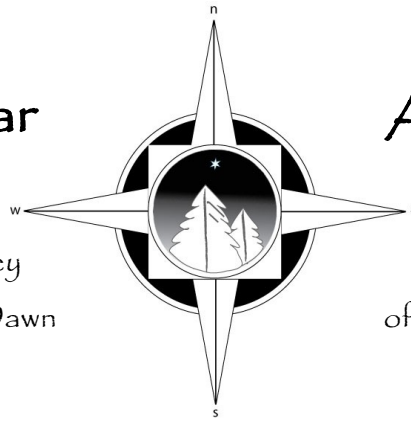


MorningStar

Adventures

Empowerment for the Journey
In The Dawn



to Wholeness and Love
of a New Day

Spring 2010 Issue 1

Volume 25

Following the Morning



Thank you, friends and supporters of MorningStar! In this time of growing uncertainty about the realities of the future for so many of us and a collective longing for something different, we have received an outpouring of generosity in response to our fundraising letter. Out of a mailing list of just over 400, we had a 20% return. Over 80 people have donated to the needs of MorningStar, for a total of \$7,643, approximately one-fifth of our yearly expenses. We find this a very heartening and hopeful sign for our work and our future.

We believe this response rises from our common and shared hunger to live life from an ever deepening core of personal integrity with self, others, and nature as an interrelated whole, as opposed to an isolated, consumptive, and fragmented way of life. It seems we are on a common journey together to find ways to live with deeper meaning and purpose, simplicity and ecological integrity, and in vital community and mutuality with one another and nature for the sake of finding and ful-

filling our call to give expression to our highest human nature. This, it would seem, is what we all have in common and are all journeying toward. How we name our journey or the practices used is not as important as what it is we seek to become and embody through them.

MorningStar is a place to nurture, empower, and deepen this vision toward the transformation of ourselves and our society. It is also both a local and widespread community of those seeking to gather, center, reflect, connect and participate in this life vision toward the many ways it will be become manifest through one another's lives.

We welcome your continued participation in the ministry of MorningStar by sharing your creative gifts in the care and upkeep of MorningStar, and in retreats, learning circles, sabbatical time, healing resources, vital conversations, e-mail updates, and labors on the land. And, as always, your ongoing financial support is needed to sustain our ministry. ☆



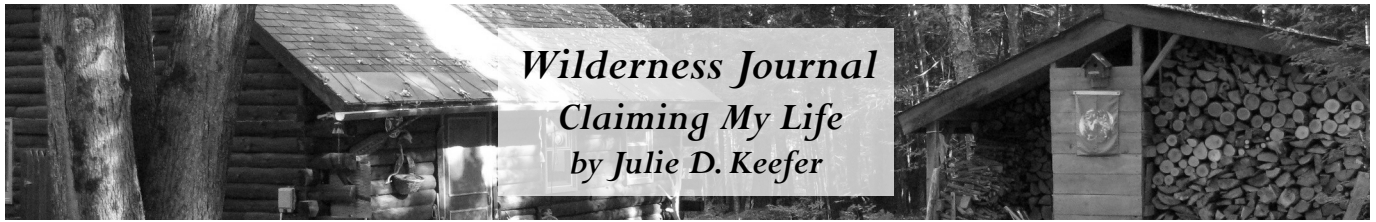
...Awakening is an ongoing journey. To begin to see and to turn our lives around is only the beginning. ...This road humbles us and gives us strength to repent, to ask forgiveness, to simplify and discard all that is not Life-giving, and to abandon ourselves into Love's hands. ...

"I've learned to love and to trust the Mystery not needing to know the future. I no longer take Grace for granted — it is pure gift. ...My essential course of action is simply to be in the Eternal Now, ready to follow the small, still voice heard in the Silence.

~ Nan Merrill

Excerpted from her book Journey Into Love, shared in Friends of Silence

Nan Merrill passed away in January 2010. We are grateful for the creative works she's blessed us with, including *Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness*, a book our community has drawn much inspiration from.



Wilderness Journal

Claiming My Life

by Julie D. Keefer

This winter I read *Leaving My Father's House*, by Marion Woodman, a therapist who works deeply with women to help them find their way to psychic wholeness apart from patriarchal conditioning. Many women struggle with cultural messages that demean, devalue, ignore, and disempower the deep feminine wisdom and way. It is difficult to uncover these messages within ourselves to become free to express our authenticity in each moment without interior blame or judgment and in the face of those who might judge or blame us for such boldness. I've been going through some shifts as I uncover more of my own defense system of self-protection related to this, allowing more feelings of vulnerability to surface.

Over the years of my life at MorningStar, it has been all too easy for me to judge my work as not being "enough" and to also feel judged through the eyes of a culture that doesn't quite value a woman who falls outside the jurisdiction of patriarchal cultural and religious expectations and lives her life and does her work more "organically."

While reading Woodman, I started reviewing my journals and looking at my life as a whole. It's important to honor and claim the fruit of these years because I see how the Living Spirit has graced my life's unfolding, labyrinthian journey in both the light and dark times, in spite of often feeling alone. Seeing how the threads of my life and work have been woven together in rather

amazing ways is to claim a greater sense of peace as I claim the whole of my life, far from perfect, but good and acceptable.

I believe my life, as each of ours, is an ongoing revelation of the Living Spirit's presence, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health until death and we depart from this life. By being faithful to journaling -- capturing our inner and outer experience of dreams and visions, relationships, the timing of synchronistic events, awarenesses and learnings in work and daily living, in times of grief, loss, despair, longing, loneliness, depression, suppression and depression as well as in times of transition, celebration, and growth -- we create a herstory we are able to look back on and see the invisible hand of Wisdom alive and present working to bring to consciousness who we are and what we are here for. In this, we recognize more fully that we are the beloved of the Living Spirit and partners in manifesting the reality of goodness on Earth from our feet up, and through the imprint of our life choices on one another and the earth. To consciously claim the life we have been given as gift, and the unique ways it has unfolded for good in the long run is certainly good and needed news in a world today that still suffers from the negation of feminine values and ways of being. ☆



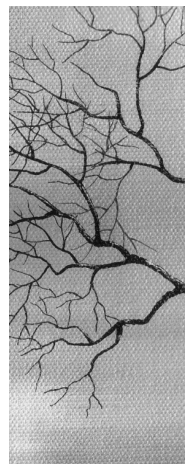
Painting by Karl S.

*Morning explodes with light and birdsong;
Gray cotton clouds, orange tipped with summer sunrise,
Trees, full-leaved, still black with night,
backlit with early day brilliance.*

*I am this creation also.
As beautiful and as ordinary,
as unique and as usual,
as magnificent as sunrise
and simple as sand.*

I am one with all. I rest humbly in awe among all that exists.

-MEW 6/4/93 6:00 am



On Dayspring Path

by Mary E Weber

I was drawn to MorningStar on a powerful, positive projection. My first time here was at the commitment ceremony in which Julie and Elise each committed to be true to her call to herself and MorningStar and its vision. All my hidden, unvoiced desires to live a prayerful, contemplative life surrounded by wild nature, to live in a faith community of women working toward a common purpose of creative service, to live small, simply, and sustainably, and to be with others who would support my inner journey found a mirror in Julie's life and how she was living it out.

Almost twenty years later, here I am. I've taken back many of those projections and lived into them myself. I live in my log cabin at MorningStar with fabulous wild land all around me. I work only two days a week as a home care physical therapist away from MorningStar and, though that comes at some financial cost, it allows me to live and work at MorningStar the rest of the time. And who does not sacrifice for what she most wants and values and for that to which she feels called?

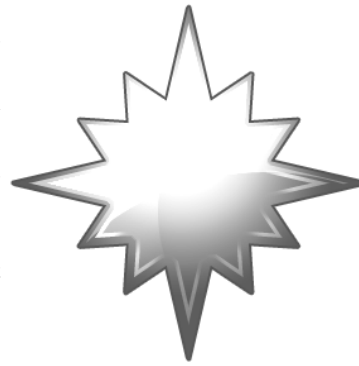
Because I have been blessed with the needed resources, I have time to study, journal, do a little gardening, homemaking and home repair, and, most importantly to me, time to "just be." Having this sort of time opens me to seeing in a different way and allows me to do a good deal of my inner work. Though it can be demanding and painful at times, and has led me into bouts of darkness, I am not alone. This community honors, creates space for, and supports each of us in our inner work and the authentic service which emerges from our time of BE-ing. We are committed to solitude, meditation, community meals and play, and transformative interactions. We are far from perfect, and inner and outer transformation is a messy business, so life here is a mixture of smooth sailing and bumpy roads. And I find the growth phenomenal.

One thing I love here at MorningStar is that no one has ever expected me to be an expert. No one here has ever

asked me to show a certificate of achievement when I have said, "I think I could fix that" be it loose pipes or leaky roofs or finicky thermostats. And having bought a truck a couple of years ago, I get to haul everything: gravel, mattresses, kayaks, rocks, firewood, beehives, and trash. I love it! So my community accepts and encourages me as a self-taught bookkeeper and Federal forms filer, deed writer and doer of a number of administrative tasks among other things. I get to keep our roads and grounds at MorningStar passable and beautiful year round with Julie's and Amanda's help snow blowing, mowing, trenching, and spreading gravel and keep tractors running to do that. We all share all the jobs here to some extent, though we each have certain areas where our specific gifts shine through.

And though I consider all my making order of the numbers, fixing and maintaining as my art and my prayer, I also dabble in the artistry of creating jam and apple-sauce for MorningStar, cards from my photography, and poetry. I have a long list of other artisan projects I would like to attempt when the way opens with sufficient time, energy, and self-imposed structure to my days (a current learning edge): candle making, calligraphy, small and large woodworking projects like wooden toys, picture frames, lathe-turned bowls and plates, rustic furniture, and even handmade caskets.

This slower paced, inner-directed to outer-active life feeds my soul so deeply. Some part of me has been hungry for a "monk's life" for as long as I can remember: solitude and community, shared values and shared purpose, real hands-on work that benefits the community and uses my talents and skills and therefore satisfies, and a fulfilling connection with the Divine in my being and doing. And another part of me has longed for the "wild woods-woman life" living close to the land among the trees, creek, and wild things. MorningStar offers me both and more, for which I say "Thank You!" ☆



"There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep yourself open and aware to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open."

~Martha Graham, Choreographer

MorningStar News and Announcements



Retreats: Listening to Your Life

Saturday October 16, 10 am to 5 pm

Saturday November 20, 10 am to 5 pm

These silent retreats are a time to catch up with yourself by reflecting and listening to what Spirit is inviting you to pay attention to. Centering practices, such as breathing, simple movement, art and ritual, journaling questions, awareness in nature, and labyrinth experience will be offered. An opening circle will provide time to enter the silence together with intention, and a closing circle to give witness to your process, if desired. Retreat may be guided or done on your own. Saturday lunch will be provided.

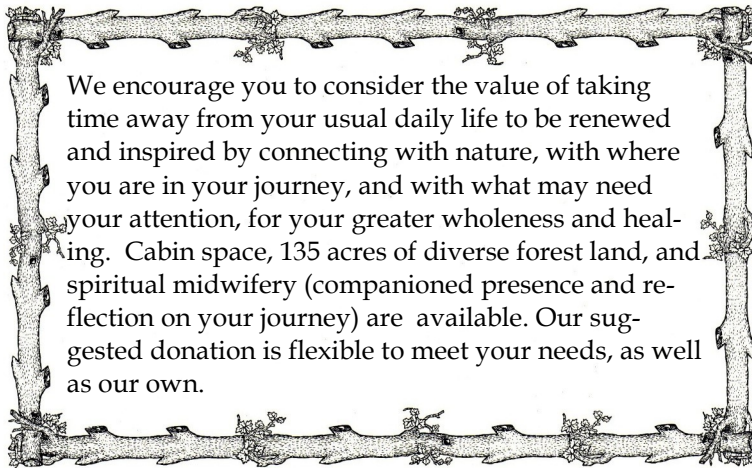
Overnight retreat space is available both Friday and Saturday nights for a deeper experience of solitude and silence on the land.

Facilitated by Julie Keefer and Amanda Sutherland

Suggested donation for retreat: \$35-45

With one night: \$75-80, two nights \$115-120

Please reserve cabins at least one week in advance.



We encourage you to consider the value of taking time away from your usual daily life to be renewed and inspired by connecting with nature, with where you are in your journey, and with what may need your attention, for your greater wholeness and healing. Cabin space, 135 acres of diverse forest land, and spiritual midwifery (companioned presence and reflection on your journey) are available. Our suggested donation is flexible to meet your needs, as well as our own.

Bee News



MorningStar's hives are still buzzing after another winter on their own strength! Last year, they produced an abundance of over 20 gallons of honey, providing enough to offer some in our gift shop, as well as plenty for their own winter supply. The first crop from last summer is rich and dark. The next is star thistle honey, which is light and like sunshine on a spoon! Right now, the bees are in the process of cleaning up their hives in preparation for summer production, while the foragers are already out gleaning pollen from the first flowers of the season...snowdrops!

When you come to M*, don't forget to visit our **gift shop**! We have Mary's delicious **jams** and **applesauce**, made from local fruit, as well as **raw honey** from M* beez!

Circles

- Our Women Leading From Within group is meeting quarterly this year. We'll continue to witness each other's journeys, sharing the movement of spirit in our lives.
- Bimonthly, we gather with a group of local women at M*. We're delighted to deepen relationships with these Amazing Women!
- We're in our third year of meeting each Friday morning with a meditation circle at M*. This is open to those who may be staying with us at the time.
- Our Sisterhood continues to gather monthly to share each other's journeys and discuss and discern M* business. Each woman's commitment to her own journey and support of M* is invaluable and integral to M*'s continuation. Our hearts are filled with love & gratitude!

If you haven't signed up already and you'd like to be on our **Group Email list**, you can subscribe on our webpage:

morningstarretreatcenter.com.



We're sending out reflections, news, and announcements monthly.

Reminder!!

MorningStar has an **additional phone line**, one that will never have a busy signal! Because we only have dial-up Internet access and no voice mail service in our area, M*'s main number may be busy. To remedy that, we now have an additional phone number: 231-884-2789.

Please consider ordering your books through the Cottage Book Shop, an independently owned bookstore in Glen Arbor, Michigan. When you mention M*, owner Barbara Siepker will generously donate 10% of the sale to M* and provide free shipping!

www.cottagebooks.com
info@cottagebooks.com
1-800-303-6956

Thank you, Barbara!



Wild Bear Prayer

by Pat Weisbart

Wild Bear Mother guards children at night and guides their dreams. She is the intuitive heart listening to the darkness, and is every mother's deep instinctive knowledge.

Ojibway Bear is strength and courage and the power of introspection. In winter, she enters the quietness of the cave to hibernate in silence, to digest the year's experience and to seek answers. In the spring, clarity emerges from the silence. She reclaims the power of knowing -- the knowing of body, mind and spirit. All thoughts and confusion over true goals are laid to rest. In the spring Bear is reborn like the opening of new white flowers.

Oh Bear,
Ask me into your cave,
Into the silence that surrounds
The answers you seek.

Open my intuitive heart
So I see things as they are,
And how they will change.
One sleep to the next.

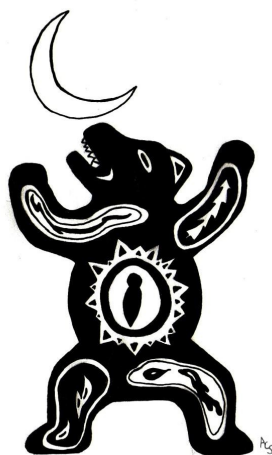
I feel like a tree,
Standing in winter
Almost dead.
But then not.

Oh Bear,
What happens in there?
And who sees us
Crawl from the cave?

Grandfather Sky?
Grandmother Moon?
Oh! It's my own wild mother
Sleeping in there!

What a wild woman,
Wet, sticky and fragrant.
Thank you Bear,
For asking me in.

I have answers now,
A path to my dreams,
Honey from the big tree,
And bears of my own to keep.



Purpose Beyond Purpose: Growing into Elderhood, the Last Third of Our Lives

by Julie Keefer

As a woman in her mid-60s, I'm experiencing greater interior strength and freedom to face what is, as I honor my need to process unfinished life: grieving choices not made or those that wounded me or another, celebrating choices I did make and what I gained and learned from them, giving and asking for forgiveness where there is no reconciliation in relationship.

As women breaking free of expectations of who we are to be, many of us nearing or into our 60s and beyond are now seeking a purpose for our life experience beyond our life's dreams, goals, and ambitions. As our involvement in family, career, and ministry lessens, and as we give ourselves time to reflect on the great diversity of our life experiences, the deeper dimensions of what our life has meant to us and to others and the wisdom we have gleaned becomes more clear.

As we weave the threads of our experience together, patterns may emerge that surprise and even delight us once we see how everything in our lives has shaped who we are, giving us understanding of the mysterious aspects of life. We come to accept and even appreciate the seeming contradictions of our lives, as we've held the tensions, stretching us until we are able to accept what IS without blame or judgment. If we have achieved a sense of self-acceptance and self-love of who we are, we also recognize that no matter what life delivers to us, we have the opportunity to learn from it and become stronger, more vulnerable and honest, humble and forgiving, compassionate and loving.

We feel the excitement and the terror of time for ourselves; excitement for the freedom from inner and outer expectation to be a directly contributing member of society through our family, career, or ministry choices; terror for the open space to create our lives in a way that focuses more fully on the power of our "being" to influence life in positive directions, both personally and communally, living more fully in the moment, accepting what is happening in and around us, and responding in an authentic way which speaks truth through kindness and compassion, engendering a respectful relationship to that which is.

This true "crowning" is spun from the gold of our life experiences and offered back as we become empowering, wise, and compassionate companions on the journey. This, for me, is a "purpose beyond purpose" which trusts the wholeness and authenticity of myself as ENOUGH! What better way to spend the last third or so of our lives? ☆



Elder Women's Gathering:

Wednesday May 5, 10 am to 5 pm, at MorningStar

Women will come together to share and be inspired by the ways we approach the last third of our lives. Please send a registration donation of \$5 with your email address and telephone number at least four days in advance for planning purposes. This donation includes lunch. Any further donation you wish to make for the day will be welcomed and appreciated.

Email or call for more information: morningstar@netonecom.net, 231-768-4368, 231-884-2789



My MorningStar Adventure

by Amanda Sutherland

My MorningStar Adventure continues to be one of diving deep and then surfacing with new bits of awareness. As the cycles continue, I'm learning to take more responsibility for my life, for both the gifts and for the areas in need of growth. The illusion of perfection is breaking apart piece by piece as I understand and accept the limitations of my humanity. The problem isn't just "out there." I carry within me the same capacity for "sinfulness" as I have self-righteously judged in others. Along with awakening to the unconscious striving for perfection comes freedom of my spirit. So much of my insecurity has stemmed from "needing" to be the best, the most beautiful, the most intelligent, the most gentle, the most spiritual. I've held an unconscious belief that this was necessary for me to be accepted and loved. And because I've never been under the illusion that I am the best at any of those things, I've felt insecure and at times inferior to others I've perceived as "better" in any of those categories. What anxiety it's produced, this inner drive to perfection! And how it's robbed my natural flow. How much more I will live out the beauty that is my true self by trusting that there is no contest I'm enrolled in. There is no one who is perfect or capable of perfection. We are all born human, and we will all die human. We all manage that dance between dark and light in the ways we are equipped to or desire to. What freedom to know this! And how long it will take to truly let go, trust, and live into that freedom!

The following was written late last summer, a writing that came after diving deep and then surfacing.

I read a quote last night...Elizabeth Lesser in her book "Broken Open" quoting Bill Moyers quoting Joseph Campbell quoting Igjugarjuk, a shaman of a Caribou Eskimo tribe in Northern Canada. He said to Campbell, "The only true wisdom lives far from mankind, out in the great loneliness, and can be reached only through suffering." Inspired, I rose from my reading spot in front of the woodstove that was lit far too early, in late August, and found my journal and a pen to jot this quote down.

It seems there are never too many reminders that the suffering, the dark nights are all part of a bigger process, leading one evermore into consciousness, trials one must persevere to give birth to some greater healing, deeper integration, awareness, maturation...a necessary part of the journey toward wholeness. These reminders come from many sources, written by those who have experienced these direct encounters with their inner demons, who have survived the bouts of loneliness, who have had the courage to press on. It's all too easy to forget the big picture, too easy to lose trust in the process. In fact, I have a piece of driftwood with the words "Trust Your Process" etched into it,

perched almost directly in front of me as I sit and read by the fire. Yet still the message eludes me until one of the pilgrims who has gone before me drops a reminder that I said "Yes!" to the journey, and so my psyche is granting my inmost desire.

The dark nights forge many aspects of the questing soul. I've become aware recently of the forging of courage in me. Yesterday I found myself curled in the fetal position on the couch crying, ready to quit. Crying in hopes that someone will come along and save me from my self, all the while aware there is no one to save me. There is only me. There is only my choice to get up, put one foot in front of the other. This was no consolation at the time, as I cried in self-pity, spilling tears of grief for my deep, aching loneliness. Simultaneously, my heart was reminding me that my tears won't grant me the forgiveness I desire. Folding in on myself won't cure my emptiness.

I got up from the couch, put on my shoes, with the shred of my adult self present enough not to walk outside in the rain with just my socks on, and went to my neighbor to apologize. And I cried. I seem to be doing a lot of that lately. Receiving her forgiveness, I felt renewal, felt my strength return to my bones. Re-energized, I continued my day with the memory of that moment of resignation and pity on the couch, the memory tinged with shame as I imagined that "others" are stronger and don't struggle in this way. Ashamed of my weakness.

So when I read Igjugarjuk's quote last night, it sparked me and I jotted it down. I was reminded to persevere, for the treasure more precious than gold lies ahead. Then today I heard a song about courage...it's all you need. And tears returned, only this time they were tears of gratitude and love for all that's good about the human heart and innocence and resilience. "Courage is all you need." And courage is being forged in me each time I get up off the couch and keep going. Just one day later, I remember my time on the couch in the fetal position differently, as a woman on her growth edge. A woman who said "yes!" to the journey, a woman who has prayed for the fires of transformation, prayed for and envisioned herself as a self-possessed and confident woman who may by grace bring love to the earth in whatever ways are hers to bring. That prayer requires the chipping away at the illusions bought into, requires a journey into the underworld, to shed the lies and to come to know herself; requires times of entering the cocoon, where she becomes a mess, undone in a painful way, so that she may give birth to new and beautiful aspects of herself.

Perhaps it's no mistake that there was a fire burning in my home in late August on that painful day. It symbolizes the fire of transformation burning within me, forging in me a heart of courage. ☆

Sharp Voice and the Needs of the Inner Family

by Julie Keefer

This writing arose from reflecting with someone on what I perceived as her “sharp voice.” I asked if she thought her sharp voice might come from an inner fear that a need of hers has not been or will not be met; and if so, what need might that have been. What expectations might she have been holding about the situation and herself at that time that didn’t allow her to be present to the other’s feelings and needs?

Later, as I asked myself those same questions, I realized how my critical, sharp voice, when it comes out, can be related to feeling disempowered in some way. This realization helps me examine more clearly the negative relationship patterns in my life to see what my unmet needs are that contribute to this.

I’m aware that when I speak with a sharp voice I may be harboring an expectation, of myself or another, that I fear will not be met. I’m then reacting from feeling a lack or scarcity of inner or outer resources to meet a need of some kind. It could be a need to become better skilled at expressing my needs, or to let go and trust that what is needed will come to me or to a situation. It may then become about having more faith in and trust of inner guidance and resourcefulness to meet my personal needs or that of a situation. I may need to be open to diverse possibilities and not closed down with self-defeating mindsets and expectations due to the fear of not being or having enough in some way. In other words, my sharp voice is my attempt to have power when I’m feeling some sense of inadequacy in meeting needs -- mine or another’s.

I am aware that when I feel fear of inadequacy in a situation, my power to be truly present to that situation or the person involved erodes. That’s when it’s time to ask myself what I need to feel better resourced, adequate, supported, and empowered. That then calls on my inner caregiver/nurturer and inner warrior/initiator to meet those needs in some way.

This is the dance of my Inner Mother, Inner Father, and Inner Child, which is a reflection of the Cosmic Dance of creative forces unfolding both in my inner world and outer world.

My Inner Mother’s function is to create an environment of safety and support by being open and present to nurture my Inner Child/Vulnerable Self; to bear and behold my Child/Creative Potential, to nurture and comfort my Child and to attend to physical, emotional and the developmental needs of my Child.

My Inner Father’s function is to provide a safe and strong structure/boundaries in that environment which provide support, learning experiences, values, ethics, and meaning for my Child’s life.

These functions, of course, dance together within me to rear the Inner Child; giving birth to my unique, whole, true person into the world.

I need to feel safe enough internally and externally to explore and express my Self with confidence and authenticity. It is this dance that gives birth to God’s very Self in and through me. My sharp voice, then, is a gift to signal to me that I am not present to the true needs of my Inner Family for my most effective living. ☆



Journaling Exercise

Explore the needs of your Inner Family — Father, Mother, Child.

Ask each of them in turn:

- What do you observe and feel about your life in and through me?
- Do I give you room to be who you are?
- What request would you make of me to allow your needs to be better met?

Healing balm for my busy mind and body:

To see what I see, hear what I hear, taste what I taste, smell what I smell, feel what I feel as I do what I do! Through this I come to know more clearly what I know, what I feel, what I need, and what I am to do next...my path to authenticity.

~Julie

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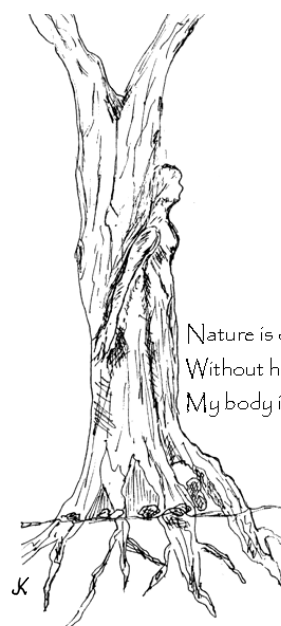
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"Silence can be a great revelation, a gentle revolution, and can evoke resolution. Ever awaiting us in the Silence are insight, intuition, and inspiration. Be still, remain awake, and listen! While shallow ponds and brooks are noisy and busy, still waters run deep: they are calm and silent. True Silence is the blessed, eternal language of Soul-Love. Silence: a sacred garden of meditation. In the Silence be still and Know, be still and See.

~Nan Merrill, *Friends of Silence*



Nature is our home
Without her we cannot live
My body is hers -JDK