

Keep Being Here Anyway



Alan's Column

Hello friends,

In Europe again! I love these sunny September days, fresh mornings, warm afternoons, something of summer hanging on in the early autumn air. In a few days begins Total Presence, the 14-day intensive workshop that came to me out of the blue a few months ago, one of those inspirations that came together so effortlessly that it was clearly supposed to happen. Most of the participants seemed to know from the start that they were supposed

to be there. I have the sense that we have all been making our individual ways towards the circle for some time now, and I'm excited for what these two weeks will bring us all. It has also happened quite naturally that I can't schedule the next Total Presence for another couple of years – as yet I still don't have a date for it! – and this too feels right. There is such a concentrated energy around it that it's evidently not supposed to happen too frequently.

Fascinating how people anyway know that this or that course or training or workshop is calling them! I remember how vividly I used to sense that "I'm supposed to be there". There were times too when I really didn't want to know! I felt that way in the 70's about going to India to meet Osho (Bhagwan as he was to us at the time). I just knew that it was going to turn my life upside down and me inside out. But what to do? Destiny calls, and to disregard the call, well, why even be alive then? That, anyway, is how I've always felt. If you want to know more about this, do a Google search on "life of Mojud" and click on "Guru Ratings Commentary – Mojud". If that fascinates you, you'll also find references on the Google page to Osho's talk on CD and a beautifully illustrated book; it's all on this theme of trusting ourselves to respond when life says to us, "Hey, come on!".

So if the time has come for you to heed the call, you'll be happy to hear that a new Body, Heart and Soul training is beginning next September. Jan will be leading it with me, and as many of you know already, she has a real gift for both looking after and inviting the celebration of the feminine. You'll know from the personal story I shared in the Journal earlier this year that I will after all be playing a major part in the new training, and in the 4 parts of Body, Heart & Soul; still, it's a real blessing to have a woman of Jan's quality and presence teaching with me. If you look at the calendar you'll see that she of course has her own Art of Being program. As some of you have already discovered, she brings her own genius to the workshops she leads, and even when we teach together there are times when I'm more than happy to disappear and leave the space free for her weave her own creations in the art of being. I hope you take advantage of the workshops she is leading around Europe in the coming months.

And if you want to escape the depths of winter, you can come and

Life on a Plate ... Slowing Down

Having just moved into our new house, Frieder and I have been unpacking lots of things that had been stored in boxes for years. It's been exciting to re-visit old treasures, many of which carry sweet memories. Yesterday I was sitting eating from a ceramic plate that I made a few years ago and hadn't seen for a long time. As I looked at it, I remembered not liking it because the glaze hadn't come out the way I wanted it to. But just sitting at the table my eyes lingered on it a little longer and I began to really enjoy the colors and swirls until, after some minutes, I found myself liking it very much. I smiled as I recalled a story about a meditation student who was given the task of sitting with a dead fish for days until finally he could see the beauty in it. Whatever we spend time with and take the time to know and become intimate with, we generally come to love and appreciate, whether it is a person, a sport, playing a musical instrument or being in nature. It requires only our willingness to slow down and BE there.

This is something I love to witness in Art of Being® workshops: the change from the beginning when everyone can feel their separateness and their differences, to the shared tenderness and human-ness we usually come to long before the end. As we slowly come to reveal ourselves, love and acceptance



Waking Up!

I want to put in a word for the ordinary state of being awake. Never mind enlightenment! Living the life I live and doing the work I do, I've met a lot of people who are very busy with their spiritual consciousness. I'm not decrying the quest. We all need to go this journey. But there is a way of being busy with it that is really nothing more than narcissistic day-dreaming. Osho used to say, "The most dangerous dream is the dream that you are awake." Dangerous because it is such an engaging dream that we may never wake up out of it! One of the common characteristics of this dream-state is being very busy with all the jargon of spirituality and enlightenment, as though being able to talk about it all demonstrates wakefulness. Meanwhile, hardly noticed, life is happening!

In the end there's not much difference between being spiritually unconscious and acting under the illusion of being spiritually conscious. All that's really different – and it is really different! – is what you do with your time in either case. In the first, you live the life that society has ordained for you. Work, entertainment, sport, family, marriage, perhaps divorce, doing some good, doing some bad and making the most – or perhaps not – of whatever you have in the way of skills, material goods, the body you were born with, and so on. In the second case, you do all those things that are devoted to or associated with spiritual awakening: you practise your yoga, meditate each morning, eat vegan food, think positive thoughts, go to Tantra workshops, sit with gurus, and so on.

A lot of us live somewhere between these two states – we want more than run-of-the-mill consciousness, and yet we're happy vegetating in front of the TV watching take-home movies. We can hang out comfortably between these states just because they aren't essentially different. After all, they are both driven by our trying to get what we want, whether what we want is a life of pleasure or the golden carrot of enlightenment. In either case it's the TRYING TO GET that runs us.

Being really awake – now that's different! It has nothing to do with what we do. It has to do with how we do what we do, with how we live our being. Being awake is so simple it doesn't require any practices. It is the way we are when we are in touch with all our senses and sensitivities, with our feelings, our talents, our intuition, with every murmur in our body that speaks to us of our joys, sorrows, fears and vulnerabilities, with our heart's longings, and at core, with the indescribable mystery of soul and spirit, as well as being wide awake to all the wonders of this here-and-now reality.

To wake up is to realise that waking up is ongoing

When we are this awake, our experience of existence is rich enough that discussing spirituality and consciousness is not interesting. It's only because we're not awake that we need something to fill the gap, something to entertain us, occupy us, feed our sense of self-importance.

And why such needs? Fear. In the three decades that I've been helping people – beginning with myself – to wake up to the full gift of being, it has always only ever been fear that is in the way. We are more afraid than we know of who we are. We're afraid of how much we can be, of how little we can be, we're afraid of our needs, of our nature, of our sex, of our tears, of our tenderness, we're afraid of death, we're afraid of the ghosts of our imperfect childhoods, we're afraid of not knowing, of not being good enough, we're afraid of heart-break and pain and sorrow, and sometimes even of joy and ecstasy. We're afraid of the dark, we're afraid of the unknown, and most of all, we're afraid of NOTHING. This is why spiritual seekers go hunting for spiritual experiences. God forbid that nothing should ever be allowed to happen. It's always been profound to sit, as I sometimes do in my workshops, with a circle of participants and let nothing happen. I discovered many years ago that for many people this is almost unbearable. I also discovered that as the circle gradually came to trust the space of nothingness, extraordinary openings and awakenings happened. Yes, out of nothing! But this is

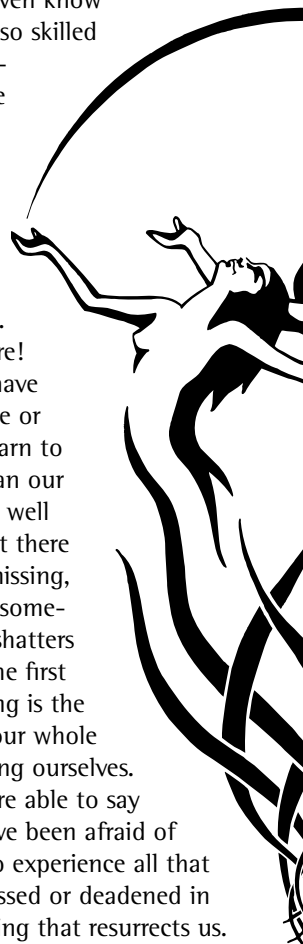
the way it always is. Essentially, awakening is about making friends with all that we are, with whatever we have come to reject in ourselves.

Normally we don't even know we're afraid. We are so skilled and trained in avoiding our fears that we can think things about ourselves that actually have little bearing on who we really are and how we really experience life.

We think that we are! Like people who have lost a limb or an eye or their hearing, we learn to function on less than our wholeness. We may well have no inkling that there is anything we are missing, until, if we're lucky, something happens that shatters our illusion. Often the first step in our awakening is the realization that for our whole life we've been fooling ourselves. It is only when we are able to say hello to what we have been afraid of that we can begin to experience all that the fear kept suppressed or deadened in us. It is the befriending that resurrects us. We become more alive, and in that aliveness we can sense and feel more.

What I love most about all this is that awakening is a never-ending journey. I guess this is why the ones who are really awake have a natural humility about them. They're not seeking any glory for their attainment. They don't parade their sublime state. They don't sit basking in the reflected light of adoring disciples. They appear quite ordinary because what they love is being, not being worshipped! To wake up is to realize that awakening is ongoing. It's not an end-state. It keeps happening; unless, that is, you try to grab hold of it and make it yours. The simple fact is that all you can ever be is in the way, just as so many self-styled spiritual teachers are in the way of the very thing they are talking about. Spiritual awakening doesn't need our clichéd words of wisdom. It just needs our trust and courage to keep opening, for ever. Love the journey!

©Alan Lowen, October 2005



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join Jan and I on Maui next February for High on Life. Yesterday I wrote a long piece about this epic but Jan told me she thought it read too much like an ad, so I cut out two

thirds of what I wrote, even though, as I said to Jan, the fact is I do want to turn you on to coming to High on Life. It really is one of those experiences that I think everyone should give themselves at least once in their lives. So take my word for it, the island is one of our planet's loveliest jewels.

And here's the rest of what I wrote about this 3-week transformational vacation:

And yet, in the end it isn't the magnificence of Maui, real though that is, that makes this vacation the transforming experience it is for people. It is the encounter with nature interwoven with the deep encounter with our own being. It is the experience of The Art of Being® circle, this gathering of twenty or thirty people becoming interwoven with each other as the hours and days go by AND saturated each day with nature's ecstasies. It is in the circle, together, that you and I and all of us come gradually to recognize that our stories, our histories, our joys and sorrows and pains, our long-borne secrets and griefs endured even through decades, our triumphs and our tragedies, our successes and failures, our epics of love and loss are all, all invitations to each and every one of us to reconcile with every little happening that ever came our way, to befriend and learn to trust every ripple of life that ever moves in us, to be at home with every color of our being, until we can appreciate and celebrate the infinity that we each are

and to which we all belong. Somewhere along the way it is as though the soul recognizes that in nature this is already so. Nature has no complaint with itself, and when we stop and look and listen, we can see and hear and feel spirit flowing through it. Yes, nature too has its dark side, and this is for us to respect as we must our own personal dark side. It is all to be accepted, all to be embraced.

It is this communion with the totality, that we come to through sharing this time and space together, that transforms us. It is this that we take home. It is this that changes the way we see the most ordinary happenings of a winter day in Berlin or Chicago. It is this that deepens beyond anything we thought possible our connections with friends and loved ones; that inspires our creativity in giving the gifts that are uniquely ours to give; that brings illumination and wisdom to the unexpected predicaments that challenge us; that dances in our eyes and finger-tips and breathes through our skin making love with our beloved. And it is this, when we come back home, that becomes the very essence of how we experience every tiny encounter with nature, so that something of Eden can whisper to us from a leafless winter tree, in a raindrop or inside a blanket of winter fog. Spirit is everywhere. To find it is to be everywhere high on life!

And finally, for those of you who don't want to trek so far, not one but TWO New Year celebration workshops to choose from! Jan will be leading her Passion, Power & in England from 28th Dec to 2nd Jan while I'm leading a New Year special in Switzerland called TanZ'nTao from 29th Dec to 2nd Jan! You can read all about them in the programme section of the newsletter. If you'd like full details call or email us for a brochure or visit www.artofbeing.com

With love and aloha, alan

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grow both for ourselves and for each other. Some of our conditions dissolve and we stop seeing only the things that get in the way, the differences that keep us separate. Instead, as we open up to the fascination of who is really there, we feel the quality of "being-one with", the separation dissolves and we open into a state of love. It seems that the more intimately we know something or someone, the easier it is to love them. Again, it all happens because we slow down enough to be there!

All too often, sadly, our busy lives get in the way of our really being with anything or anyone, and we can come to believe in and expect isolation. We can see this in also in our lost connection with nature. Earlier today I was talking to a Hawaiian friend and she told me that the Hawaiians don't have a word for nature. I was surprised; how could they not have a word for something that they must value? She told me that there is no word for nature because they don't see themselves as separate from it so why would they need a word for it? They ARE nature! She went on to tell me that they didn't have a word for work either, because work wasn't seen as anything different from life. This shows me how our western culture creates unnecessary struggle and suffering; and I see too why aloha, which means something very close to love, is so widely valued in traditional Hawaiian culture, simply because there is not such a strong sense of separateness.

I remember, nearly 20 years ago, my first Art of Being workshop. It was like being in a bath of love. I experienced a profound sense of connection with the people in the circle and with the nature in the woodlands surrounding the center where we were staying. It was this sense of connection that I was missing in my ordinary life and that I longed for. It was the beginning of a healing journey that continues even today as I slow down enough to gaze at a plate and see the beauty of what is there in front of me when I take the time to see beyond my initial judgements.

I wish you many moments of slowing down to enjoy the connection with whatever and whoever is around you.

Aloha, Jan

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT WORKSHOPS with Alan or Jan and to update your address if needed, contact the main office in Hawaii, or the local organisers:

MAIN OFFICE

USA (Hawaii): Tel +1-808-572-1435(voicemail)
info@artofbeing.com
UK Voicemail: +44-(0)20-7870 1774 (msgs)

LOCAL ORGANISERS

UK: Meru, Tel. +44-(0)1453-752604
Voicemail: +44-(0)20-7870 1774 (msgs)
uk@artofbeing.com

Switzerland: For all groups in Waldhaus Zentrum:
Tel +41-(0)34-461-0705;
email waldhaus@waldhaus.ch
For all other workshops in Switzerland contact
Malou Burgmann +41-(0)1-796-1053 / Handi:
079-475-6973, workshops@artofbeing.com

High on Life 2006, Maui
10th February - 3rd March, 2006
Maui, Hawaii

led by Alan Lowen & Jan Day

Break out of winter into tropical paradise. High on Life will again take place on Maui, amidst the beauty and magic of our island home, our deep celebration of nature, heart, being and spirit.

This is an experience to treasure your whole life!
Brochure available on request.

EARLY BOOKING PRICE for bookings by
5th November 2005.

Info : Jan +1-808-572-1435 or +1-808-572-2962
(Voicemail England) +44 (0)20-7870-1774
Email: info@artofbeing.com

The Art of Being®

PO Box 790269, Paia, HI 96779, USA. Tel +1-808-572-1435 Fax: +1-808-573-1096 Email: info@artofbeing.com

www.artofbeing.com

2005

			led by:
24 - 26 Oct	The Heart of Touch	Waldhaus, Switzerland	Jan Day
4 - 6 Nov	Passion, Power & Love weekend	Schloss Glarisegg, Switzerland	Jan Day
4 - 9 Nov	Passion, Power & Love	Schloss Glarisegg, Switzerland	Jan Day
28 Dec - 2 Jan	Passion, Power & Love New Year Celebration	Glastonbury, England	Jan Day
29 Dec - 2 Jan	Tanz'NTao	Schloss Glarisegg, Switzerland	Alan Lowen

2006

10 Feb - 3 Mar	HIGH ON LIFE 2006	Maui, Hawaii	Alan Lowen & Jan Day
14 - 17 April	Love & the Shadow	Schloss Glarisegg, Switzerland	Alan Lowen
14 - 21 April	Love & the Shadow	Schloss Glarisegg, Switzerland	Alan Lowen
14 - 17 April	Freedom to Feel, Freedom to Love	Devon, England	Jan Day
14 - 21 April	Body, Heart & Soul Part 1	Devon, England	Jan Day
28 - 30 April	Opening to Intimacy! A Tantra Weekend	Prague, Czech Republic	Alan Lowen
29 April - 1 May	Sacred Sex: The Heart of Intimacy	near Köln, Germany	Jan Day
3 - 7 May	Discovering Art of Being® Tantra	Waldhaus, Switzerland	Alan Lowen
12 - 14 May	Freedom to Feel, Freedom to Love	near Berlin, Germany	Jan Day
17 - 21 May	Artisans Circle (for training graduates)	Schloss Glarisegg	Alan Lowen

ADVANCE NOTICE for Body, Heart & Soul workshops

2 - 9 June	Body, Heart & Soul Part 1	Waldhaus, Switzerland	Alan Lowen & Jan Day
8 - 15 Sept	Body, Heart & Soul Part	Waldhaus, Switzerland	Alan Lowen & Jan Day
8 - 17 Sept	Body, Heart & Soul NEW 2-YEAR-TRAINING BEGINS	Waldhaus, Switzerland	Alan Lowen & Jan Day