

THE BOOK OF
AWAKENING

*Having the Life You Want by
Being Present to the Life You Have*

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trust and patience to live into.

- *Sit quietly and bring to mind the color of a truth you have personally lived into.*
- *Using your breath, unravel this truth back to the questions you had before living it.*
- *Note the difference and share the story of this truth with a friend.*

DECEMBER 7

We Have This Choice

The heart is a strong shore
and the ocean has many moods.

With each day, we have this choice: we can build walls, block ourselves from the light, and suffer a dampness in the soul. Or we can live barely, shine on through, and suffer the nicks of erosion for living in the open.

Most of us, myself included, live behind walls that were started by others and finished by ourselves. Very often, we fear each other without reason—the wall builders and those who shine on through. But it really comes down to how to make it through life—safely or fully. I confess this comes from one who struggles to shine on through, because in the end, not being touched by life is not that safe after all. What I've learned is that the more I risk being who I am—like a sun daring to shine—the thinner the walls need to be outside me.

My first experience of this was a painful moment as a boy in which my mother had ordered me to do something. We were alone in my room, and I said no. I don't remember what it was she asked of me, only that her demand was demeaning and unnecessary. I wasn't belligerent, just quietly firm. I remember fearfully building a wall as fast as I could in anticipation of her anger. I had barely prepared myself when she drew her arm behind her head and slapped me with a vengeance. The wall hadn't worked. My very soul had been struck.

father to enforce her demand. He felt my brightness, but held the line and struck me too. By the time he landed, I was shining through. It hurt, for sure, but I was protected.

There are times walls are necessary, but more often we can protect ourselves by being who we are. Neither hiding nor revealing ourselves will prevent our share of pain, but in being who we are, we get to be a part of the Universal stream, not just a nut in a shell waiting to fall.

- *Center yourself and meditate, by turns, on your sense of the wall you look out from and on your sense of who you are that does the looking.*
- *Breathe steadily. As you inhale, close your fist and feel your wall.*
- *Breathe slowly. As you exhale, open your hand and feel who you are.*
- *After a time, practice bringing who you are out beyond your wall by inhaling and exhaling with your hand open.*
- *After a time, stand and move about the room outside of your wall. Note how this feels.*

DECEMBER 8

In the Source-Place

Take a pitcher full of water and set it down in the water—now it has water inside and water outside. We mustn't give it a name, lest silly people start talking again about the body and the soul.

—KABIR

We can't help it. We make too much of where we end and where others begin. Yet only after declaring healthy boundaries can we discover and experience the true

common water of spirit that Kabir talks about. It can be confusing. But, though we are not always eloquent or clear in what comes out, everyone is clear as water in the source-place where mind and heart start as one.

As Teilhard de Chardin said, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience." Entering our days with this perspective can make a difference. It provides the ocean for our small pitcher of a life.

It helps to remember that despite all our struggles for identity, despite the weight of living, there is an irrepressible ounce of spirit in each of us, a wellspring we carry within, that can be blocked but not contained. It emanates through all beings as the longing for love and peace.

When opening our longing, our honest want for love, we open the fountainhead of spirit, and then, like Kabir's pitcher, we are water living in water, love living in love, a small thing alive in a big thing alive, a breath inside a wind.

- Sit quietly, and as you breathe, think of yourself as Kabir's small pitcher of water.
- Breathe deeply and freely, and think of the unseeable world of spirit around you as an ocean that carries you.
- Breathe slowly and cleanly, and try to feel how you and the life around you are made of the same thing.

DECEMBER 9

The Work of Love

Love courses through everything.

—FAKHRUDDIN IRAQI

I recently learned that the first form of pencil was a ball of lead. Having discovered that lead, if scratched, would leave markings, people then wrestled with chunks of the stuff in an attempt to write. Through the work of many, the chunks

I am humbled to confess after a lifetime of relationship that love is no different. Be it a lover or a friend or a family member, the discovery of closeness appears in our life like a ball of lead—something that if wrestled with, will leave markings by which we can understand each other.

But this is only the beginning. The work of love is to shape the stuff of relationship into a tool that fits our hands. With each hardship faced, with each illusion confronted, with each trespass looked at and owned, another piece of the chunk is whittled and love begins to become a sacred tool.

When truth is held in compassionate hands, the sharpness of love becomes clear and not hurtful.

- Bring to mind a significant relationship that you are struggling with.
- As you center yourself, pray that the love you share continues to find its form.
- As you enter your day, stay pliable and open to becoming a tool.

DECEMBER 10

Questions Put to the Sick-IV

When was the last time you listened to the stories of others?

—QUESTION PUT TO THE SICK
BY A NATIVE AMERICAN
MEDICINE MAN

I found myself in a psychodrama group that met every other week for two years. I didn't have any idea what psychodrama was and would never have tried it, except that the man who led the group was a sage to me. I knew he had more to teach me, and I had vowed to myself to participate in whatever he was doing.

It turned out that psychodrama was a process by which we each took turns bringing to life a part of our inner story in the hope that by acting out dreams or current conflicts or