



Healing mind, body, heart and soul

<http://www.thehealingbridge.org>

Interviewee **Mary Branch**
Age **50**
Occupation **Administrative Assistant**
Interviewed **June 18, 2001**
Location **West Chester, PA**

This personal account of a true life story is offered as support and inspiration for your own healing journey. It is not presented as a definitive method of healing, or seen as encouragement to pursue a particular path

A Lot of Pain

Beginning in January of 1995 the healing that I was aware of needing was physical. In the abdominal area of my body I had endometriosis, fibroids and cysts. I also had intestinal problems and was pre-cancerous in one area with different diseases and things going on in there. I was going to doctors and through procedures, tests, and surgeries. There was a lot of internal bleeding and a lot, a lot, of pain.

The pain had gradually built up over the years, so I wasn't fully aware of the extent of it. Looking back now that its gone, I am amazed at what I lived with – it hurt to sit, it hurt to stand, to bend over, even while lying still in bed there was a continuous burning pain in my pelvic area. It occurs to me now that there are probably many, many people who live in constant pain.

Back then I just knew that I would like to get the pain taken care of, so I kept going to different doctors and they kept trying different things. Drugs or surgeries would help, but only temporarily. Then the pain would manifest again in another way, in a new form, but in the same area of my body. Eventually, every organ, muscle, joint, and function between my belly button and my knees was messed up in some way.

Proving Myself

I was married, raising two kids, and working at my own craft business. I was involved in my work and I was very, very busy and I was pushing myself to be the best. It was important for me to make a lot of money, and to prove to myself, and to everyone, that I could be successful. It was driving me. My self-worth gauge was how much money I made.

By that measure, I was an okay person. I was involved with a large group of artisans and I was a top seller. I was also on the Board of Directors for the organization and was managing many aspects of the business. That made me feel important. But I was suffering with this intense pain all the while.

A Familiar Place and Face

The various doctors kept trying to clear it out, clean it out, make it better. But nothing was really helping permanently. In my medical process I went through all the gynecological and gastro-intestinal possibilities. There was still a lot of pain but the doctors said they'd done everything they could, short of removing the affected organs. Then one doctor suggested that there might be something going on in the joints, or within the bone structure, so, he sent me to a physical therapist. I made the appointment, thinking, "Oh, all right, I'll go, but it's probably not going to help."

When I went into the physical therapist's office, something about it seemed familiar to me. It was a very friendly and comfortable place. And when the therapist came up and introduced himself to me, it felt as if I already knew him. Even though I had never met him before, I recognized him as someone I was familiar with and liked very much. It was very easy to be with him.

We went through the initial screening and all that. Sure enough, the sacrum, hips, and pelvic area were out of alignment, the tailbone was broken and hinged, pointing toward my spine. The sciatic nerve was pinched. There was scoliosis of the spine.

The Big Jolt

After the x-rays, etc., I came in for my first appointment of the hands-on physical therapy. David, the therapist, started to loosen up my body, beginning with the head and neck and upper spine. He was holding my upper body and rolling it around when all of a sudden something happened inside of me. Some really big jolt occurred. I don't know how to describe it. I felt it physically, it was a very deep pain. Although he was working on my upper body, the pain hit me in my abdomen, very low in the pelvic area, and it just ripped through my body. And there was a really, really intense emotional content to it. It shook me up. I

don't know how to describe it... it was just so powerful. I was sort of in a daze while I went through the rest of that session. All I could tell him was, "It hurts!"

At the end of the appointment I went out to my car and I just sat there and bawled. All afternoon, I just sat there. I couldn't move. It was very confusing to me because I knew something big had happened but I didn't know what it was. Sitting in my car for hours, confused and crying, I watched the other patients go in and come back out. I wondered if what happened to me was happening to them too, and what did it mean? It was an intense, confusing and painful feeling.

When I eventually left, I ran into my friend Linda. She looked at me and said, "Peg, are you okay? Let's go somewhere and talk." I tried to explain to her what was going on but my mind was starting to do some weird things. It was starting to not make sense what I was saying to her. It was so helpful to talk to Linda, though, and she was very supportive.

An Intense Power

Then, this process started where there was an overwhelming, kind of, like a... pull. Like a gravitational pull, or something – to David, the physical therapist. The essence of his character was embedded in my mind and I could not get it out. I just had to get to the bottom of this, get this figured out. I knew something big was happening. I was being drawn by an intense power from within him -- I knew he could help me. I knew he had some answers for me.

After the initial shock of that jolt that overwhelmed me, I quit my job. The next day, I wrote my resignation letter. I couldn't do it anymore. I thought, "Okay, that's it. It's over." I had been in a lot of turmoil within myself over my reasons for being there, doing that work, because of my drive to make money and to be the best. After this jolting experience, I knew that it wasn't what I wanted to be doing any more. So I just focused on the process with the physical therapy. I did my prescribed exercises and went to my appointments twice a week.

A New Awareness

Now, I was starting to become aware of a difference in my reality. I started to pick up on people's thoughts, and I had a sense of a deeper understanding of things. It started to become clear to me that the circumstances and the things that were happening in my outside world were communicating with me. There was an exchange going on. It wasn't just me in the world, going about my life. The world was talking to me! And it was blowing my mind. I was like, "what's going on???" I couldn't tell anyone about it. My husband would have said, "yeah, sign her up for the loony bin!" But, it was very clear to me that this was happening.

Like, I'd be wondering about something and someone on the radio or around me would immediately give me the answer. Things like that would happen consistently and I'd think, "This is impossible!"

I began to be aware of the essence of people. I could see what a person was like, or about, or... I don't know how to describe it. And then I would know things. Sometimes I would know things that were going to happen before they happened. This was quite exciting but also scary. I thought I was going crazy.

Digging In

I was ready to really dig in to what was going on with this pain in my body. Now I realized that there were some very significant aspects of my diseases, my physical problems, that I had not been aware of before, that clearly involved my emotions, and also who I am.

Sometimes my mind would relate the physical therapy to previous experiences I'd had. During a session, or thinking about it later, I'd sometimes have flashbacks and remembrances of being abused years ago in a very degrading way, sexually and mentally.

I tried to talk to David about it. I tried to explain it to him, but it made him uncomfortable. He listened to me. He didn't discourage me from talking about it and I could tell he was struggling with what was happening in me. Because I had this intense pull towards him and when I tried to describe it, and I said, "what's going on here?" maybe he thought I was suggesting that his behavior was inappropriate. I knew he was physically touching me and that was definitely part of it. For me, it wasn't necessarily a sexual attraction. What was drawing me was more about who he is, and what he represented to me. He is a very good-natured, cheerful, yet deeply compassionate man. I knew he genuinely cared about all his patients and wanted to do whatever he could to help them. It was a different approach than I had experienced with all the other medical professionals I had seen. With them, I always felt as if they were watching the clock and the main objective was to try to squeeze as many patients and procedures in as possible.

I stayed in the physical therapy process for a couple months, but my physical symptoms were intensifying. They weren't getting better they were actually getting worse. It was to the point where I was bleeding constantly, vaginally and rectally, and the pain was intensifying.

Another Shift

So, I went back to the gynecologist and he put me on Lupron to block the production of estrogen. Around that time another shift happened. All of a sudden I had so much energy I

didn't know what to do. I was bouncing off the walls. I dropped 15 pounds immediately and I started dancing all over the house. I had never danced before in my life. And these insights, this different awareness, was intensifying too. Then the pain started to subside. After that shift, the bleeding stopped.

I was still in physical therapy and still confused about my relationship with David. It wasn't a natural thing. It was confusing, because I didn't know the man personally. How could I have this intense feeling, almost like a craving, a longing, a deep reaching for something there that was going to help me. It was agonizing.

The Final Surgery

Then, I got better. It was summertime and we were going to quit the therapy sessions. I had been doing my exercises and the joints were straightening out. We had the final appointment, and that night the pain started to come back. I was still getting Lupron injections so, medically, it should not have happened. But it started to come back in a big way. My abdomen swelled up and it was too much for me to handle. Emotionally I was a wreck. So, I told David about it and he sent me back to the gynecologist. I decided then and there, the uterus is coming out! "I can't do this anymore – I'm sick of it!" So, in August I had a hysterectomy and they took the ovaries out too. It was a real mess in there. And that was the final course of action that was definitely going to resolve the pain.

The surgery was a piece of cake -- it was not a problem. After the designated healing period I was supposed to be all better. Well, I wasn't. That autumn the pain came back again. And it was just as bad as ever. It was just the same – with no uterus in there -- it was the same kind of pain. I thought, "Good Lord! What's going on?"

Seeking the Best Helper

I was still watching the day-to-day occurrences in my life, noticing how many coincidences were fitting together. I followed the cues and leads that were coming in. And I was praying. I knew I had to go back to David and figure out what happened there. I knew that he was my connection to the answer. So, as difficult as it was for me, I went back and told him what was going on. I said, "Something really big happened to me here and I need to figure it out. I want to know what it was all about." He didn't think he could do anything more for me, but he thought it would be helpful for me to see a psychologist and talk about it. So, he gave me the name of somebody and I called her up and made an appointment.

On my way to the appointment I was getting very strong messages about this psychologist, that this wasn't the best person for me to see. I had clear directions to her office, but I could

not find it, and was driving around and around in a circle. Finally, I found her office, but she wasn't there! I just bagged it at that point. I went home and called her, described my situation and said, "I don't think you are the right person for me, can you recommend someone else?"

She gave me the name of another psychotherapist and so I made an appointment with her. I knew immediately when I walked into her office that she was going to help me. At the end of our first session she recommended a particular book that I had very recently been told about, or come across, from about five different sources and I thought, "Okay, she's hooked in! This is lining up now. It's starting to feel right." (The book was Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom by Christiane Northrop <http://www.drnorthrup.com>).

Connecting to the Answer

Now it was January again, one year after I had first begun physical therapy. Now I was beginning to work with transpersonal psychotherapy. I started to explore mentally and spiritually what was going on behind my physical problems. Jane, my therapist, took me into my mind, into different levels, to areas that were in pain.

There was one particular session that was a turning point for me. In a trance state, I went into the pain in my pelvic area and experienced what it felt like. For the first time I was really in touch with a feeling of being completely isolated and alone, pushed on and pushed down, not heard, not listened to. I could feel it so strongly. I hadn't realized that there was a part of me that felt that way, that had been stifled for so long. And that part of me was in excruciating pain. But, I got in touch with it. I really tried to understand the feeling, understand the depth of it, and get a sense of it. After I did connect with it, I felt the pain, I felt the emotional anguish. Then, Jane guided me to the opposite of that -- to the resolution to the pain -- to the comfort, the other part of me that connected with the Source of the healing: the Answer.

And this was what I was longing for that David represented to me. I knew he cared about helping me. He wanted to help me. It was genuine. It was a physical relationship that we had -- he was helping me physically. And although it was always strictly professional, it was also very intimate, because he was working on my pelvic area in the therapy sessions. I realized it was the first time that I was with a man who was physically "intimate" with me that was helping me, and not hurting me. I realized that I trusted him, that he did want to help me. And I realized that prior to that, in the relationships I'd had with men who were physically (sexually) intimate with me, it wasn't for me. It was never something for me. It was always a painful experience for me, and something I participated in for unhealthy reasons.

I was able to relate my internal emotional and physical turmoil to my own perception of myself based on experiences I'd had with men -- and to my own interpretation of my value and worth as a person. The part of me that was my healthy sexual expression had not been allowed to come forth, and had been dying.

In therapy sessions I got in touch with it and I was able to be aware of it and to get to know that aspect of myself. And, too, there was the other part, the comfort and the security, the part that David represented, that was at another level within me and had also been beyond my grasp to know -- just as the hurt part had been beyond my conscious knowing. Now I felt both. I felt the pain and I felt the comfort.

Loosening the Block

After that point I focused on working with the different processes that Jane gave me to do. I was writing and drawing every day. I still wasn't working, I devoted my total concentration to this healing. Every day I did my physical exercises and then I would meditate.

I would often go into self-guided meditations and have experiences in deep levels of my mind that would then manifest in my everyday world, in my waking consciousness. In my inner travels, I became aware of the course of the flow of life energy in my body. I realized that the healthy upward flow of emotion was blocked around my diaphragm and it was pooling up and stagnating in my abdomen. There was so much old, unreleased emotion in there that was bleeding and swelling and crying out in the only voice I would listen to: pain.

I began a search for another type of therapy to help me work through the block and release suppressed emotion. I learned of different modalities that work with the body's energy system, and tried several therapies such as Reiki <http://reiki.7gen.com/>, Shiatsu <http://www.shiatsubo.com/>, Acupuncture <http://www.acupuncture.com/> and Barbara Brennan work <http://www.barbarabrennan.com/>. Each one gave me comfort and helped to gently loosen the block, open the passageway, and gently coax that cut-off part of me who had not been able to speak up and be heard, to come forth and be in the world.

Hiding

That summer a friend came to visit from out of town. Annie was an aerobics instructor and wanted to go to some classes around here to get some fresh ideas. So she dragged me along with her. I went reluctantly since I had never taken a "step" class before. We randomly picked a gym and a class to go to. Terry, the instructor, was a dynamic and charismatic man who, again, was a person I recognized as someone who would really help me. I was drawn

to him. He led a funky, dancey, kind of step aerobics class. Annie and I went to the one class and afterwards I said, "I'm going to that gym. I'm signing up!" So, I joined the gym and I started going to Terry's class – by myself.

Now, this was that lost part of me coming forth that had never had the courage, or had never been allowed, to express. That part thought, "I can't dance! Good heavens – to have somebody watch me or see me, no way! Because I'm a klutz. I can't dance!" I thought I was uncoordinated and the thought of somebody looking at me while I was trying to do this horrified me. But I knew I had to allow this part to come forth, so I started going to the class.

At first it was hard because I was so inhibited and embarrassed, you know. Everybody was going to see me look like a fool. But then I decided, "I don't care. I'm going to do it." And I just did it. At that time I was just about skin and bones. I had lost a lot more weight, and was all hyper and flinging my scrawny arms everywhere. But as I did, I could feel the energy exploding from my body. I kept trying and I kept going to class and gave it all I had. I'd try to hide in the back row so nobody would see me look like an idiot.

Moving Up

All the while, Terry encouraged us. At the beginning of every class he would say, "This is your class. Take it at your own pace. And always keep in mind you're in competition with no one but yourself." He said exactly what I needed to hear. He invited us to greet each other, "make a new friend," and he had inspirational things to say throughout the class. He made exercising so much fun. He was enjoying himself and we all did too. Again, I was in a "relationship" with a man who cared about helping others -- a genuinely compassionate and giving person. And it really nourished that part of me that had been so hurt.

It also provided a way of allowing my sexual expression to come forth. Terry was a physical specimen! He presented himself as a sexual being, but in a positive way, not in a way that was demeaning, flaunting, degrading, dirty, or any of what I had associated with sex before. He was just a fine masculine figure, okay with being a man. So, I started to allow myself to express my femininity in this class, just by dancing and letting that energy come through. I don't mean provocative dancing, just being at ease with being a woman and allowing my body to feel the music, move, have fun and express the fun.

I kept going to the class and made lots of great friends. We became like a family of funky step dancers – each one of us doing our own thing and being okay with it. Over time I gained confidence, and gradually encouraged myself to move up to the front of the class, and not hide in the back any more.

One day, to my surprise, Terry asked if I would consider participating in a dance group that performed regularly, as a paying job. Wow! I guess I could dance after all! And I was becoming physically healthy. Now I was truly beginning to heal.

Releasing the Block

But I was aware that the block was not gone, that the flow of energy was not completely open and I was still seeking out energy workers to help to open it up. My search led me to Perry, a Rubenfeld synergist, <http://www.rubenfeldsynergy.com/> who in one session helped me to feel the full intensity of that blocked energy and move it from the abdominal area up and out of my body. It was a very intense and profound experience. I physically felt it, my body was shaking and convulsing. I emotionally felt the content, I was moaning and crying and wailing. And as she gently guided the mass upward through my body, I could feel it moving and breaking through the barriers. It was a terrifying experience in some ways because I didn't think I would survive once it hit my heart, and I didn't know where it was going to go. It did pass through my heart and I did survive and it came up and was released out of my mouth. The deep unexpressed anguish, fear and rage came out of my mouth in waves of sounds, words, noises, screams, on and on. When it was finally spent, Perry, who was my mother's age, gathered me in a sobbing ball in her arms and held me and rocked me and I felt clean and loved and comforted.

Releasing My Dad

Directly after that experience I traveled to visit my family for Thanksgiving. My Dad was ill and it was to be the final gathering of our complete family. I ended up staying there with my parents for a month, while Dad went through the dying process. This was a very healing time for me.

When Dad was diagnosed with cancer two years prior, he began to write his memoirs. While I was there in my childhood home, helping Mom take care of him, I typed up the stories he had written of his childhood and adolescent life. These were stories that he had never shared with his seven children, and they helped me to understand who he was and what his struggles were and how valiant, strong and courageous a man he really was. This was a special time for me -- a very beautiful, loving, sharing experience. I learned so much watching my parents work together to see Dad safely and comfortably pass from this world to the next. He died at noon on Christmas day.

Building Strength

That January 1997, after I returned to Pennsylvania, I decided that I wanted to build up muscle as part of my physical improvement. It was still difficult to ask for help, but I knew I needed to, so I approached a member of the gym, a friend of Terry's who was a personal trainer. I just went up to him and asked if he would be willing to help me with strength training. And he said, "Oh sure." So, I started working with James. Here was another beautiful specimen of masculinity! James was to be my next helper, another individual who enabled me to have a "physical" relationship, that was helpful and healthy, not harmful or threatening. Now my body was really changing, and was becoming well proportioned, and defined, and attractive. It was absolutely astounding to me that this was happening!

Transformation

In a very short time, just a few months, between the dancing and the weight training, I went through a complete physical transformation. I think one reason I changed so quickly was because while I exercised, I was aware of the flow of energy through my body and mentally focused on directing the energy to assist in the process. I also was aware that in order to develop and maintain muscle and coordination in the physical body it was necessary for me to develop the relating emotional, mental and spiritual muscle. Once this was accomplished, the pain was gone. Gone.

People at the gym noticed the rapid changes in my body and many approached me and asked how I did it. I wanted to be able to help others, so I studied and became certified as a personal trainer. Now, for the first time in my life, I had a body that was free of pain. Even the scoliosis was gone. My tailbone was pain free for the first time in thirty years! I felt strong and beautiful, confident, and expressive.

Getting Stronger

I discovered that building strength in my mental process and emotional process was similar to the process of building strength in the physical body. To build strength, you want to take the muscle that's become established in a certain "way of being," in a weakened condition, and gradually work it into a strengthened condition. To do that you hold yourself in perfect alignment, add a little weight, and you push the weight, and you pull the weight, and you resist the weight. And you take it to a point of discomfort. You don't take it to a point of pain, because then you may cause injury. But you feel the discomfort. Then you release the weight and lengthen and stretch that muscle. When you do this consistently you build strength, you build endurance, and you develop flexibility in your physical body.

That process I took to the spiritual level. Allowing the part of me that was so weak and encouraging that part of me to come forth, was extremely uncomfortable. But I tried not to let

it get too painful. If I started to feel pain, I would hold back a little bit and give myself rest and gentle care. But more and more I was taking myself to the point of being uncomfortable and going through a process of not just pushing forward, but also a process of resisting other challenges that were putting the weight on. And building strength. As the weak part of me got stronger, and stronger, I felt better and better about myself, and it's wasn't so uncomfortable. In weight training, after you build strength in a muscle, it starts to feel good to put weight on in, to exercise that strong muscle.

It was the same thing learning to dance and with weight training. Going through the process was uncomfortable. I had to stretch my usual boundaries and limitations, by forcing myself to ask people to help me, and by persevering through the uncomfortable stages, and by pushing the usual inhibitions away. As an ongoing part of the process, there were circumstances and attitudes that came up that required resistance. All these elements of the process were important, the pushing, pulling, resisting and stretching. Persevering through the process -- resolving the issues, building confidence and strength -- was so liberating and exhilarating.

I knew that physically I had healed because the pain gone. I didn't have it anymore. Spiritually, or personally, I knew that this part of me that had been injured and was weak was healing because I was glad to be a sexual being in the world, and to express that in a way that was comfortable for me. So, I knew that part of me was healing.

A Certain Joy

There was a certain joy that came forth as a result of this process that was beyond anything that I'd ever experienced in my life. The freedom to be myself! To be expressive and know it was okay to do that – and not be afraid. It wasn't that I was being sexual in the way I used to define it. It was not that I was calling for attention. It didn't even involve the act of sex or physical touching with another person. It was an acceptance of my sensuality or femininity-- just being a woman. And being okay with that.

Different Expressions

The wounded part of me drew my attention with physical disease and pain. By looking deeply into it, I became aware that the pain that I had in my physical body I also had emotionally and mentally, and also at the spiritual level. Once I reached the spiritual level, I was able to draw the courage and strength I needed to work with the pain. I think of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects as distinctly different expressions of the same thing.

This process resulted in big changes, not only in my physical body, but changes in my emotional expression. And mentally there were changes. I could understand things that I didn't understand before. I could relate to physics and comprehend it, whereas before it meant nothing to me. Because I had gone through this process internally, I understood that the same processes that I was experiencing within myself were being described in physics. It made sense to me.

I went in, through my emotions, through my mind, into an internal world -- a world that I consider to be the spiritual world, being that it's invisible in the physical world. I went inward and explored those regions and saw what was going on that was being manifested in the physical world. That allowed me insight into my physical expression and showed me ways to work through and resolve the pain.

What It Is

Every moment of every day I'm making decisions about which direction I'm going to go. I don't know how it could be wrong, because it just is. It's what's happening. It's not that it should have been this or that, because it can't be. It is what it is.

I do have the sense of options, of making choices. For example, I chose not to see the first therapist I was referred to. If I had gone on to see her, I don't think that would have been a wrong turn. It just would have been a different way of going through the process. I do think that we have hard choices, and we come up against a powerful pull to maintain the familiar.

Changing Courses

Sometimes it feels like I'm in a river and the current is so strong. The river has been flowing that way for so long, it's the familiar course. I'm in that flow, and to try to deviate from it is so hard. The current just sucks me back over. I may know that the current was going to lead me into something that may not be the best for me, I would understand that, and know that I needed to develop a new course, a new destination. But the old pull is so strong.

Say, for an example, in order to get healthy, I realized that I needed to quit bingeing on junk food or eating chocolate, or drinking alcohol. I might decide to quit, but the pull of the old course, the usual way of thinking that motivates the habit, is so, so strong. That's where the decision comes in. Do I resist that pull, and set a new course that's going to be healthier, or do I just go let myself be pulled along by the old set pattern.

When I was facing hard choices, inside myself I was very uncomfortable. My mind would be so locked into the usual pattern of thinking, and the usual way of being that was established

as sort of my “programming.” I knew that there was another way that would be better, that I really should try for. But, oftentimes, the struggle would be knowing there is a better way, but almost totally forgetting what it is. And with being so stuck in the way that I’m used to thinking, being and feeling, it was a real inner struggle to think otherwise.

Finding Love and Support

When I was involved with the inner struggle, I needed people around to remind me which course was going to be helpful for me -- people who did not feed the old pattern, but helped to nurture the new way of being that I was going for. I think more than anything, I just needed support.

I found that support in therapy, with the right therapist for me. And with talking to friends and family who would listen to me without judgment. I got a lot of help through seeking reading material. I’d go to the library and just start looking at books. I’d be drawn to certain books and certain information that would speak to me and help me.

The biggest and best resource for guidance and comfort is my internal support. In meditation and prayer I got in touch with spiritual beings. One Being in particular has guided me and helped me all through this process. No matter what happens, as long as I remember that he is there, I have everything I need -- the strength, acceptance, compassion and assistance, just the total loving presence that is always there for me. Everything that I am not, he is for me so that united we are total and complete. It was this loving acceptance that jolted me through David’s hands. By following it’s gentle flow, I was led to people who expressed this loving acceptance and offered me assistance: my therapists, my dance teacher, my strength trainer, the energy workers. It is a powerful force when we are open to it.

More Big Changes

In that particular three-year phase I gained strength and learned to accept and love myself. In the three years since then, I’ve had a lot of changes to go through to continue this healing process. I’m now divorced from the wonderful, patient and supportive man I was married to for twenty years. At this point in my life, the same process is still going on, but at a different level. After experiencing the exhilarating release of the old ways of thinking and being that were causing me pain, I am finding myself back in the turmoil, back in the “work” phase of allowing blocked parts of myself to come to full expression.

Right now, at this point in time, I’m finding myself alone. Within the last couple days, I have moved out of what was my home for fifteen years. I have to support myself for the first time in my life. Last week my daughter graduated from high school. She’s moving on to college. My

son is in college so he's out on his own. I don't have a full time job. I have to find a place to live -- I just have a temporary place for a couple months.

It's a real pivotal, transitional time for me. I know that I am opening up for some big changes and some really good growth and healing. I don't know yet what it's leading to, but I trust it. I'm scared. It's terrifying to be where I am now. Because all my old familiar world and security is no longer there. Everything that I had in the material sense that was important to me because it was familiar to me -- what was my foundation to stand on and to function through - is no longer there. I was a wife and a mother, that was my role. Now I have a new identity coming open, and I'm just working on what the heck it is.

There is a Reason

As hard as this is, it is not the most difficult time of my life. Years ago, after I graduated from high school, I found myself on the other side of the country from my family, no money, no job, no place to live. It was the same kind of situation as now, and I was in a lot of mental turmoil and confusion. That was the pits. The thing that kept me going then was a desire to change my circumstance, to do things differently so that I didn't have to be in that place alone.

Now, after going through the process that I went through a few years ago, there's something that keeps me going. It is just a dim and vague feeling that I know there's a reason for this. It is worth it, I know that. I can't remember what it is. It gets really unclear, and distant, but I know it's there, and I'm reaching for it.

Absolutely Valuable

As I look back at the intensified healing process, a specific example of a belief that was changed for me was the belief that I couldn't dance. And there was a belief about myself that started to change, but is still in the process of changing. That is the belief that I am as valuable as the next person. I have always felt inferior to others, because I'm female, I don't have a formal education, or a certain type of intellect, or certain ways of expressing myself that people think, or society says, is the acceptable way. Now I'm realizing that this doesn't mean that I'm of lesser importance or value. I've learned that every one of us is absolutely valuable, just as every part of who I am is absolutely valuable.

Opening the Door

There were definite shifts in my consciousness that I can try to describe. There was an awareness of an expanded reality. My whole reality changed as my perception of myself changed. It was like being inside of a house my whole life and not even realizing that there was an outdoors! My usual way of being in the world was limited, there were walls around,

blocking my view. As new parts of me came forth, I began to notice windows to the outside world. When I discovered there was a door that led outside, it was like, “Wow! There’s so much more!”

Eventually I found the courage and stepped out the door. It was very scary and confusing at first, terrifying in fact, because it went so far beyond what I had perceived life to be. Everything that happened in my awareness had the usual familiar meaning, but there was another layer exposed that meant something deeper, more profound and beautiful. And there was another layer after that, and on and on. Life became a true adventure full of exciting exploration and discovery and surprises and blessings.

The trouble I had at first was that when I found out about the “outdoors” I couldn’t tell anyone about it because no one else I knew could see it! I had to seek out the people who could see it so I would have other people I could relate to and share the experience with. That was a real frustrating and frightening thing for me at first -- being the only one in my world that could see this new dimension. I was oblivious to the so-called “new age” movement, I had never heard of any kind of spiritual teaching about things like the energy system, or auras, or the kundalini flow. <http://www.kundalininet.org/> I saw it and felt it, I became aware of it through my own experiences, and I didn’t know what it was. Then I heard and read about it and found my support. I can’t tell you what a relief it was to discover that this is for real – and I’m not crazy after all!

Pivotal Moments

There were many epiphanies for me. One was the turning point of the really intense psychotherapy session, where I became in touch with a lost part of myself. That was a real eye-opener. And there have been pivotal moments like when I would all of a sudden become aware of something else that I didn’t know before. Like the moment in the therapist’s office when all of a sudden, my whole life changed, my whole perception of life changed. Just in one flash of a moment.

And even though that involved pain, there was along with it, a peak, high form of experience. It was the full range. It went both directions – contraction and expansion.

During a phase of my expanding process, I would sometimes experience a full understanding of why I am here in this world and what this existence is all about. It would become very open for me. Then my mind would clamp down, and I would forget. Then it would open up again, and I’d think, “Oh yeah, now I remember! Okay, let’s go back down and do some more work.” And then I’d forget. Now I’ve been through it enough times to remember that I forget! So when I’m forgetting I think, “Okay, don’t worry about it. Just do the work.”

The Healed Way of Being

Throughout these past years, I've had a very clear sense that I was in a healing process. At first healing meant release of physical pain in the physical dimension. Healing on the other dimensions was more of a whole expression--a way of being complete. It's working through blocks and opening to a more expanded understanding or realization of who I am, accepting myself totally and expressing myself freely, and then being available to love and support others through their process.

I could describe the stages of my process as first recognizing that there is a need, becoming aware that there is something that needs to be healed. Then, finding a way to deal with it, to work with it, to try to help it, to resolve it -- the prescribed exercise. Then, to be very persistent, through a phase of consistent, persistent, repetitive work. "Okay, here's what I need to do. Okay, I gotta do it again. I gotta do it again." Until I change that pattern. Then starting to feel the shift, the change of the pattern. And then the release of the old and the establishment of the new way of being--the healed way of being.

A Loving Place

There are challenges that stand before me right now. At this point I'm trying to remember that it's a matter of going through the process. I'm trying to get support, to make sure that I talk to people. I believe that it's moving me forward. I'm trying not to panic and get too caught in the downward pull. Just keep moving step by step, moment to moment, forward towards my nebulous goal! And to remember to draw on my internal power and sources of comfort and assurance. To meditate, write, read, and believe in myself and in a higher, loving order, and stay in communication with the higher order.

I always try to give to other people what I feel I need the most, because I don't see myself as just an individual. For me now, my whole world is me. And every person in the world is me. I want to be as helpful and considerate to everyone I meet, since we belong to each other and are truly one. I feel at this point, that even though my old world has changed so much, that I'm at a pivotal point now of moving forward to a new place. I feel that I am in relationship with my world around me and that the support I need is there. It is a helpful place, a loving place. I think the whole range of possibility is still there -- the good, bad, light, dark, up, down, in, out -- but my own awareness, and my involvement in the process is a positive thing. That's what I look for and choose, so that's what I see and experience.

So Very Worth It

For someone going through the challenges of a healing process, I would want to say to them, "Do not give up! Persistence is important. Keep going. There is a reason why this is happening. There is a reason for the circumstances. And there is a resolution to it. This uncomfortable place is temporary. There is help. It's okay to ask for help, and when you do, help will be there. You never have to be alone. And what you are working for, the reason you are doing this, it is so very worth it!"

A Changeable World

During an intense phase of my healing process, when I was going to deep inner levels of my mind and exploring my pain, I had to "hold on" to my therapist to keep me grounded, because my external world was changing rapidly. My experiences made me realize that the outside world is fluid, it's malleable. As individuals, we do have the ability to change the world. That became clear to me. Because my whole world changed when I changed. That's a part that I tend to forget.

I learned that reality -- I don't know about anyone else's, I can only speak of my own -- that my perception of reality is merely an expression of who I am at this moment. And it's not something I have to be stuck in. It is changeable.

The following websites are provided as sources of information about resources mentioned.

Christiane Northrop	http://www.drnorthrup.com/
Reiki	http://reiki.7gen.com/
Shiatsu	http://www.shiatsubo.com/
Acupuncture	http://www.acupuncture.com/
Barbara Brennan work	http://www.barbarabrennan.com/
Rubenfeld synergy	http://www.rubenfeldsynergy.com/
kudalini	http://www.kundalininet.org/

To order the book referred to, click on it or go to www.Amazon.com

Christiane Northrop, *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*

This story is copyright of The Healing Bridge Project Inc. and its contributor. Except for personal reference, it is not permissible to reproduce this material in any form without prior consent of The Healing Bridge and/or the proprietary owner.