



The Healing Nest

The Official Newsletter of **Rising Bird Healing Arts**

A healing space for the mind, body, & soul.

Courtney E. Putnam, MFA, LMP, CRP

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"The Healing Nest" is the official newsletter of Rising Bird Healing Arts.

This newsletter is for clients and friends of Rising Bird Healing Arts. You may send all correspondence and newsletter contributions to Courtney Putnam at cputnam@rising-bird.com.

Rising Bird Healing Arts

Massage • Reiki • Holistic Healing

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Courtney E. Putnam.

Transitions



I had the best of intentions. I had planned for this newsletter to come to you in July or August. It seems my life had other plans for me, however.

My father passed away in August after a seven-month struggle with kidney cancer. This has been the most difficult seven months of my life and it has also been the most deep and meaningful time. That is why the loss feels so great, and why I knew the theme of this Summer/Fall 2008 issue had to be Transitions. Not only am I experiencing the transition from summer to

fall, a typically challenging transition for me, but I am feeling the intense transition that comes from losing a beloved parent.

My dad was the king of smooth transitions. He had the uncanny ability to adapt to any situation with ease and grace. With a new situation in front of him, he would take a deep breath, refocus, and then ask, "What needs to be done now?" He very much lived in the present moment, and allowed the past to stay in the past. There are moments when I have encountered this ability in myself, when I have felt my father's influence resting inside me like a smooth basalt river stone, but this fall, my first fall without him, I am feeling wobbly and uncertain.

What has kept me grounded during these wobbly times, however, has been my healing work—the profound work I do with all of you. This summer during my father's illness, one dear client who knew of my struggles asked me during a session, "How do you care for other people and hear other people's problems when you have such big stuff going on in your own life?" It was such a good question. I was surprised when I heard myself saying, "I find it very grounding and centering to give bodywork. I can tune into the relaxed breath of my clients and the sacred space I have created for their healing." I also heard myself say something about the universal nature of suffering—that I can connect to the suffering of others (even small moments of suffering or discontent) while holding my own sadness about my father because it all comes from the same source. Suffering is suffering. Grief is grief. Loss is loss. The specific circumstances and degrees of intensity may differ, but I have a hard time ranking or categorizing these things. Until my client asked me her question, I hadn't realized that I truly felt this way.

Whatever transition you may be experiencing now, whether positive and lovely or deep and difficult, I encourage you to take good, gentle care of yourself. Change, even positive change, can carry with it strong emotions. The articles and information in this newsletter address several ways you can nurture yourself during times of transition. I hope you take away some kernel, some bite of helpful goodness you can use to help you as you encounter the important changes in your life.

Courtney

The In Between Time

by Elizabeth Rightor, MA, MEd
Helping People Blossom

I would love to live
Like a river flows,
Carried by the surprise
Of its own unfolding
~John O'Donohue

As I write this, I'm sitting in the living room of the first house I ever owned. Outside, the wind is dancing through the trees, whispering of change to come. Leaves of every color surround me. I'm in awe of the beauty. Truth be told, I'm also a little scared.

When the wind picks up, I take in a deep breath and watch as a single golden leaf floats back and forth until it finally, gently touches the ground.

Fall is my favorite season. I love the colors, the way the air feels fresh and clean. It's almost as if you can taste the possibility of things to come. This season has always been about transitions. Nature shows us with breath-taking beauty that change is the most poignant of paradoxes. It is both beneficial and unavoidable. Changing seasons remind us that we must find a way to release the old to make room for the new.

This particular fall, what I see outside reflects my inner journey. I recently sold my house and my partner and I are moving into a place that will feel more like both of ours. This period of transition, coupled with the current financial market, has been challenging.

It is this *in between* time that offers us insight to our deepest, most sacred selves—when what we used to know is no longer true and what fills the space has yet to come into fruition. Transitions can be difficult, because they bridge the known and unknown. Times of transition can often bring feelings of emptiness and confusion, when questions remain unanswered.

We go through transitions both when we are building on our life's dreams and also for unexpected reasons. The loss of a loved one, the end of a long-term relationship, or the diagnosis of an illness may propel us quickly into a state of transition. What many people fail to realize is that periods of transition that are in line with our heart's longing can also be disorienting. Conceiving a child, starting a new business, getting engaged, or preparing for college-age sons and daughters to leave home may be bittersweet.

As Bernice Johnson Reagon says, "Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you; they're supposed to help you discover who you are." Whatever the reasons for transition, the following tips can help you navigate the transition smoothly and learn about yourself in the process.

Stay in the present moment as much as possible—

Thinking about what could have been or trying to plan for what might happen in the future can drain you physically and emotionally. A good question to ask yourself is, "What do I need right now?" At first, you may come up with answers about next week, next month, or even tomorrow. It is helpful to focus on the present moment. You don't need to know all the steps along the journey. Just take the next best step.

Stay physically active and get grounded in your body—

Nothing beats exercise for helping keep everything in perspective. Try a yoga class; go for a long walk; or take a bicycle ride. Physical activity helps us to feel alive and spurs creativity. Plus, by being physically engaged, you can clear some of the mental chatter of worry.

Choose to look for and focus on the positive—

My mentor once told me, "Fear is a gross misuse of imagination." I try to remember this about fear when I'm faced with anxiety, imagining what *could* happen. When we contemplate the unknown, we are sometimes caught up in the fact that "anything can happen." Why not turn that idea around for your benefit? Yes, anything can happen, that includes things that are beyond comprehension, which are positive, things beyond your wildest dreams.

Set positive intentions—

Think about what it will feel like when you are on the other side of this transition. Use all of your senses to feed into this picture of your life: smell, touch, sound, taste. What will it feel like in your body? Imagine being healthy and vibrant. Picture with great detail what your new job will be like or how it will feel to hold a new-born baby in your arms.

Let go of expectations—

Be open to the outcome and appreciate the learning and growth the transition offers.

Trust that you are resilient and have the strength and resources you need—

Have you ever heard we are never given more than we can handle? There is a Chinese proverb I've always admired, "*You can only go halfway into the darkest forest; then you are coming out the other side.*" Trust that things will get better.

Understand that life has a rhythm of its own—

As individuals, we are constantly evolving, becoming. Our transitions move us forward in life. According to Harrison Owen, four spiritual laws govern all of life: whoever comes are the right people; whatever happened is the only thing that could have happened; whenever it starts is the right time; and when it's over, it's over.

Breathe—

In *Loving What Is*, Byron Katie talks about how breath is one of the most powerful mechanisms for healing. We can bring intentionality to our breath and let it soothe our minds and bodies. Even if you are not

conscious of it, your breath flows naturally. Katie says it's not about our "doing the breathing," but instead about *letting go*. In that letting go, "we are breathed." Just as our breath works as it should, she suggests our lives do as well.

Reach out to family and friends—Making connection with those we care about and scheduling time for fun can help during challenging times. People who are witness to your life can help you stay grounded and optimistic.

Seek help—I love working with clients in transition, because my job is to mirror back to them their own brilliance and resources. Change can be scary; it helps to have someone to walk with through the waters of transition.

Look for resources that can inspire and uplift you—One of my favorites is *Transitions: Prayers and Declarations for a Changing Life* by Julia Cameron. It's filled with reflections and tidbits that can bring meaning when nothing seems to make much sense.

May you be at peace where you are and be carried by the surprise of your own unfolding.



Elizabeth is a therapist in private practice. She blends her training in Family Systems Theory with energy medicine, spirituality, and her own gifts of intuition and insight to help clients live the full, rich, rewarding lives they desire. Elizabeth specializes in working with couples and women who suffer from anxiety and depression. For more information, visit her Website elizabethrightor.com.

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Books for grief, loss, & other life transitions

On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler

Seven Choices: Taking Steps to New Life After Losing Someone You Love by Elizabeth Harper Neeld

No Death, No Fear: Comforting Wisdom for Life by Thich Nhat Hanh

The Courage to Grieve: The Classic Guide to Creative Living, Recovery, and Growth Through Grief by Judy Tatelbaum

A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis

Grieving the Loss of Someone You Love: Daily Meditations to Help You Through the Grieving Process by Ray Mitsch

The Wheel of Life: A Memoir of Living and Dying by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and Todd Gold

On Death and Dying by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

My Grandfather's Blessings and Kitchen Table Wisdom by Rachel Naomi Remen

Writing as a Way of Healing by Louise DeSalvo

The Way of Transition: Embracing Life's Most Difficult Moments by William Bridges

The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

The Year of Magical Thinking by Joan Didion

Refuge by Terry Tempest Williams

Hard Laughter: A Novel by Anne Lamott

Without: Poems by Donald Hall

Moon Crossing Bridge: Poems by Tess Gallagher

Have you ever visited **Four Seasons Oasis** in the Madison Valley area of Seattle? This marvelous store holds within its walls books, resources, and gift items related to loss, grief, and healing. I feel calmed and soothed the minute I walk in the door.

The Madisonian Building
 2915 East Madison Street
 Seattle, WA 98112

206.726.0500



For more information, visit <http://www.fourseasonsoasis.com>

Feeling Good



I've been reading up on oxytocin lately. This "hormone of love" as it is often deemed, is known to reduce stress hormones, promote relaxation, and increase feelings of love, bonding, and connection.

I've been thinking about oxytocin lately because I have heard some express that right now "things aren't feeling so good." Perhaps the weather and light change has affected some of us, or maybe we're feeling down from the economic turn. I've also seen many people starting to get those nasty and lingering fall colds. So, if you're in a space of feeling not quite optimal, not quite 100%, I want to give you a little inspiration.

This inspiration comes in the form of something that you already have. You don't need to buy it or concoct it. All you need to do is access it and let it do its job. The amazing hormone oxytocin, most known for its effect in producing labor in women, may show positive effects on both your body and mind. Now, how do you activate this great, feel-good hormone?

What researchers are finding is that receiving positive touch increases oxytocin in the body, and receiving massage in particular may be an effective and powerful way to get that "feel good" feeling. The Touch Research Institute in Miami has conducted hundreds of touch studies, all which have produced interesting findings related to the power of touch to help us heal, grow, and prevent stress and disease. Many of its most profound studies involve underweight infants who, when touched on a regular basis, grow faster and gain weight more quickly than infants who were not given touch. Several other studies reveal a decrease in depression among people who receive touch, particularly massage, on a regular basis.

So I say, hug your partner, your family members, your pets, your friends. Make a conscious effort to not only connect with others with your eye contact and voice, but also with a small gesture of touch.

And consider getting massage on a regular basis. More and more I see how receiving massage is important and integral to our well being and health. What was once considered just "pampering" and "extra" is now shown to play a huge role in our overall health and well being. Several massage studies have shown that massage not only reduces stress and promotes relaxation, but actually restores the body and may in fact be strong preventative medicine.

Autumn Special: Pumpkin Spice

This autumn, I invite you to surround yourself in light and warmth while taking in the nurturing scents of pumpkin, cinnamon, and clove.

Spend two hours relaxing your mind and body, releasing unwanted tension, and restoring your sense of well being.



This two-hour experience includes:

- A **citrus-spice foot spa**, warm **herbal chai**, and a light **fall-inspired snack** to awaken your senses.
- A **full-spectrum light therapy** session to boost your mood.
- A **pumpkin spice body polish** treatment to revitalize your skin.
- A **hot stone massage** using heated basalt river stones for deep relaxation and warmth.

Cost: \$120. Gift Certificates Available.

To make your "Pumpkin Spice" appointment, email Courtney at cputnam@rising-bird.com!

This special ends on December 31, 2008.

Open Hearts

This summer I offered a two-hour special called "Open Heart." This holistic healing session allowed recipients to open themselves to the gifts of the heart chakra: self-love, forgiveness, compassion, and grace. Included in this special was a "Self-Love Valentine" art exercise, which gave clients an opportunity to create a valentine *for* themselves *from* themselves. I was touched and inspired by the valentines my clients created, and witnessing the powerful impact of this art exercise on each client revealed to me the importance of self-love work. One client said to me after creating her valentine, "I should create one of these for myself every month!" Yes, indeed.

Two of my clients have generously offered to share their experience of this special, including the valentines they created. Thank you opening your hearts to us by sharing your creations, Jenna and Carol Jo!



For me, the experience of the "Open Heart Special" brought together thoughts and feelings in an unexpected way. I had never made a valentine for myself. I was able to give my heart a gift, while the cradling, nurturing affect of Courtney's Reiki and massage helped me to internalize the truth of what I was saying with my mind. - Carol Jo Horn



"I give myself peace. I give myself the ability to dance to my own drum. I give myself unconditional love," were the thoughts that I had while participating in the Heart Chakra special, and are reflected in my self-love valentine. In my busy life I take on the role of helper, supporter, nurturer, but often neglect to give myself the same love and attention that I give others. This experience let me slow down and focus on myself, and I left feeling rejuvenated.

- Jenna Powers

About the Heart Chakra

The **Heart Chakra** is located in the chest area of the body and extends down the arms into the hands. The heart and lungs are part of this chakra, and so is the thymus gland. Here are some other interesting characteristics of this chakra:

Indian Name: Anahata

Associated Element: Air

Symbol: Twelve-petaled lotus flower

Key Issues: Unconditional love, self-love, compassion

Chakra Colors: Pink (for calming/soothing) or Green (for activating/balancing)

Gemstone used to activate Heart Chakra: Emerald

Gemstone used to balance Heart Chakra: Rose quartz

Essential Oil: Rose

Source: Mercier, Patricia. *Chakras: Balance Your Body's Energy for Health and Harmony*. Godsfield Press: New York, 2000.

Current Sessions and Rates

Swedish Massage • Deep Tissue Massage • Hot Stone Massage • Acupressure • Reiki • Mind-Body Integration • Healing & Creativity Workshops • Emotional Support • Personal Growth

Bodywork & Holistic Healing Sessions

I offer integrative bodywork sessions tailored to fit your particular needs and concerns and hold a soothing and safe space for you to relax and heal. Sessions may include one primary modality or a combination of healing modalities.

Please note that these prices may reflect an increase for some of you. If this is the case, new prices take effect Nov. 1, 2008.

Sixty-minute session: \$70

Seventy-five-minute session: \$85

Ninety-minute session: \$100

Sixty-minute hot stone session: \$90

Ninety-minute hot stone session: \$120

Reiki for Animals

Reiki sessions for animals last approximately one hour, with a portion of that time spent communicating with you and your companion animal regarding particular health, behavioral, or emotional issues. Reiki time will vary based on the size of the animal as well as the animal's response to energy work.

\$60 for full sessions

\$30 for focused sessions

Add Ons

Please request add ons when you make your appointment.

Add Sugar or Salt Glow: \$20

In this treatment, salt or sugar (your choice), combined with emollient and essential oils, provides a refreshing scrub to invigorate your senses.

Add Aromatherapy Treatment: \$20

This treatment includes an aromatherapy foot bath, hot towel treatment, and your own customized spritzer or lotion to take home.

Add Light Therapy: \$25

Sit for thirty minutes in front of the soothing rays of a 10,000 lux full-spectrum light box. Full-spectrum light therapy can help boost your mood and combat the effects of S.A.D. During the fall and winter months, this form of therapy is especially effective. Absorb the healing light as you soak your feet and enjoy a cup of tea.

Add Reflective Journaling: \$25

Enjoy thirty minutes of time to yourself and for yourself. Allow your creativity to flow onto the pages of your very own journal (provided), soak your tired feet in an aromatherapy footbath,

and warm your body with a cup of tea. Process your hectic day, explore your inner thoughts and dreams, or play with some of my writing prompts. This journal time is especially beneficial for those who have a difficult time "turning off" their mind during a massage session.

Two-hour Chakra Healing Sessions

I am developing unique two-hour chakra healing sessions for specific and intensive work on each chakra. The first Chakra Healing Session I am offering is the following:

Heart Chakra: Open Heart

I invite you to open yourself to the gifts of the heart chakra: self-love, forgiveness, compassion, and grace.

This two-hour "Open Heart" session includes:

- A soothing rose water foot bath, strawberry-rose iced tea, and a light snack.
- A "Self-Love Valentine" writing prompt and art exercise (all art supplies provided).
- A combination of massage, Reiki, and guided visualization to support, soothe, and open the heart chakra.
- A "Heart Chakra Kit," including a rose quartz stone and aromatherapy spritzer.

Cost: \$150

Specials

Each quarter, I offer a unique two-hour holistic healing session, which includes bodywork, energy work, and other specific creativity or healing modalities. These two-hour sessions are priced at a reduced rate of \$90-120.



Reduced Rates for massage students: One-hour massage: \$55; one-and-a-half hour massage: \$85

Please let me know 24 hours in advance if you need to cancel your appointment.

I accept payment in the form of **cash, checks, and credit cards.** * **Yes, I now accept credit card payments!** *

Occasionally I may be able to book same-day appointments, but most often booking in advance is required.

At this time I am not able to bill insurance directly, although I can provide a detailed invoice for your reimbursement purposes.

Gift certificates are available.

Animals are always welcome at Rising Bird Healing Arts. It is sometimes optimal, however, to visit animals in their own environment to reduce the stress of travel and unfamiliar settings. As such, I do not charge a travel surcharge for animal Reiki sessions to homes located in the Seattle metropolitan area.

Creativity Corner

Art Prompt: "Change"

As much as we might try to fight the statement "The only constant is change," it seems rather true, doesn't it? For this exercise, think of a change that you have endured, a transition you are currently going through, or a transformation you would like to take place. This change could be an internal one, like a change from uncertainty to self-confidence. It could also be more external, like a change from living in Los Angeles to living in Seattle. Whatever change rises to the surface, it's time to explore its characteristics. Does this change make you feel light and buoyant or heavy with dread? What colors and textures come to mind? What images bubble to the surface? Explore this change with whatever artistic medium you are called to use.

Writing Prompt: "Transformation"

You are about to drink an elixir that will change your physical form for 24 hours. You will still be *you* inside—with your same memories and thoughts, etc.—but you will look entirely different. This elixir can change you into another human form, an animal or plant, or even an object. What happens when you drink this magic elixir and who (or what) do you become? How do you experience the world differently in this new form? If you need some help getting started, begin with this: "I drank the elixir, glanced down at my body, and saw..."

Submission Guidelines:

Submit your writing or art to me via email (cputnam@rising-bird.com) by **January 15, 2009** to be considered for the Winter 2009 Issue of the newsletter. Subject line of email should read "Winter newsletter submission." Art should be in .jpg format, and writing may be in a Word document or pasted into the body of the email.

Next ART SHOW at Rising Bird Healing Arts:

Thursday, December 11, 2008, 6-9pm



In honor of my dad, who passed away this past August, I am donating 50% of the proceeds from my original art, art prints, and art cards to the Kidney Cancer Association.

My hope is to increase awareness about kidney cancer, and to help in the effort to create methods of early detection and to develop effective treatments.

I will, once again, be joined by the lovely and talented **Kristin Stubbs**, who will be selling her one-of-a-kind **jewelry** creations!

As always, there will be **art**, **refreshments**, heaps of **merriment**, and a **winner** of a free one-hour massage!

A Wee Bit About Me:



Courtney E. Putnam is a Licensed Massage Practitioner and Certified Reiki Practitioner, who offers a holistic approach to wellness. With a strong belief in the mind-body connection, Courtney holds a safe space for her clients to experience emotional as well as physical healing.

By integrating massage, energy work, creativity, and holistic wellness approaches, she invites you to experience a unique blend of healing modalities to support your body, mind, and spirit.

In addition to her bodywork endeavors, Courtney is a poet and visual artist and holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

Please visit her blog, **The Healing Nest**, for frequent articles on health, wellness, and creativity: <http://thehealingnest.blogspot.com>!

End Notes:

As a writer and visual artist, I find that incorporating artistic expression in the healing process is helpful and revealing. Feel free to visit **The Healing Nest Blog** for writing and art exercises, stress reduction strategies, and bodywork you can do for yourself at home. Also, visit my **Sessions and Rates** page for detailed descriptions of all of my services, including full-spectrum light therapy, aromatherapy foot baths, and reflective journaling time. • I created all of the artwork in this newsletter. Feel free to visit my "**Quiet Girl Gallery**" art blog for more examples of my work.