said almost) eager to deal with loss so I can retrieve wonder. All of these truths help restore my perspective –and my soul.

It changed the trajectory of my life.

What are the life experiences that really change our lives? Can we see them when they are happening or only notice in retrospect? At a plateau point in my life two friends who didn't know each other both recommended that I go and talk to a nun named Mary Sharon about my life. I wondered why. But I trusted them. She was a spiritual director, which I knew little about. And the fact that she was Catholic had my mother mumbling from her grave. My mother was a Lutheran! Well, let's just say Mary Sharon saw me coming! The third time we met, she wisely asked me a simple but profound question and let my mind try to wrap itself around that question. "Why did God create you?" Yikes. It took me a year to answer it other than in a superficial way.

Over my years in spiritual direction, forty and counting now, what I've experienced in my life and why spiritual direction changed the trajectory of my life is this: I've healed my image of God which was coincidentally much like my unhealthy image of my father; I discovered deep intimacy with God; I developed courage beyond my comprehension; I embraced pain and loss in my life and saw it eventually as a gift; I experienced more joy than I thought was possible; I reset my life's priorities, finding my life's meaning in these new directions. Hallelujah.

"Welcome to the excruciatingly wonderful world of marriage."

I believe in love. I believe in marriage. I've loved and I've been loved. I've been married twice for a total of thirty-one years. At its best, marriage brings love, belonging, teamwork, facing adversity together, raising children, traveling, celebrating with each others' families, having a witness to our lives, and sharing oodles of memories. Many of my best times in life, and a few of my worst times happened within marriage. Yet I felt God was always present with me. Through my marriages I became a deeper, wiser, stronger, more wounded, more compassionate person—and I truly believe that marriage brings you your work to do. It may even force you to do that inner work! I believe I healed the deepest issues of my life through marriage, and for that I am grateful. Therefore, in wedding cards I usually say, "Welcome to the excruciatingly wonderful world of marriage."

"Oh well"

You know how people have mannerisms or sayings they become known for? Like the comedian, Flip Wilson, who was famous for saying "The devil made me do it." Or Carol Burnett's Tarzan-like yell. Well I think I've become known among my friends for a much more pedestrian saying but one that helps me to stay balanced and mostly sane. It helps me release things that do not go my way and to be grateful for what I wasn't expecting and can't take credit for. It just works. Even when I can't think of anything more to say about it. "Oh well."

Amateur Urban Mystic

I think Frederich Buechner, writer and theologian, was right when he said that all of us are mystics of some sort or another. He says we all experience things that are beyond our comprehension. We experience miracles. We have touches of eternity breaking into our lives. But unlike the saints and mystics we read about, when these things happen to us we go right on as if nothing happened.

I decided to do what I'd read the mystics did, stop and notice what was happening, absorb it, and even look for these mysteries. I'm just an amateur urban mystic with no training, only a desire to connect at a deeper more intimate level with God and the earth. But even as an amateur mystic, I've noticed that colors vibrate, gifts come from the "other side," birds and trees know more than we think, spontaneous tears and scents matter, dreams are postcards from God, people carry intentions in their eyes, love has a glow, forgiveness is visceral. Don't get me started!

E. I found my “twin” in prison

God finds really creative ways to get my attention, maybe because I don't always notice the more subtle ways. One incident in particular got my attention more radically than others. I was a volunteer spiritual director at a women's prison, attending a four-day spiritual retreat that included both inmates and outside team members, seated together at tables for six. I sat next to a beautiful vivacious brunette and looked forward to talking with her, and truth be told, I assumed that she was on the external team. When we introduced ourselves to one another it turned out that we had the same first name. “Cool” I said.” What's your middle name?” Turns out we had the same middle name. So jokingly I asked what her last name was. You guessed it. We had the same last name too, although one was a married name. That didn't matter. We were name twins from that moment on. And then I found out she was an inmate. Several stereotypes flew right out the window. And God's message to me was to wake up to this rich opportunity to learn about myself, about this lovely woman in prison, and about God. She and I ended up meeting twice a month for about eight years and at least from my perspective, our relationship was like a sacred bond. Her highest compliment to me was that I came to the prison to meet with her even when it snowed!

Body as temple: the dilemma for humans

The body, specifically our relations with it along with our sensuality and sexuality, is perhaps the last bastion of hold out in God's healing work with us. I don't know if that is due to the mind-body-spirit split in religion, the fears and or distain we have about our bodies in general, or the culture's focus on sex as power. I do sense that our reluctance to embrace our bodies and our sexuality as holy is one reason things seem to go awry in that arena so often. I can see in my own life, the healing of my body image and my sexuality resulted in new and deeper layers of emotional and spiritual intimacy with myself, with others and with God. Could it be that our angst and pain around these two issues is a deep and sorrowful cry for more intimacy with God, who not only created us in God's own image but created us to be temples of God's presence on earth? Healed. Safe. Loved. Whole. Healers. This may sound naïve and overly simplified until we actually try it.

Racial Reconciliation

I am eternally grateful to have a wise African American man as my pastor, mentor and friend. As a white female I have all those confusing and guilt-induced feeling about race. So my pastor is my go-to guy with all my fears and questions. He's wise, safe, and experienced in race relations. Once we were having a conversation about racial reconciliation since I was interested in ways to do that as a process within the church. In the same conversation I was relating the creativity I felt being in the church quilt group, which was multi-racial. After I finished my story he looked at me, smiled and said, "Janet, that's racial reconciliation."

"You don't understand how busy I am."

God and I have been on this intimate journey, sometimes rocky, sometimes smooth but always interesting, for years. My image of God has gradually shifted from judge, Santa Claus with a stick and distant, to being more approachable, then to a source of healing and intimacy. One major turning point in that journey was right in the middle of the busiest time of my life. I was balancing a lot of balls with several different roles to tend to. In prayer one day God asked me if I wanted to go deeper. What a question! And I knew that it had potentially disruptive implications! So I asked what it meant. God said, "Well if you would like more of me in your life, I need more of you." "What does that mean?" I retorted. God replied, "I'd like you to take one half day a week for prayer, in order to do more of what I'm calling you to do and be in the world." "But you don't understand how busy I am" I wailed back. "Yes, I do, and that's why I'm asking this of you. I want to be more integral to your busyness."

I realized then that God tended to a lot more of my life than I thought. Duh. How could I refuse this invitation, although on subsequent occasions when the same offer came up, I invited God to come back in a few months! But in this case I showed up one additional morning a week and sure enough, God did too. We still do. I save the time for prayer or for whatever God wants of our quiet time together. And truthfully, I cannot imagine my life without my Wednesday retreat. It is not overstating it to say that many a Wednesday has restored and even saved my soul.

The "other"

All of us have those we consider "other;" different, wrong, threatening, perhaps even an enemy. For some it is people in a different tribe, for others it is people in power or who have privilege and for some it is those who are marginalized,

poor, ill, or homeless. I've found that otherness has a better chance of breaking down with mutual acquaintance, yet that is a difficult path and not so easy to come by in our world of fear and of cultural siloes. I know that I am the "other" on some people's lists. And some who have been "other" for me have been young black men with dreds and low hanging pants, the super rich, sexual predators, and abusers.

Albert Nolan has helped me to understand at least four ways to learn and to perhaps heal and connect with the "other" who he names in his model as the poor in the world (and incidentally with the other in me.) *This model has shifted me from fear, guilt or shame to a stance of opening my heart to deeper experiences and deeper truths so I could face into my fears of the "other."* The first way, Compassion, is to help the poor with relief work and a simplified life style. The second way, Structural Change, is to advocate for and free the poor through social justice reform, noticing that we are all victims and participants in the system. The third way, Humility, involves empowering the poor, getting to know them as individuals, and learning from them. This was the way that helped me most to face into my fears, to get to know people who were on my "other" list and see what I could learn. For instance, I invited a young black man with dreds to be my mentor. Wow, what a breakthrough. The fourth way, Solidarity, is our willingness to "become" the poor and gain the realism that we are all human and we share much of the same pain.

F. Music soothes my soul

Maybe that's why some music is called soul music. Music is a universal language. It delights. It excites. It mourns. It heals. It calms. It exudes all kinds of emotion. It even stays with you when you'd rather it didn't, like ear-worms. We can even remember where we were when we first heard a song. Isn't it amazing how music pops up in our psyches just when we most need it; The words of an old love song, the lines from a hymn, the cover song from our favorite rock group or a movie theme. Where are all of those stored and how do they know to emerge at the right moment?? During an anxious time for me, our choir sang a profound yet simple song that has stayed with me, deep in my soul. I sing it in my car when I need calm reassurance. I draw on its truth when I need it most. I know the words to be true for me, even though they are hard to hold. But the truth of them soothes my soul. "I believe in the sun, even when it's not shining. I believe in love, even when I don't feel it. I believe in God, even when God is silent."

In a healing way

When I began to sense a call to a spiritual and emotional healing role, I met with my healing mentor, Fr. Matt Linn. I sought his counsel on how to go about this work. He said he would give me just a few principles—and he did—in all of five minutes. The three things I remember most were that God is the healer, not us; that anyone can be involved in a healing process; and that no one is truly a victim. I learned key things in those five minutes but I learned even more from watching him at his annual healing service.

He tells healing stories, cites Jesus' words and asks people to draw into God's healing love. He has spiritual directors available to hear the prayer requests for healing and he simply anoints people with oil. The focus is on the process not on him. And in the healing work that I am called to do, he's taught me to work with anyone who feels the personal call to be in a healing stance in the world. So I work with consultants, mothers, teachers, counselors, pastors, musicians, baristas, spiritual directors. We do not hang out shingles saying we are healers. We go about our daily lives as whoever we are but "in a healing way." And we wait for God to bring healing opportunities our way. What a gift and what a revelation. Who knows how I would have gone about this work by myself? Wise mentors. Five minutes. Life changing. God's mysterious work. In a healing way!

We may not be cured but we can all heal

I have had the privilege of walking alongside a young man as he journeys with a deadly form of brain cancer. He's been living with two tracks of healing, the physical and the spiritual/emotional for more than two years now. His tumor has not grown for over a year, yet there is no declaration of a cure. That part is a mystery.

But on the other healing track, he has uncovered severe trauma four generations back on his father's side, with multiple brain illnesses in the men in that lineage, including his father. He has worked diligently on understanding and healing this history through the help of community, prayer, relatives, and unearthing the sad stories. And he would say that nature, specifically the Mississippi River and the water birds, are guiding him on this journey. They are accompanying him and filling him—every day. He also talks directly to God at the river and hears what healing words and direction he needs for the day. And now he meets with others who have life threatening illnesses, to help them tell their personal stories as part of the healing process. As a result of the loving relationship he has with his

doctor he also works with doctors and patients to encourage more loving and mutual relationships. He may not be cured. That remains mysterious. But he certainly has healed.

Dayenu

Dayenu is a Hebrew word meaning "It would have been enough." Jewish people have a song citing all the major things God has done for them in their history, followed by the loud refrain, "Dayenu." The meaning of this is that if God had only done one of those things, it would have been enough, but God just kept going. "Dayenu, dayenu, dayenu."

I've tried it in my own life, listing all the things in the past few years that I remember God doing for me, one at a time, followed by the word "Dayenu" spoken out loud. After listing a number of items it becomes clear that God is at work and that I can pause and be thankful for this treasure God is willing to bestow on me. And on those days when it is hard to imagine God helping me because I'm feeling down on myself, I can beg God to help me heal that false image of myself and God. And when that happens, "Dayenu."

Keeping my slate clean

In my work with people who want to live their lives in a healing way, we have five principles we focus on to lean us in the direction of healing. One of them is keeping our slates clean. That means to consciously deal with anything that is weighing on us or hindering our healing intentions. The way I recognize the need is when I'm anxious, hurt, angry, resentful, or afraid. The path is to go underneath the feeling to find the deeper truth and free it, to be embraced, acted on, forgiven or healed.

An example: I am in the process of closing down a business I've been involved in for twenty-five years. I got stuck a few weeks ago, not being able to act on the things I knew I needed to do. I didn't know why until I took it to quiet reflection. Then I realized I've not sufficiently grieved this loss. It is a loss of identity, a loss of some income, a loss of meaning. I think I am really wondering if there will be any other meaning to take its place once I release it. In my quiet time I heard God say, "My beloved, you are holding on to something that is over. The more you tarry the harder it will be for me to show you the next phase of your life. You are holding us both back." Wow, that got my attention. So I wrote out what else

needed doing and the next day I moved to action. Yikes, who wants to hold God back!

Arrogance is a sign of insecurity

Arrgh, I don't like writing about this. But here it is! Each of us has a trait or characteristic, part of our shadow that can trip us up just when we think we are immune to it. The list includes the seven deadly sins and more: Laziness, lust, anger, deceit, pride, envy, fear, avarice, arrogance, gluttony. We also have an equal and opposite bright side: Action, innocence, serenity, truth, humility, equanimity, courage, non-attachment, sobriety.

My temptation is to self-deception and to elevating myself beyond my actual abilities, in a word, arrogance. I can slip into feeling better than others for any number of reasons. When I found out that arrogance is a sign of insecurity it changed my relationship with my shadow. I found a way to help heal my tendency. Whenever I felt my arrogance rising I would ask myself, "Who or what am I afraid to learn from?" When I could answer that question I could gently allow myself to heal and to move closer to truth and authenticity, my brighter side or otherwise known as my golden shadow.