

PRIMAL

Supporting Growth and Healing Through Deep Feeling Process

FALL NEWSLETTER • NOVEMBER 2008

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Summer Convention 2008

A message of thanks from the one
with the sunburned leg...



By Julia Mitchel
Photography by J.J. Jackson
and Anna Puleo

This last year has been a series of challenges that have kept me preoccupied with day to day surviving, remembering, feeling, managing—and at times, my shocked body/mind stops things from being absorbed. Then later, when it's quiet, I can allow the images, memories, and thoughts to surface, bit by bit, and gently settle into feelings and responses that I begin to absorb and make my own. In this way, I have gradually opened

up to the experience of the IPA Summer Convention and the wonderful interactions that occurred. It's interesting that some of the most enjoyable, and warmest memories involve laughing, sharing the humor and aliveness that feels so vital to have in my life.

To whoever was responsible, or jointly responsible for assisting me to attend the Summer 2008 Convention, I give my heart-felt thanks. I gave up a job that was well paid because it was killing my spirit, I was getting very, very sick, and took on a new job with less responsibil-

"Convention 2008" continued on page 2

A message of thanks from the one with the sunburned leg...

“Convention 2008” continued from page 1

ity. It’s great, but it means I am needing to be careful with my finances. The gift of this overseas scholarship is and was deeply appreciated. Some of you may remember it was actually my second attempt at getting there, the first one having to be cancelled because of a health scare. It was all the more appreciated as a result.

I am very sure the benefits I have been fortunate to receive will go on, in the everyday interactions and contacts that we have with people all the time. The IPA has a collection of unique and courageous people, and I’m very pleased to be

associated with you all.

It was also a great sense of achievement to have become certified. My certificate is framed and on display in the green house where I work. I now have a web site and am working with some very good people here in Ireland, to further develop awareness and access to this deep-feeling work. I’m going to create a vision board and focus on getting a big house and opening a centre for healing and sanctuary. Any thoughts (or multi-million donations) gratefully received.

Here’s to next year’s gatherings and growth!

Convention Portrait 2008



Front row: Laure Spiro, Marlene Schiller, Joe Dunn, Alice Rose, Bob Holmes, Harriet Geller, Heidi Garrett, Jennifer “JJ” Jackson.

Second row: Kim Mellor, Barbara Bryan, Larry Schumer, Gene Long.

Third row: Bill Owen, Warren Davis, Walter Gambin, Bill Whitesell, Joe Sanders, Diane Kohl, Marie Regis, Denise Kline.

Forth row: Maria Williams, May Dell, Leonard Rosenbaum, Sandy Weymouth, Mandi Cope, Jean Rashkind, Jeanne O’Donnell, Alex Tadeskung, Bob Wentworth, Anna Puleo, Clare Gill, Julia Mitchell, Esta Powell

Standing in he back: Marian Horton, Anthony Puleo, Ed Durkin, Peter Vaino, Claire Turner, Roger Tolle, Mileve Gold

IPA Calendar

IPA Board of Directors Meetings

Jan. 23-25, 2009
Sandy Weymouth's
The Woods Place,
Rising Sun, MD

Apr. 24-26, 2009
Location TBD

Spring Retreat May 7-10, 2009

Kirkridge Retreat and
Conference Center,
Bangor, PA

Spring Retreat Coordinator:
Bob Holmes,
1-877-258-9315

Summer Convention August 24-30, 2009

Concord Retreat Center
Yellow Spring, WV

Loving to Feel: The True Connection

Co-chairs:
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Esta Powell, J.J. Jackson



Alex Tadeskung, Denise Kline



Jean Rashkind, Bob Wentworth



Alice Rose, Mary Dell, Sandy Weymouth, Anna Puleo, Mileve Gold



J.J. Jackson, Denise Kline, Mileve Gold, Marlene Schiller, Claire Turner, Anna Puleo, Dianea Kohl



Walter Gambin (bkrd), Anna Puleo, Larry Schumer, J.J. Jackson, Kim Mellor

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inactive while on the Board)

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The International Primal Association, Inc. publishes the IPA Newsletter. Opinions expressed by the authors are their own and not necessarily those of the IPA. Unless otherwise directed by the IPA Board, the Editor reserves the right to make final judgment as to the publication of all materials received. Unless specifically requested otherwise, the Editor reserves the right to edit contributions.

Next deadline: February 1, 2009

2009 Spring Retreat, May 7-10

By Bob Holmes

Next year we will be back at Kirkridge Retreat and Conference Center in the beautiful mountains of north-eastern Pennsylvania. Mark your calendars for May 7-10, Thursday dinner through Sunday lunch. Students get a spring break, why not you? Spring flowers will be in full bloom.

Enjoy the time-tested program of workshops, cabaret, dance party, men's and women's groups, small sharing groups, labyrinth, pond, and the standing stones of Columcille. Real beds! And great food, of course! Watch your mail for the Spring Retreat flyer for more details. Call Bob Holmes, 2009 Spring Retreat Coordinator at 1-877-258-9315 for more info.



Member Announcements

Diane Kohl's New Book Wins Award

Diane Kohl's new book *Tears Are Trust...waiting to be felt* has been honored as an Award-Winning Finalist in the "Health: Psychology/Mental Health" category of the National Best Books 2008 Awards, sponsored by USA Book News.

Primal at Avalon, West Virginia

Primal at Avalon Nov. 15-16, 1:00-4:00 pm, during their Health Fair weekend. Denise Kline, Kodankan Restoration Therapist, psycho-dramatic body-worker and Chris Wright-style facilitator will present Hawaiian massage, and Sandy Weymouth will facilitate deep emotional processing with members in attendance. Others are welcome to join us: share rooms, do emotional work, swim, enjoy the Jacuzzi and sauna, and...dance! Avalon, where Walter Loeb lives and does massage, is a "casual and friendly clothing-optional resort and community" on Critton Owl Hollow Road in Paw Paw, WV 25434. Denise will also present at Avalon's Luau on Nov. 22. Call Denise (301) 791-9237, Walter (304) 947-7818, or Avalon at (304) 947-5579 if you wish to reserve a room, condo or camping site.

Thanksgiving Weekend at The Woods Place

Great, Gracious, Gratitude, Grrrr: Thanksgiving weekend at Sandy Weymouth's The Woods Place, 55 Patrick Ward Drive, Rising Sun, MD 21911. Please RSVP for afternoon dinner with trimmings on Thursday; bring a favorite side dish, drinks or dessert. You are welcome to primal all weekend like it's Open House. Deep massage available from Denise Kline. Several people are expected Saturday when their family plans conclude, including massage therapist Jan Owens. Call Sandy at (410) 287-3103 or (302) 530-1535, or Denise at (301) 791-9237.

Summer Convention—August 24–30, 2009

Loving to Feel: The True Connection

By Barbara Bryan, Diane Kohl & Denise Kline

We love to feel joy, excitement, passion and enthusiasm. But we must be willing to feel the darker emotions of rage, shame, fear and sadness in order to release them and make room for the lighter emotions. We will deepen the true connection—to our innate loving selves—through exploring anger, fear, sexuality, life stages and pain in vulnerable, but safe ways.

As we go to press, the final details for a new and expansive convention site, Concord Retreat Center in Yellow Spring, WV, are being worked out. The new venue offers exclusive use and has its own pool, plenty of meeting space, comfortable sleeping accommodations, and a wide variety of food. Check it out at www.concordretreat.com.

Look for the Call to Presenters with your membership renewal mailing in mid-November. You will also have an opportunity to complete a Membership Questionnaire concerning future sites, best dates,

and activities most desired at IPA events. Perhaps there will even be a Super Early Bird Special so that we can pack this spacious location with ever more people seeking to avail themselves of opportunities to primal, release emotions and create joy, love and peace outside and within.

Co-chairs are Barbara Bryan of the Primal Integration Center of Michigan, veteran primal therapist, trainer of primal educators and facilitators, and the IPA's longest-serving president; and Denise Kline, J.D., who is IPA's current vice president. Barbara can be contacted at babryan@twmi.rr.com (website www.primalcenter.com) or (248)478-5559; and Denise at messagearts@aol.com or (301)791-9237.

We are truly looking forward to a peaceful environment and fun-filled week as we process through our internal struggles, learn new techniques, explore life stages, and deepen our experiences together.

Changes to the IPA's Convention Scholarship Program

The IPA Board has decided to increase the availability of scholarships for the 2009 Summer Convention. Up to eight half-price scholarships will be available for IPA members who demonstrate financial need. Individuals may qualify for such scholarships whether or not they have received one in the past. After those eight scholarships are awarded, two additional scholarships may become available, but only for applicants who have not previously received such scholarships. The cutoff income level has also been raised (to \$26,000 for a single person household). These additional scholarships are made possible because of the generous bequest to the IPA by Daniel Miller. For further information about scholarships, see the IPA website page at: <http://www.primals.org/convention.html> or call the IPA Treasurer, Bill Whitesell, at 703-734-1405.



Welcome New Members!

Claude Breault and
Julie Contant, Quebec, CA

Becky Christophel,
Harrisonburg, VA

Mileve Gold,
Baltimore, MD

Danuta Snow Song Mette,
Krakow, Poland
(joint membership with
Silver Fox Mette)

Bill Owen,
Kensington, MD

Anna Puleo,
Harris, NY

Don Wharton,
Bethesda, MD

Marc Zavitz,
London, Ontario

Primal Groups

Barbara Bryan
Farmington Hills, Michigan
Thursdays from 7:00 - 9:30 pm
Some primal experience
required
babryan@twmi.rr.com
248-478-5559

Bill Whitesell
McLean, Virginia
No charge to participate
wmwhitesell@yahoo.com
703-734-1405

Esko and Marja Rintala
Helsinki, Finland
Weekend groups Friday
evening through Saturday.
esko.rintala@pp.inet.fi
358-9-611184

Member News

Primal Intensives at the Primal Integration Center of Michigan

November 14-16, 2008 (\$300)

December 13, 2008 (\$100)

January 10, 2009 (\$100)

February 13-15, 2009 (\$300)

Led by Barbara Bryan and staff. Food, lodging, and possible pick-up at the airport are included in the fees.

Phone: 248-478-5559

Email: bbryan@twmi.rr.com

Website: www.primalcenter.com

Primal Psychodrama Weekends in Columbus, OH Led by Esta Powell

December 5-7, 2008

March 6-8, 2009

Cost \$175, breakfast and dorm style accommodations included. Group size limited to eight participants.

For more information visit: www.primalmatters.com or call 614-893-3527.

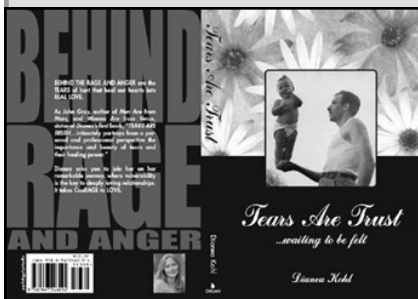
Diane Kohl's New Book

TEARS ARE TRUST...waiting to be felt is the sequel to *TEARS ARE TRUTH...waiting to be spoken*, the second book of a trilogy: *TEARS ARE TRUE LOVE...waiting to be known*, is anticipated.

For more information visit:

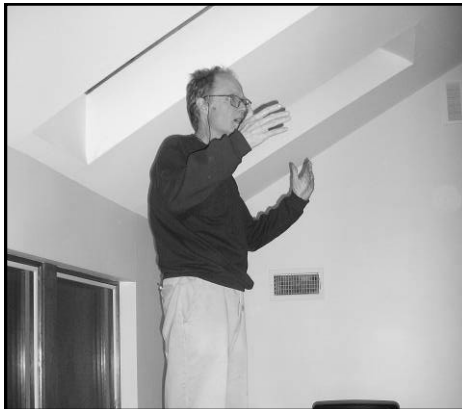
www.makealllove.com

dianeako@yahoo.com



Primal Gathering in Maryland: It Worked!

By Sandy Weymouth



The Primal Feelings Gathering, October 17 through 19, was a great leap forward for The Woods Place. Twenty-six people came and participated in the various workshops and other feelings-release activities. Even our cook, Maryam Savabi from Iran, an American citizen as of about two months ago, checked in on activities.

People's reactions, on the one hand, seemed to be ecstatic about the place, the food! and the opportunity to do in-depth primal and primal-like work on feelings and personal history. On the other hand, they saw room for improvement in the structure and clarity regarding unavoidable rules and procedures.

I couldn't attend the workshops but I heard they were excellent, including great and possibly painful stories played out in Linda Marks' Saturday morning psychodrama workshop. I've done many of Linda's workshops and know how well they can go. Saturday afternoon Spirit Taylor took people not only to feelings but to attitude and behavior change in her New Identity Process-based workshop. (NIP was developed by the late psychiatrist Dan Casriel and lives on today as Bonding Psychotherapy.) Lee Aikin led a similar NIP-based feelings workshop Sunday morning and the buzz on it was excellent. And finally, massage therapist Jan Owens led a touch workshop which participants praised, and she gave many private mas-

sages.

I love how everyone pitched in and contributed to the success of the whole thing and at the same time took real responsibility for getting what they came for, breakthrough feelings work. But please let me single out some special people who did special things: Anna Puleo and Bill Gronwald, who've worked extensively with veteran primal therapist Barbara Bryan in Michigan, came early and did all kinds of vital stuff.

And thanks to J.J. Jackson for great photography of the event: I tend to take J.J.'s recording our events for granted, forgetting this is time she might have used elsewhere. And the divine IPA vice president, Denise Kline, whose kind and creative energy permeates the whole process, before, during and after. And how about those oh-so-necessary "Keep Off the Grass" signs, Bill Owen!

It was a great event, and, with some invaluable feedback compiled by J.J., it'll be even better next time. February maybe. It couldn't have happened without the IPA; the overwhelming preponderance of people were either IPA members (three officers!) or people I've met through IPA functions. The Woods Place in northeastern Maryland is available for any kind of experiential feelings work 24/7/365-6. Call or come any time: 410-287-3103, cell: 302-530-1535, sandyw@iximd.com. I love you all.



Snail-Wail: Anger

By Linda Marks



For a time, when I first started primal therapy, I reveled in my right to feel and expel my infantile rage. It was a relief, exhilarating and quite harmless when aimed at a representative pillow or waste basket. Of course, I knew that venting that sort of anger in the real world would be embarrassing and demeaning, and make people think I was crazy.

However, I have to admit that, in my zeal to be true to my feelings, I have sometimes overdone anger at a friend or loved one and, of course, regretted it. I am embarrassed to admit that, in my confusion, I sometimes felt entitled to berate others or make hostile remarks.

Now I'm struggling to be the compassionate person I would really like to be. I don't want to be a bully, even if I *have* been hurt or wronged, or even if I *am* entitled to feel my anger and express it. I didn't realize how abusive my anger might have seemed to others, partly because I hadn't fully felt how harmful the anger I received as a child was to me. I had become

numb as a child as a way of coping.

When I began to feel my own anger and grow stronger as an adult, I felt justified in asserting myself and didn't always know when to draw the line. Now I see that my anger does not have to lead to aggression, hostility or deliberately or inadvertently hurting someone. It is a feeling. It doesn't have to become an activity. I have learned that I can acknowledge it to myself and express it respectfully if I decide to be careful *not* to hurt, humiliate or intimidate the other person.

I know that the desire to hurt others with my anger is connected to old, helpless child feelings and, although I know this, I also know I am no longer a vulnerable child, and I no longer need to let those

Now I see that my anger does not have to lead to aggression, hostility or deliberately or inadvertently hurting someone. It is a feeling.

feelings out in situations where I can hurt innocent people.

I don't want to become the bully. That won't make me feel better. I can primal if I need to get old feelings out. I don't have to push away people who might love me or at least be nice to me as long as I remember this. And I don't have to hang around with other people, who don't remember this, if I don't want to.

A One

By Harriet Geller

I am a one, which is not first in the Enneagram: it merely occupies its place on the circle of numbered personality types.

Being a one means that I can't leave anything alone; I cannot just welcome a yellow leaf floating on the breeze.

I poke at it and test it for perfect balance until it nose-dives to the ground, a stable situation I can live with—that is,

with which I can live.

I am aspiring to be a copyeditor so that I might be paid

for my neurosis, at least provide it with a professional label, like doctor or teacher, a useful and respected endeavor.

I untangle my friendship with Ture helped by the Enneagram—each of us knowing that the other's defects

are shared with one-ninth of the population. Ture invokes my oneness to defang the critical bitch, and I forgive him

for being a loudmouth ass-hole when I remember that he is a seven.

Being a one means I cannot express a feeling—

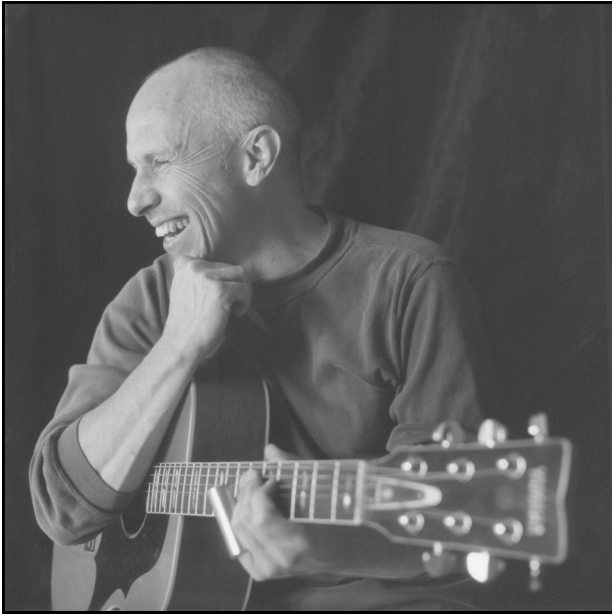
the joy of maneuvering words into a poem, say—nor can I let a line stretch to its own length.

The Enneagram



Raising Our Voices

By Sam Turton



We are born with voices. Voices that cry, voices that speak, voices that shout, voices that sing. Our voices allow us to reach out and touch each other with our inner thoughts and feelings. Our voices allow us to make things happen.

Unfortunately, for many us, our voices have been silenced. As babies we were left to cry alone in the dark until we shut down and passed out. If we expressed our joy, pain, fear, or sadness beyond the confines of adult “propriety,” we were judged, shamed, punished, or ignored.

Schools often drove the last nails in the coffin, row by row, desk by desk, test by test. We were trained to “follow the company line” and be quiet. We became the perfect fodder for the corporate office, the factory floor, the big box aisle, the government agency, and the battlefield. From schoolroom to workplace, the hypnotic command is, “repeat what you are told and do as you are told.” Children should be seen and not heard. Silence is a woman’s best garment. If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.

From birth, we are raised in an autocratic system that stifles our originality and silences our voices. No wonder we don’t vote—most of us have never lived a democratic life! Our families aren’t democratic, our schools aren’t democratic, and our jobs aren’t democratic.

We are used to letting a few powerful individuals run our lives. This pattern continues as we let a few developers design our cities, let a few marketers tell us what to buy, let a few producers program what we watch and listen to, let a few corporate execs play with the economy, let a few politicians sell off our resources, and let a few oil tycoons heat up our climate.

We need to get our voices back, and to do that we need to start at the beginning. As babies and as adults, the

beginning is a feeling. If you know what you feel, you know what you want. If you know what you want, you can raise your voice, take action, and make it happen.

Unfortunately, years of repressive conditioning make it difficult. We are unsure. We don’t want to upset anyone. We don’t want to be centered out, disliked, criticized, or made fun of.

To find our voices we need a safe, supportive, non-judgmental environment. We need to start small and share a bit of what we think and feel to those who will listen and not criticize. We need to express ourselves, little by little, until we can make our thoughts and feelings known. This is what brings relationships, families, work teams, and communities together.

One of the most powerful, reliable, and enjoyable ways to find our voices is to actually raise our voices and sing! Singing has inspired us and brought communities together since ancient times. Every great musical tradition, from Afro-American Gospel to Irish-Maritime Celtic, is built on songs that get everyone singing. This is democratic music—by the people, for the people—and the supportive group is the safest place to raise our individual voices.

That’s why I dedicate more and more of my time to bringing people together to sing. If we can escape the phantom-filled isolation of our TVs, computers, and ipods, and fill our ears and bodies instead with the real vibrations of our voices and the voices of others, we can begin to regain a sense of our personal power. Instead of being passive pawns listening to and obeying the powers that be, we can make our own music—and make ourselves happy.

I love being in a room where everyone is singing together. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a hymn, a chant, a protest song, a gospel belter, a Celtic foot stomper, or a doo-wop finger-snapper—it feels good and it brings people together. And it also inspires people to take that good feeling home and do something with it.

Whether it’s in a singing workshop, a pub sing-along, or a chant circle, group singing opportunities—if they are truly non-judgmental—are one of the best ways to confront our fears, feel them, express them, and grow beyond them. Once we begin to use our voices, we may find that we venture a bit farther from the passive and obedient little cage in which we were stuck.

Who knows what will happen in our lives when we raise our voices. We may make our feelings known to our family and friends. We may speak to our coworkers and bosses. We might join an active community group or write a letter to the editor. We might speak as a delegation at City Hall or be a representative in a municipal planning process. We may sing in a musical comedy! Once the cork is out of the bottle, anything is possible.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

From the website of the Department of Health and Human Services' Center of Disease Control

“Childhood abuse, neglect, and exposure to other traumatic stressors which we term adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are common.”

The ACE Study was initiated at Kaiser Permanente, San Diego, from 1995 to 1997, and its participants are over 17,000 members who were undergoing a standardized physical examination. Each study participant completed a confidential survey that contained questions about childhood maltreatment and family dysfunction (adverse childhood experiences), as well as items detailing their current health status and behaviors. This information was combined with the results of their physical examination. The study found a strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults. More than half of respondents reported at least one, and one-fourth reported two or more categories of adverse childhood experiences. Persons who had experienced four or more categories of adverse childhood experiences, compared to those who had experienced none, had significantly increased risk for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, suicide attempts, smoking, poor self-rated health, more than 49 sexual intercourse partners, sexually transmitted disease, physical inactivity and severe obesity. The number of categories of adverse childhood experiences showed a graded relationship to the presence of adult diseases, including ischemic heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, skeletal fractures, and liver disease.

The ACE Pyramid represents the conceptual framework for the Study. During the time period of the 1980s and early 1990s information about risk factors for disease had been widely researched and merged into public education and prevention programs. However, it was also clear that risk factors, such as smoking, alcohol abuse, and sexual behaviors for many common diseases were not randomly dis-

tributed in the population. In fact, it was known that risk factors for many chronic diseases tended to cluster; that is, persons who had one risk factor tended to have one or more others.

Because of this knowledge, the ACE Study was designed to assess what was considered to be “scientific gaps” in the origins of risk factors. These gaps are depicted as the two arrows linking Adverse Childhood Experiences to risk factors that lead to the health and social consequences higher up the pyramid.

The ACE Study takes a whole life perspective, as indicated on the arrow leading from conception to death. By working within this framework, the ACE Study began to progressively uncover how childhood stressors (ACE) are strongly related to development and prevalence of risk factors for disease and health and social well-being throughout the

lifespan.

The sequence in the ACE Pyramid supports psychoanalytic observations that addiction is primarily a consequence of adverse childhood experiences. Moreover, it does so by a population-based study, thereby escaping the potential selection bias of individual case reports. Addiction is not a brain disease, nor is it caused by chemical imbalance or genetics. Addiction is best viewed as an understandable, unconscious, compulsive use of psychoactive materials in response to abnormal prior life experiences, most of which are concealed by shame, secrecy, and social taboo.



More detailed scientific information about the study design can be found in “The relationship of adult health status to childhood abuse and household dysfunction,” published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* in 1998, Volume 14, pages 245-258 or at: <http://xnet.kp.org/permanentejournal/winter02/goldtolead.html>

The Necessity of a Neutral Therapeutic Stance

By Donald Wharton

Many of us are rather fond of the primal process as described by Janov. In my thumbnail overview of that process we start with the very real problems in our lives and find the historical events which impact on them. Where they include traumatic events which can be re-experienced and cleaned up by the healing process we share we become more real, more authentic and more able to live with a sense of ease in the here and now.

However, not all experiences which look like a primal regression are real primals. Many of us can recall court cases including the disastrous “recovery” of false memories of child abuse. Some unfortunate parents were taken to court and had to demonstrate that an incompetent therapist had implanted false memories with the communication of inappropriate “therapeutic” expectations.

It can be easy to implant such “memories.” People are deeply suggestible during the intense emotive states that go with primal or quasi-primal responses. It is remarkable that many of the victims of these implanted false memories manage to reject them and reestablish positive relationships with their parents. It certainly documents the necessity of a neutral stance on the part of a therapist. The therapist must not present implicit demands on their client to produce stories of any given form.

Scientology has a methodology that is somewhat similar to primal therapy. They say that traumatic events are stored in “engrams” which must be made conscious and thereby cleared. That has some similarity to primal theory. However, after a Scientology follower becomes “clear,” he or she is told that they are inhabited by the spirits of alien life forms that lived 75 million years ago. They were drugged and murdered in titanic nuclear explosions by a galactic overlord named Xenu. The fact that it is easy to instill this belief seems astonishing to me, but in the context of Scientology this is accepted as fact. Grown people go through a period of struggle with very strange experiences in an effort to rid themselves of something that never happened. This is all a creation of the auditor who is functioning in the role of a therapist in a Scientology community. I feel sorry for the poor Scientologist who is suffering under this particular delusion. Some people have called these processes the world’s most expensive exorcisms. The cost supposedly runs into five figures.

The concept of past lives, from this Xenu event or otherwise, is not supported by any reasonable empirical evidence. There have been numerous cases of past life claims that have been investigated. None of them have documented any significant correspondence with verifiable lives in the past. Beyond

that there is now a very large and growing body of evidence linking human cognition (including memory) to specific lobes of our biological brains. Lesions caused by accidents or disease have produced dysfunction which documents the function of the lost brain cells. Functional imaging has shown which areas of the brain are more active with various states of mind, mental activity or memory. Various mechanisms have been used to turn off or stimulate specific brain functions. Some cognitive functions are more widely dispersed than others but there is no credible evidence of any cognitive function that is unrelated to brain biology. If there were memories of a past life, how could these memories possibly be stored? There is simply no plausible mechanism documented by science for asserted memories of a past life to be a truthful accounting of reality.

There are numerous activities in which past life regression, within the IPA and outside, is taken seriously. This requires far more belief in the improbable than I have. These are just false memories and false problems. To my thinking, people no more have problems from a past life than a problem with a disembodied spirit murdered by Xenu.

Why do people believe they have past lives? There is a theory about the evolution of folktales, legends and myths which talks about the “minimally counterintuitive.” What this means is that such stories seem to have one or very few magical features, which makes them attractive. They create interest and are retold. Research shows that a minimally counterintuitive story will be remembered better than stories where all elements are intuitive (non-magical) or where there are a great many counterintuitive (magical) features. Thus talking animals appear in many myths. A tale about a past life also seems to qualify. The single magical event, the migration of the ‘mind’ from one life to the next, creates the minimally counterintuitive condition which enhances the propagation of such folktales.

I posted a prior version of this article on the IPA ewall listserve. There were several posts that asserted some evidence or reasons to believe in past lives. The case of Jenny Cockell was cited as proof of reincarnation. Under hypnosis she fantasized that in a past life she was a woman in Ireland named Mary. How many tens of thousands of women named Mary were there in Ireland in the past? Obviously a vast number. She then started to search for this “past life” in the historical records. She eventually found the case of Mary Sutton and decided that this was the one.

There were a great many ways in which the imagined past life did not match. At one point she imagined that her surname had been O’Neil, rather than Sutton. She imagined a husband named Bryan but Mary Sutton had a husband named John. A drawing by Ms. Cockell of a church was very different

“The therapist must not present implicit demands on their client to produce stories of any given form.”

than the church Mary Sutton actually went to. Another church in the area had a gable end as in the drawing. However the drawing lacked the massive gothic window of that church and a skeptical review noted “many other significant omissions and mismatchings.” The street that Mary lived on was Swords not Salmon Road. The justification was made that they both started with the letter “S.” Jenny had drawn various maps of the roads and landmarks in Mary’s village. The many differences with the actual area were deemed acceptable given that the maps “had been drawn from dreams.”

This process of searching for some minimally matching story has been described as shooting an arrow and then drawing a target around the place where it lands. With the vast number of possible cases to be examined there is a certainty of finding something at least vaguely similar. If

the similarity is not sufficient one can continue the search until something better is found. In what way can Mary Sutton possibly be considered a real “past life” of Jenny Cockell with this type of search strategy?

There was also the assertion that there “was a guy whose head had been run over by a truck, leaving him in a coma with only a functioning brain stem,” and he recovered. This example was given to demonstrate that “while the brain is associated with cognitive functioning it doesn’t mean it is the source of cognition.” If there were cognitive function with only a brain stem present it would be arguably the most astonishing discovery in the history of humanity. The fact that this case did not create a media frenzy appropriate to the scale of the claim suggests to me that this case is not very special at all. My deduction is that the man did have all the relevant parts of his brain and this example did not in any way violate the scientific consensus that cognition is a brain function.

I was asked if I had attended “any of Brain Weiss’ workshops” so that I “might be able to be open to experiences” of my own. I deduced that Brian Weiss was the person giving these workshops and writing his various books. I learned that he has hypnotized people to regress them to past lives and to progress them to “future lives.” I also learned that Jenny Cockell reports exploring her future life in Nepal. She is convinced she will reincarnate there in a future life.

I have also read Bob Holmes’ essay entitled “An Argument for Past Life Therapy.” Most of this reads as logical reasons to be skeptical of past lives. However, at the end he just makes the astonishing leap that if we primal past life events and “if resolution of the issue occurs, perhaps we have a new reality paradigm to supercede the old one, because the new one now fits our current experience in a better way for us.” He does not demonstrate that it really is a past life. In fact I did not see any reason for Bob to think this is anything other than fantasies. He reports no time markers of any form.

I have a friend who says, “We should be open minded but not so open minded that our brains fall out.” When examin-

ing extraordinary claims such as past lives our open-mindedness should include listening to the reports and evidence, if any, supplied by those who talk of such things. I have been touched and astonished by the sharing of many people on this subject in response to my original post.

However, what we are seeing is exactly what the research would suggest we would see. If an experience is labeled a “past life” it becomes more interesting and the story is differentially propagated. In an environment where past lives are accepted and assumed to be true there will be a default forcing simply due to this well documented differential interest. A therapist might imagine that he or she is not forcing his or her client to have a “past life” experience. However, that forcing effect will be there simply by virtue of an authority being present who validates the concept. Fictitious stories are generated

by default.

I want to quote an excellent paragraph from Bob Holmes’ essay:

“Now, if the real horror of an incident was too terrifying for a person to go through, and instead the unconscious mind produced a fictitious story to approach the issue in an indirect way, how might we expect the issue to resolve? Would we not simply be faced, sooner or later, with the causative event or situation? If this were not so, then we might reasonably expect to be able to create fictitious story after fictitious story, healing all our pain along the way. But this simply does not happen. We cannot primal, and heal, a fictitious story. If we could, we would only be leading ourselves deeper and deeper into denial, and that is a pathway away from healing, not toward it.”

Well said Bob!

I am quite certain that “past lives” are impossible. There is some chance that good might be accomplished even if it is based on a false assumption. It is also possible that the results are harmful. If the purpose of the primal experience is to become more real as people, we would not want it to make us less connected to reality.

Fortunately this need not be left as a matter of opinion. Janov has documented that real primal regression results in a significant lowering of resting pulse rates and blood pressure. I have found those measures to be very effective personal biomarkers documenting the effectiveness of my primal work. I usually take my resting pulse as I wake up in the morning. I do it before any significant activity in the morning has created a need for an increased blood flow. Deep primals have often lowered my early morning resting pulse 10 to 15 beats per minute for the next few days.

If we put in place a systematic capture of these biomarkers from “past life workshops” as opposed to classical mat work, it should be quite visible if any real good is being accomplished.

“I am quite certain that “past lives” are impossible.”

An IPA Sponsored Peer Program For Veterans

By Joe Sanders

Joe Sanders has requested the IPA Board to approve a committee that would develop his proposal for including recent veterans in the IPA. Below is his proposal.

Thanks to the passage of a post-9/11 G.I. Bill, large numbers of discharged soldiers are expected to sign up for higher education and training in the near future. Many of them will be receiving compensation for injuries declared by the Veterans Administration to have been “service connected.”

For this group of veterans, as for those from previous wars, there is likely to be a perceived stigma in accepting treatment for service-connected mental disabilities. Those who balk at seeking treatment from the VA for a mental disability may be at significant risk for harm to themselves or their significant others. But, as students, they will be easy to contact. Could they be helped in some other way?

More than any other organization with which I have been associated since 1973, the IPA is now in a state of development that warrants its offering help to veterans who were trau-

matized during recent military service but who have declined help from the VA. The IPA is unique in its acceptance of both lay persons and professionals as members. That, perhaps more than anything else, may account for its viability.

Immediately after World War II, the VA hospitals were forced to empty the beds occupied by veterans of World War I who were being treated for alcoholism to make room for disabled World War II vets. Many of those veterans turned to Alcoholics Anonymous for help. They got it and continued to associate with each other regularly. It was buddies helping buddies.

At its core, that is what the IPA has been about. True, most of the trauma revisited in IPA’s Mat Tracks was first experienced before adulthood. But the methods used and the companionship experienced on the mat are just as applicable to trauma experienced as an adult. Thus, I am asking the IPA’s Board to consider publicly offering recent veterans membership, and for its current members to consider facilitating the process.

IPA ROSES to . . .

- ◆ Daniel Miller for endowing the IPA to the tune of \$335,000, and Bill Whitesell for handling our bequest with his signature professionalism.
- ◆ Denise Kline and her Summer Convention team for creating a wonderful week while overcoming the many difficulties of a new location: Bob Holmes, facilities facilitator par excellence and program printer nonpareil; the energetic kitchen crew led by Diane Kohl; J.J. Jackson, who checked us in when we arrived and checked out our rooms at the end with the help of Gary Bradley, Warren Davis, Alice Rose, Claire Turner, and Maria Williams; all the DC-and-environs people who transported us to Sevenoaks; J.J. and Anna Banana Puleo for great photos, and Larry Schumer for making them available to us on-line; all the massage people, workshop presenters, and special-event facilitators, who gave, gave, and gave.
- ◆ Sandy Weymouth for making The Woods Place available for a free primal weekend in October, and for his continuing commitment to the growth of the primal community.
- ◆ Esta Powell for hosting the Board meeting in October with warm hospitality—and hot tub!
- ◆ The whole IPA Board for deciding on a new site for the 2009 Summer Convention in record time (after Sevenoaks became unavailable), and Denise, Jean Rashkind and Sandy for their yeoman research on the web and on the road.

IPA Membership Dues

	<u>Single</u>	<u>Joint</u>
Lifetime Membership (payable over five years)	\$1000	\$1500

Annual Membership (based on income)

\$100,000 or more	\$110	\$165
\$50,000–99,999	\$75	\$112
\$25,000–49,999	\$60	\$90
Less than \$25,000	\$50	\$75

- Membership fees are tax deductible

- Membership for \$30 per year is available to overseas residents, full-time students, and individuals who support themselves exclusively with public assistance.
- All dues cover the fiscal year from January 1 to December 31.
- To qualify for joint membership, both members must live at the same address and pool resources. Joint members will receive one mailing per household.
- Please make out your check to the IPA in US funds. Canadian checks or international money orders (in US Funds) are accepted with an additional \$10 service fee.
- Pay by credit card (MC or VISA). Indicate credit card type, number, exp. date, and 3-digit code on back. Mail to the address below, or pay by calling (703) 734-1405.
- Mail your complete name and contact info (including email) to:

IPA, 811 Whann Ave., McLean, VA, USA 22101