



# AAP News

The Newsletter of the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

August

2006

## **Mayor Teresa Ann Isaac Welcomes Conferees**

*2006 Conference's Community Day draws numerous local people, including the Mayor of Lexington, Kentucky. Here are the Mayor's opening comments:*

**I**t is a pleasure to welcome everyone to this special conference which is unique in giving a spiritual perspective to understanding each other, and perhaps most importantly, understanding ourselves. This conference and the theme for today, "Going Beyond Bias," will help identify the nature of personal biases people have towards each other, and the use of stereotyping as a means of identifying each other. In every aspect of life we try and make connections that will serve as avenues to greater understanding.

I want to thank the Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis and the Kentucky Center of Psychosynthesis for bringing to us the idea that spiritual avenues are vital to reaching that place of peace to which we all strive. In our city proclamation naming June 2006 as spiritual and cultural diversity month, it asks that we encourage everyone to learn to live in love and peace together. In order to do that, we must embrace everything that leads to that end.

A poet once wrote: There is sight in blind eyes if the heart sees clearly, there is music to deaf ears if there is rhythm in the soul, there will always be wealth if there is no greed, there will always be movement if the spirit wishes to proceed.

Let the spirit of this conference move each of us to a better understanding of each other and the world we live in. Thank you.

## **Empathy, Relationships, and the Brain**

*A Brief Review of Some Current Research*

By Joann M. Anderson

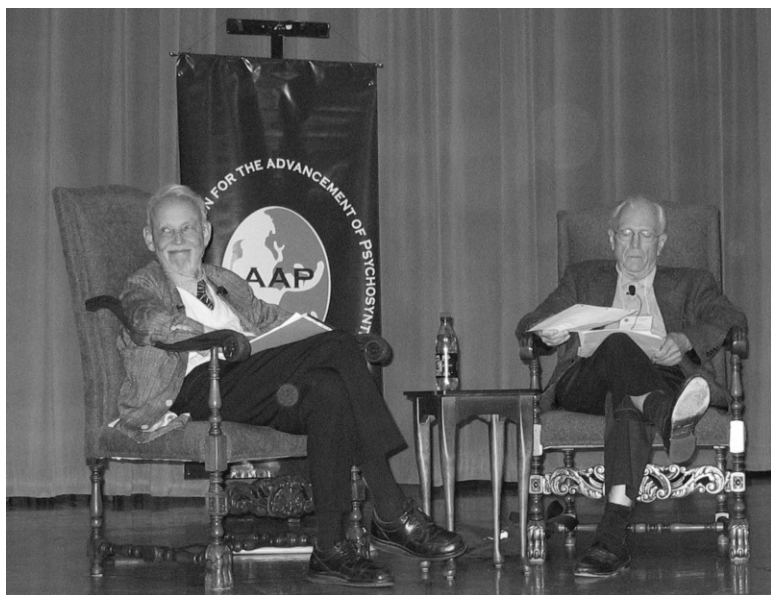
**A**s a clinician of twenty years, I've found the clinical use of empathy in relationships to be very valuable. Until ten years ago, however, I found no research support for this, so I am excited to find the publication of exacting mind/brain research which maps the connections between empathy, relationships, and mental health.

About ten years ago, Marco Iacoboni, MD, PhD, and his staff from Italy discovered "mirror neurons" in the brain. In the first research with monkeys, a brain function printout was recorded while a monkey ate a peanut. Then the researcher ate a peanut and the printout of the monkey's brain showed two patterns: one of the monkey observing the researcher, and another that was the same as if the monkey itself was eating the peanut. It is an amazing discovery.

The research has been extended to humans and has been found to be similar, although not exactly the same. For example, monkeys don't have the capacity to determine the source of the perceived intent, while humans do.

In research with humans, it has been found that there is a continuum of mirror neurons in different populations. Persons with Asperger's Syndrome have no mirror

Photo by Janet Messer



**Huston Smith (left) and John Parks in Lexington**

*Turn to Empathy, Page 8*

# AAP News

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## Yes, Send Ideas, Art, Photos, and Letters:

Send ideas helpful in your life and work, your poems, book reviews, art work, articles—especially about your use of psychosynthesis.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the editors or the AAP. We may edit submissions for grammar, syntax, and size.

## Help Your Editors Edit

We're volunteers, so if possible please make submissions "camera-ready," **Goings On** notes 75 words or less, and **articles** 500 words or less.

## Submission Deadlines

Mar. 15, June 15, Sept. 15, Dec. 15

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## The Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis

Founded in 1995, AAP is a nonprofit association with tax exemption in the United States. It is dedicated to advancing and advocating on behalf of synthesis and conducting psychosynthesis educational programs. Donations are welcome.

# Goings On

## Wisconsin Center Retreat features Sacred Music

Sacred Music will be the theme of the annual retreat sponsored by the Psychosynthesis Center of Wisconsin and the Center for Awakening. To experience the impact sound has on all levels of our being, we will immerse ourselves in sacred music/sound throughout the weekend. There will be times for discourse, for meditation and chanting, for silence, and for play and laughter. We will meet October 5 to 8, 2006 in the Baraboo Hills of south central Wisconsin, where there are many opportunities for being in nature, hiking, exploring or simply enjoying the surrounding beauty and peace.

For further information contact the facilitators: Hedwig Weiler ([hedwig.weiler@gmail.com](mailto:hedwig.weiler@gmail.com)) 704-537-1597) or CaSandra May ([casandra@merr.com](mailto:casandra@merr.com)) 608-356-5577.

## NY Institute Presents Teaching and Tour in Florence

In the Spring of 2007, Bonney and Richard Schaub of the NY Psychosynthesis Institute will teach at the original Florence institute in Italy, and will be following up with a sacred art tour and visualization meditation retreat in Florence. They have led several previous Florence retreats, and there is a strong demand for this upcoming retreat. You can read about one of their previous tours in chapter nine of their book, *Dante's Path*. The tour always includes contact with colleagues from the Florentine institute. You can also attend the teaching, *The Psychosynthetic Treatment of Addictions*, and enjoy being among your Italian colleagues. The course is taught in English and translated into Italian. If you are interested in the content of this teaching, get in touch

with Richard for a free article. The dates of the Florence retreat are yet to be announced, but if you are interested, you should get in touch with Bonney and Richard soon. This is a much-requested tour which they hold only every few years.

You can reach them at [brschaub@optonline.net](mailto:brschaub@optonline.net) or 631-673-0293.

## Psychosynthesis Manhattan Schedule

### Fall 2006 Calendar

Free Introduction to Psychosynthesis  
Friday Evening, September 15, 2006,  
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Psychosynthesis and Higher Self  
Development: Meditation and the  
Experience of Wisdom

Saturday, September 16, 2006, 10:00  
to 4:00 p.m.

Psychosynthesis and Subpersonalities:  
Feelings Have People Too

Sunday, September 17, 2006, 10:00  
a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Beginning of training Fundamentals  
of Psychosynthesis: Integrating our  
Personal and Spiritual Nature Ongoing  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday Evenings  
beginning September 20, 2006

Beginning of Professional Training  
Foundations of Psychosynthesis

10 Monthly Saturdays beginning September 30, 2006, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Beginning of Clinical Imagery  
Training

10 Monthly Sundays beginning October 1, 2006, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The Inner Lives of Men/A Men's  
Group for Psychological and Spiritual  
Development

Ongoing Monday Evenings

Contact: Scott Thompson,  
Psychosynthesis Manhattan  
19 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
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917-279-9960

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## Psychosynthesis Graduate Course at Vermont College

The Synthesis Center of Amherst, Mass., is linking up with an accredited college to cosponsor a new graduate course starting this fall. The course, titled "Psychosynthesis," is being offered through the Vermont College Office of Lifelong Learning, and enrollment is open to anyone who wishes to apply.

Students may take the course for 3 graduate credits (or 3 CEU's) which can be transcribed and applied towards a Master's level degree program. Instructors for the course are Dr. Michael Gigante, PhD and Jon Schottland, MA. Michael has been teaching psychosynthesis for more than two decades and was instrumental in establishing a psychosynthesis institute in the former Soviet Union in the 1980's. Jon is an educator, psychotherapist and an

alumnus of the Synthesis Center counselor training program.

Course enrollment is limited to 25 students.

**Dates:** The course will take the form of three intensive weekend retreats during the fall and winter of 2006-07 at the Brattleboro campus of Vermont College. Weekend dates are Sept. 16 and 17, Nov. 11 and 12 and Jan. 20 and 21.

For registration materials and more information about the upcoming course, please call 802- 387-4827 or go online at [www.onewholeself.com](http://www.onewholeself.com).

## Tom and Anne Yeomans Coming to The Synthesis Center, Amherst, Mass.

Tom and Anne Yeomans will be bringing their work to the Synthesis Center in the next year.

More details will follow.

"Let it be said that all at The Synthesis Center are thrilled," said Didi Firman of the center. "Tom and Anne are at the very foundation of psychosynthesis in this country. Both studied with Roberto Assagioli and both have been primary trainers for most of the second generation of trainers. What a gift!"

## Once Upon a View of *The Color of Fear*

Sounds from silence  
The hidden, heard.  
Mindsets altered  
Root ways purged.

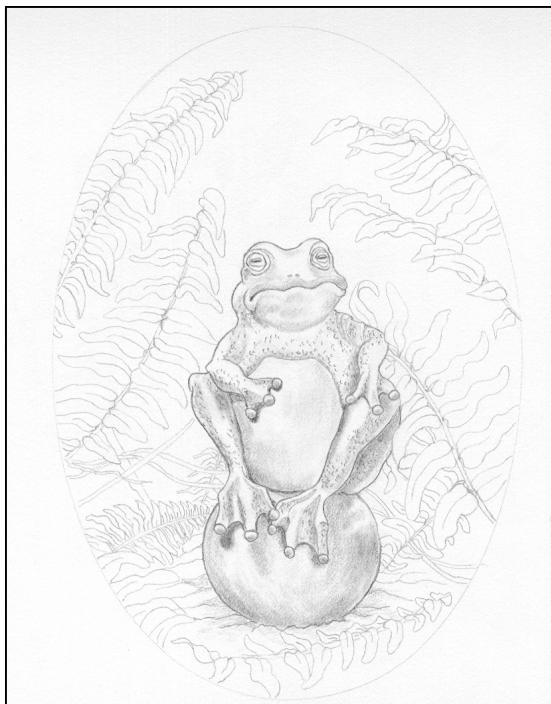
Anger, hurt, injustice  
Ignorance, too,  
Getting on the table  
So long overdue.

Our heartfelt growth  
Its season come.  
Support each other.  
Receive each one.

May silence keep a voice.  
May love receive the news.  
May tenderness come forth.  
May hope embrace the views.  
—Marie Sharp

[Written at a workshop arranged by Rev. Al Lingo and led by Rev. Steven Smith following the June 2006 AAP Conference in Kentucky.

The workshop featured the film *The Color of Fear* by the filmmaker Lee Mun Wah, a Chinese American community therapist who filmed eight men in a weekend of honest and unconstrained discussion about their experiences, beliefs and values related to race, color, ethnicity and culture.]



***I'm no subpersonality!!***

Art by Bonney Kuniholm

## LETTERS

### ***Notes on Psychosynthesis from an African American Perspective After the Kentucky Conference***

Dear psychosynthesis friends,

After presenting at and attending the “Unity in Diversity, Diversity in Unity” conference, I experienced an increase in enthusiasm for and interest in the psychosynthesis community.

Through the years I’ve eased my way into psychosynthesis: I didn’t want it to offset my religious beliefs. I consider myself an individual who welcomes, respects, and encourages the diversity of religions and spirituality—and nonreligions and nonspirituality. Initially I was worried, because most of the people I came in contact with at the beginning of this psychosynthesis journey were atheists, agnostics, or people who had been hurt so deeply by religion or religious practices that they put down any and all forms of organized religion.

In my fledgling days I thought psychosynthesis meant non-

religious. What a wonderful surprise, over the years attending conferences and reading about psychosynthesis, to discover there is room for both religion and non-religion.

Some embrace a theory of lightness and darkness as warring

*“In my fledgling days I thought psychosynthesis meant non-religious. What a wonderful surprise . . . to discover there is room for both religion and nonreligion.”*

dichotomies, with one to be conquered and one to be triumphant. Some of *us* accept and appreciate the existence of our positive and negative selves housed within our single body—we enjoy the challenges and joys of the dance between the two. They balance and counterbalance each other. And, there is room for both these

views and more.

Psychosynthesis has been a blessing in my life—especially after attending the last conference (Diversity and Unity). This was a refreshing opportunity to experience psychosynthesis as a framework in which to explore diversity—of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, family, religion, and spirituality. I met others from a variety of religious and spiritual backgrounds who also had found a place of solace, refuge, and joy in psychosynthesis.

Thanks for the opportunity and the connection with what makes our world a challenging and wonderful place in which to exist, thanks to diversity.

Sincerely,

*Cynthia Lashley, MS*  
psychosynthesis traveler  
advocate of diversity

### ***New Psychosynthesis Book by Abby Seixas***

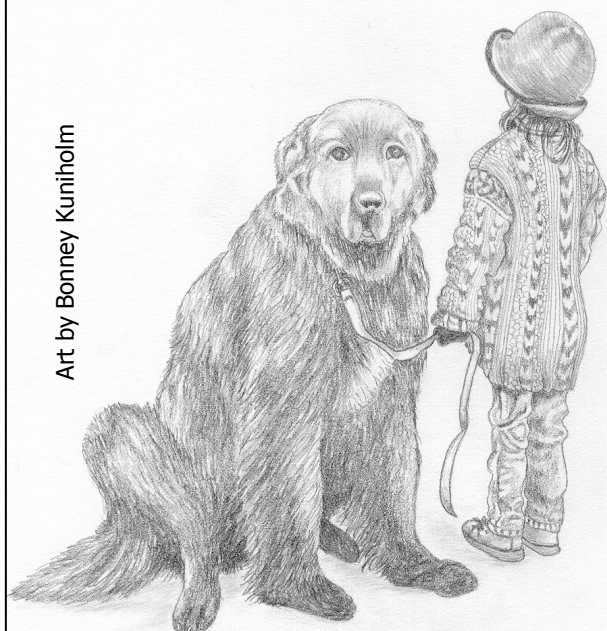
Jossey-Bass has published a new book by longtime psychosynthesis practitioner Abby Seixas: *Finding the Deep River Within: A Woman’s Guide to Recovering Balance and Meaning in Everyday Life* (September 2006).

Christiane Northrup, author of *Mother-Daughter Wisdom*, says, “*Finding the Deep River Within* holds the key to lasting health and sustainable joy.”

The book is endorsed by many others, including Didi Firman of the Synthesis Center, who writes, “*Finding the Deep River Within* belongs on the bookshelves of every therapist who works with women—not only to give to clients, but for their own self-care. I am already recommending it to clients and friends.”

Look for a review of *Finding the Deep River Within* in a future newsletter. In the meantime, you can find out more about Abby’s work or preorder the book at her website: [www.deepriverwithin.com](http://www.deepriverwithin.com). ■

Art by Bonney Kuniholm



**Whither thou goest . .**

# Co-chair Report

Betty Bosdell and David Shirley

*Kentucky Conference exciting, inspirational...  
New Members Join Steering Committee...  
New Monograph published...more*

Your annual conference held in Lexington, Ken., was exciting and inspirational. Huston Smith's keynote address, attended by about 400 people, set the tone for the conference. You may read highlights from participants in this issue. The conference theme of "Unity in Diversity, Diversity in Unity" manifested as goodwill that permeated the conference—from the innovative addition of presentations by friends of psychosynthesis to a day devoted to the local community, ethnic foods for each meal, and an "Introduction to Psychosynthesis" that was very well received by 27 people! The University of Kentucky conference was held in a stunning setting that encouraged conversation and sharing—all participants had opportunities to interface with each other. Special workshops ended the conference: one on Diversity and one by Jeremy Taylor on Dreams.

We were delighted to welcome two new members to the Steering Committee: Carla Peterson and Sharon Mandt. We said goodbye to two hardworking members of the SC: Walter Polt and Veronica Fisher. Both will continue to serve AAP, Walter with the newsletter and Veronica with the membership committee.

Brad Roth announced the completion of the monograph *Psychosynthesis and the Body*, which was made available to members attending the conference and will be sent to members who were not in Kentucky. The issue is dedicated to Dr. John Parks, who also was presented with a framed print of the cover art.

As we looked ahead we made several decisions. The **July 2007 conference theme is "Psychosynthesis in 2007: Bridging Spirit and Action,"** to be held in the East Bay San Francisco area. The next monograph will be on Psychosynthesis and Spiritual Traditions. As the Steering Committee of a membership organization, we rededicated our efforts to improving membership benefits and representing psychosynthesis to the larger community.

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## Will Parfitt's book *KABBALAH FOR LIFE* published

*How to Use the Power and Wisdom of this Ancient Tradition*

The Kabbalah is an ancient tradition which provides a pragmatic approach to spiritual growth. It has been a source of inspiration for individuals as diverse as Shakespeare, Madonna, Carl Jung and Da Vinci. Starting with the Tree of Life, Parfitt reveals the Kabbalistic approach to health, healing, the Tarot and pathworking. The book is at once a guide to individual evolution as well as an exploration of how to live peacefully without harming our increasingly fragile universe. ■

Will Parfitt – will@willparfitt.com – www.willparfitt.com – Box 1865, Glastonbury, BA6 8YR, U.K.

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## Psychosynthesis, Swedish Style

By Ilene Val-Essen, Ph.D.

With a bounce in my walk as a gentle breeze blows in the fragrant spring air, I behold the stately HumaNova building in Stockholm. I'm in awe. Psychosynthesis is housed in one of the most prestigious blocks in one of the world's most beautiful cities. Inside, as Gunnel Schwieler leads me up flights of stairs on this bright Saturday morning in May, it becomes clear that there is *life* and *learning* on every floor. Psychosynthesis is alive and very well—and I am joyous. I am in a room that overlooks the sea and has an ornate ceiling painted in the thirteenth century, to talk about *Quality Parenting*, the program I developed for parents, based on psychosynthesis. I'm facing a sophisticated group, open and ravenous to learn. Their questions show exceptional insight. A delightful woman, fluent in English, asks if she can translate my material into Swedish. They order more than two dozen copies of my book, *Bring Out the Best – in Your Child and Yourself*. How wonderful to experience enthusiastic peers in other parts of the world. Now it feels as if Scandinavia is just around the corner. ■



Photo by Janet Messer

**Table Talk in Kentucky:  
Unity in Diversity, Diversity in Unity**

# Huston Smith—'Dean of Comparative Religion'— Keynotes AAP National Conference in Lexington

By Sonya Jones

Memorial Hall was filled to capacity as Dr. John Parks, Director of The Kentucky Center of Psychosynthesis, introduced Professor Huston Smith, this year's keynote speaker for the AAP Conference held at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, June 16 to 18.

In calling Professor Smith the "Dean of Comparative Religions in the United States," Dr. Parks noted that this Syracuse University professor emeritus and UC Berkeley distinguished adjunct has published 14 books and received 12 honorary degrees. His germinal text, *The World's Religions*, is used in college classrooms worldwide. "Huston's voice rings loud and clear in today's troubled world," Dr. Parks told the packed house.

"Deeper in every individual than sexuality or possession is the craving for right orientation," Huston Smith began his lecture. "We need to know where to go," he added. "We turn inward. We all need to know who we are. Enter psychology."

As noted for humor as for humility, Professor Smith then announced that having taken care of psychology and religion handily, he would turn to integrating body, mind, soul, and spirit. We are "one" spirit, he said, quoting the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, who wrote, "the soul can split the mind in two/ and let the light of God shine through."

Professor Smith's topic, "Human Growth, Religion, and Psychology," fit well with AAP's conference theme, "Unity in Diversity, Diversity in Unity." Peppering his lecture with quotes from European and American thinkers, he integrated Native American tradition, and he offered a teaching from his Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

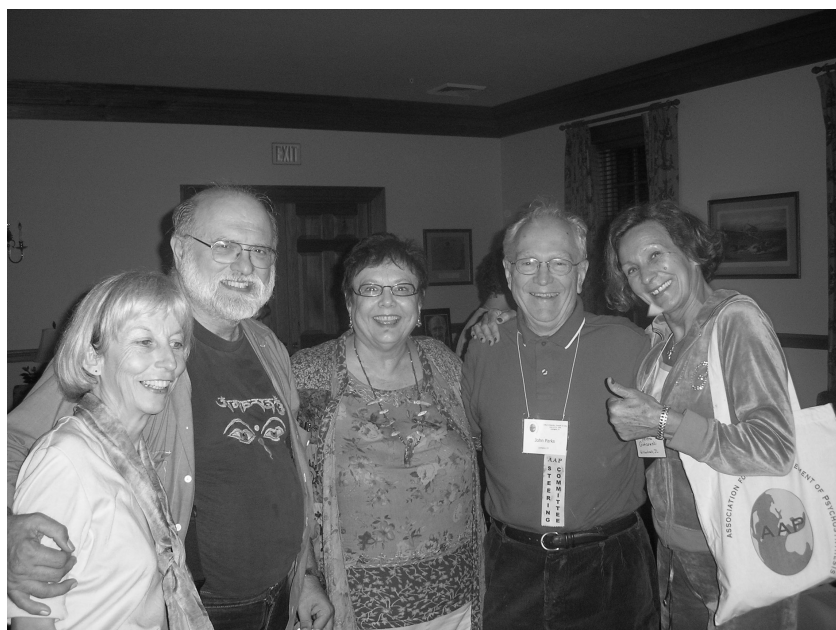
When asked what he would like to accomplish before he dropped his body, Smith said, His Holiness reportedly said he would like to be enlightened, but the troubles of his people are so great that he can only meditate two hours each day. How can anyone be enlightened who can only meditate two hours each day?

Professor Smith's answer to this compelling question was delivered in American dialect: "Do your duty. Develop muscle." We live in a "very troubled" but "deeply mysterious world," he said, advising young people to study the Wisdom traditions, to read from great religious tracts such as *The Bhagavad Gita*. "Blessedness is the union of the mind with the whole of nature," he said, attributing the quote to Spinoza.

After responding to several questions, Professor Smith proclaimed that he wanted the last word. "In traditional China where I grew up," he said, "when the audience clapped, the speaker clapped back. Let's all clap for us." ■

*Dr. Sonya Jones is a member of the Honors Program Faculty at The University of Kentucky and President & CEO, The Jones Educational Foundation, Inc.*

Photo by Mary Kelso



**Magdalena Lehman, Jeremy Taylor, Mary Kelso, John Parks and Helena Gudowski enjoy a moment between workshops**

## **MUSIC AND DANCE ENLIVEN CONFERENCE**

Attendees at the Kentucky conference were treated to an evening of music on Saturday, June 17. Ann Sidumak, Kathleen Cummings, and Bill Adams, a retired professor of music at the University of Kentucky, performed both four-hand and solo works by Bartok, Debussy, Chopin, and even some newly discovered works of Gurdjieff. While the pianists took a break, those who wished did the Dances of Universal Peace, and sang and danced to *The Ocean Refuses No River*. These were taught by Fran Belvin, a local dance instructor, who guided all to a beautiful, meditative experience.



## Day-to-Day Psychosynthesis

### A Birthday Present to Myself

**I**t was my birthday, I was in an exotic location with friends, and everything should have been perfect. My concern about the trip was to avoid repeating events that I had experienced once before with friends—a very frightening experience which left me in a state of great anxiety, resulting in the loss of my job and a difficult time moving forward.

Over time, I worked through this difficulty with a therapist. I also took a course in psychosynthesis where I got in touch with the part that made the rules for me when I was young. One rule was that in all circumstances, I had to be nice. During this exercise, the rule maker part was asked if that was a rule for all occasions, and the part said “yes.” Then the part was asked if the rule would apply if it were a serious situation or a matter of life and death. After thinking about it, my rule maker said that I did not have to be nice in that case. Some part of me took in that information and entertained the idea over time.

On the evening of my birthday, I was bowled over by a friend’s attempt to get me into the exact circumstance that had set me back several years before. Instead of responding as I had on that earlier experience, or as I would have in most of my experiences, I got mad! I was mad because this friend was doing what I had asked all my friends never to do, which was to put me in this position again. It was an angry part, but also a centered part that realized this person was putting me in a position of risk and compromise, and not valuing everything I had been through, and what could be jeopardized.

I’ve learned that anger can be good when used by the self. Before taking the psychosynthesis class there might have been a point where I would have looked back with regret as to how I handled this situation because I wasn’t “nice,” but that didn’t happen. Instead, I know now that in certain circumstances it’s okay to be angry, and to respond with some force.

It wasn’t the birthday experience I was expecting, but I was glad that I had learned to use my anger to help protect myself from serious harm, which I hadn’t been able to do before.

Kari, IL

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### CONFERENCE COMMENT

Jeremy [Taylor] was both dynamic and articulate. I’ve never wanted to remember or record my dreams. I had fear in taking a look at them because dreams might tell you something you really don’t want to know. But having used his approach, I enjoy it and look forward to recording my dreams.

—Sue Molneaux, Ill.

## Plea from the Grieving

by Judy Von Bergen

it requires an outpouring of my limited energy  
this taking care of the kind people who gather to minister to me  
I appreciate their intentions

it would be far worse if they left me alone

but wouldn't it be healing  
if people came with open ears connected to open hearts  
if they came comfortable with soul talk  
I don't want to be cheered up  
nothing that artificial

often physically or mentally I need to be alone  
other times I yearn to speak frankly  
of the bare naked emotions that sweep me  
of my new awareness and understanding  
of my fears and joys  
and hear others' joys and understandings too

when visitors come tap dancing bursting with kind intentions  
and  
pasted on grins  
I strain as I hoist out my smile  
I dredge up a shred of my party personality

I struggle to make them more comfortable with my loss

instead come to grief in quiet  
not needing a show nor wanting an exhibit of one

don't worry    you've known me  
I'm still me  
sadder maybe    less energetic  
wiser  
there might be much to communicate  
or we can keep quiet company

come as yourself  
no performances necessary

bring love to share and we can both part stronger  
than when we came together

*Two friends had similar experiences when grieving.  
Ann was grieving for the loss of her health, Julie for her  
infant that died. This poem was written for them.*

## Empathy cont'd from Page 1

neurons, and those who are autistic have few, if any, mirror neurons. On the other end of the continuum are persons with an abundance of mirror neurons who are highly sensitive to the intent of other persons. They *observe* the intent of the behavior in the other person, *attribute* it to that person, then experience it within themselves as *empathy*. There are also persons who have an abundance of mirror neurons but do not *attribute* the intent of the behavior and simply take on the emotions of the other person. These persons need to

develop awareness of *attribution of the intent*.

The key here is that empathy is shown in these studies to be the way one person relates or connects to another person. Without empathy, there cannot be a connection, as has been found in those persons with autism and Asperger's Syndrome.

Another researcher and clinician, Daniel J. Siegel, MD, is the author of *The Developing Mind* and co-author of *Parenting from the Inside Out*. His "mindsight lectures" apply Iacoboni's research to mental health (available through [www.drdansiegel.com](http://www.drdansiegel.com)). This review is too brief to cover all the facets of Siegel's work. His focus

is on "consilience," that is, the concurrence or accordance in inferential results from different sources (see E. O. Wilson, 1998). Siegel has just reported the first-ever research of the effects of mindfulness on the brain (December 2005). The early findings (before publication) indicate that concentration, meditation and mindfulness bring coherence to the functioning of the brain, especially in those persons with an abundance of mirror neurons.

These findings are highly significant for psychosynthesis practitioners and I look forward to further developments as Drs. Iacoboni and Siegel continue their research and education. ■

### CONFERENCE COMMENT

Sigh, then smile . . . "It's been a wonderful experience. Everyone pulled together to get the big picture first, and then the details."

—Judith Broadus (of the Kentucky center, when asked how it felt to be putting on this conference)



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Albany, CA 94706

### Explore This Issue:

- **The Kentucky AAP Conference**—On Huston Smith's keynote address
- A review of current research on **Empathy**
- A Birthday Present
- Viewing ***The Color of Fear***
- Notes from an African-American perspective
- **Goings On** at psychosynthesis centers

. . . And find **much more** . . .