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Excerpt from "Soulshaping: A Journey of Self-Creation"

by [Jeff Brown](#)

A SIGHT FOR SOARING EYES

When I woke up I felt cohesive, as though I had been reorganized to a higher vibration. After years of painstaking work, I finally had clear eye—an unwavering bead to my center.

I walked to a high perch overlooking Harbin Valley. Tears fell down my face. Look at this magnificent valley. A sight for soaring eyes. This was God's country. Everything was God's country. How sad that we waste so much time chasing rainbows, when the rainbows live within us. Empty the inner channel and they rise into view.

Submerged in the Everything, I fell awake for ... who knows how long? Time lasts forever when you are actually in the moment. Little doors opened now and then, inviting me deeper into unity consciousness. One set of eyes after another, more and more inclusive each time. Everywhere I looked, the mystery repeated itself.

I stared out over the valley and marveled at the Buddhaland that had birthed me—a tapestry of subtle and brilliant shades of meaning governed by benevolent intentionality. We are brought down this road or that, called to one lesson or the other, by a Universal Broadcasting System with a benevolent intention—the growth of the individual and universal soul ... same, same.

I looked out at the real Mother of us all, the divine Mother who had never left. I had never felt her so close. Fierce but benevolent, she is always right here, breathing life into each of us, holding us safe. I sat in her lap as she breathed me. How had I failed to notice my own Mother?

If we want to really be here, we just have to open the gate to our heart. Opening the heart unlocks the heart of the universe, and we see what is always before us.

At some point I began to notice my separate self again. I was connected to the Everything, but I wasn't *identical* to everything. I had my own unique role to play in this eternal dance. The deeper I penetrated the collective soul, the closer I came to my own soul's tale.

The timeless and the timely soon intersected. I saw clear images of my life's journey. Not bits and pieces but the whole story: *archetypal wave meets localized experience*. It came through me like a film about my own life, quietly revealing, and natural—like, "Oh yah, there you are, my little story." Of course, the projector had always been inside me, only now it had a receptive audience.

As I had already gathered, our prior experiences forge our soulshape in their own image. Each lifetime presents opportunities to expand it further. Like a lake against the rocks, the shape is shifted through repeated action, carved in soulstone by the act of becoming that which we are called to be.

I set my eyes on the bigger picture: the *real* learning channel. When we are ready to stop turning a blind eye to the meaning of our experiences, we tune in to the learning channel as a way of being. Through this lens, expectations are meaningless: soul gifts come in unexpected packaging. Seeming failures can be welcome events—sometimes the ego suffers while the soul rejoices. We are knocked to the ground on the Earth plane but tripped *up* spiritually. The ladder to heaven is made of broken rungs.

One lifetime after another, the soul chooses the life that will expand its shape. It chooses its circumstances and obstacles. It chooses the nasties. It chooses the body that will best bring the lessons home. It is all essential ground to cover before we can inhabit our innate image. Without challenges, there would be no dross to convert into gold, no grist for the soul mill. *Holy* shit.

If the soul honors its path in a lifetime, it moves on to the next stage. The school of heart knocks is an ongoing university of higher

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learning. At some point the soul may learn all of its lessons and graduate. With no more work left to be done, it rests in the heart of Essence forever.

In my usual consciousness, I saw no connection between my circumstances and my highest paths. The difficult parents were the false-path that I had to overcome. The great love that couldn't be was just bad luck. Yet in this consciousness a deeper knowing had emerged. It turns out that I knew far more than I had been prepared to admit about the circumstances of my life. There was the superficial level of knowing, and then there was the *real* knowing.

This lifetime called for a radical transformation in my soul's consciousness. After many lifetimes as the archetypal Warrior—the call to arms—the scripture for this lifetime was to stretch into a more loving and surrendered way of being—the call to disarm.

The opportunities began with my family. I chose them because I needed them to learn my karmic lessons. I needed slaps to the head. I needed a mother raging at me from the foot of my bed. I needed cops and debt collectors banging on the door. I needed to see the holes punched in the bedroom doors. I needed to live in a family haunted by hate.

Naturally I jumped into the fray. War was all my soul knew. And, of course, that was the idea: go to war, grow tired of war, become more open to another way of being.

Now I saw my parents for who they were. Their souls were not evil. They were just playing their part in this cosmic dance, learning whatever lessons they needed to learn and giving my soul exactly what it needed to grow forward. They were my greatest karmic teachers.

It is such an odd thing to hate people for so long, and then to recognize that they were the best thing that ever happened to you. Our lessons demand that we live through crazy things with the "monsters" in our lives, but once we have brought the lessons through, they look remarkably human, sometimes even inviting.

With grateful eyes, I saw my parents' humanness. Like so many of us, their real enemy was survivalism, the true enemy of heightened consciousness. They grew up poor and strained, then married each other and the strain intensified. Although I needed to focus on their hurtful actions to learn my own essential lessons, the truth is that they also did *many* good things, and every single act of love they performed was extraordinary given the circumstances of their lives. It is one thing for a well-nourished person to be loving, but for those who have lived such difficult lives to focus away from themselves and give love to another is a remarkable feat that resounds throughout time.

My next forum for transformation was criminal defense law. The Warrior had walked this road many times and needed to walk it one more time. There were interesting new lessons to be learned this lifetime.

This time my soul chose to work with Eddie Greenspan. I picked him because in some sense I was him. We were very similar, and watching him allowed me to witness my future. I jumped right into the madness with him. I worked hundred-hour work weeks. I ate the war game for breakfast.

There was a time in this soul's long journey when this would have been just perfect. But this life was different. Although parts of me loved the war games, other parts were already tired of it. My family life had seen to that. When the first spiritual emergency came my way, I was just ripe enough for the picking. As it turns out, the torrents of confusion had been a blessing, a sign that I was to move on to the next stage of my soul's journey. Who says that confusion is a bad thing?

Of course, my guardian angel, Little Missy, came down here with me. Separate yet indivisible, she sat on my shoulder and whispered sweet somethings in my ear, beckoning me to pick the right flower at the just right moment. Her job was clear: keep me on true-path, nudge me home. She had a keen eye for deviation. When I strayed from my path, she called me back. When I refused to answer, she brought the message through in other ways.

My next forum for transformation was Rachel. As I looked out over the valley, I saw our hearts asking for love months before we met. I saw the universal ear listening with an open heart. I saw our guiding angels jumping into action to bring it our way. Now I understood why I knew she would be in Boulder. She was so intrinsic to my innate image that I could see her coming from a thousand miles away.

The lesson itself came through the heart. Little Missy led this (war) horse to water and then brought him the temptress that he could not help but drink. She knew that the antidote for the Warrior was love—bring him his soul-mate and he will never be the same. She knew that I would have never taken the love bait earlier, in the tear-down stages of self-creation, before I had established the girders necessary to stand in the fire.

In Rachel's presence, my Warrior soul abandoned its armor and fell to its knees. Every time I opened, I dove deeper into the broader universe, love's liquid lava flowing from the heart to the genitals to the great beyond. The more I lingered there, the more I entrenched a surrendered way of being.

Little had I known that the opportunity was not the love itself but what came later. To become the surrendered man that I had identified as my innate image, I had to do more than lose at love. I had to embody the depths of my heartbreak. If not, the Warrior would return with a vengeance and it might take another dozen lifetimes before he could surrender again.

Here at Harbin my soul made its choice. It chose living in the light over living in the might. By embracing my discomfort, I had converted my pain into the lessons held within it. By re-opening my heart when it was most difficult, I realized surrender as a way of

being. As it turned out, there had been no love lost between Rachel and me. There was only love's labor found—everywhere a white flag with a heart at its center. By leaving me, she had made my heart my home.

Now I saw why it could never have happened any other way. It doesn't matter how much two people love one another if they are developmentally incompatible, or if there is not a shared willingness to become conscious. This is why they call it a relationship instead of a loveship. Love alone is not enough. If you want it to last, you have to relate to each other in ways that keep the ship afloat. Although we had loved each other deeply, the psychological girders were simply not there to support a lasting relationship. We were supposed to touch wings, and then fly away.

Cell Your Soul

Bringing our soul lessons through takes more than awareness. It is an active process that demands a courageous willingness to live our experiences right through to completion. This means staying with our feelings until they are truly done with us, no matter how uncomfortable it is. Although we may not see it at first, there is a method to our sadness.

Oftentimes we distract ourselves out of the learning, particularly when the feelings are painful. We all know people like this. We have all been people like this. We choose not to get the hint. We ignore our grumbles and truth aches at all costs. If we don't break this habit, we just come back the next time with the same lessons waiting in the wings.

The body is far more than just a vessel for the soul. It is the field where the soul's lessons are harvested. It is the breeding ground for the soul's emergence. In order to grow forward, we must bring our suffering through our emotional body until our spiritual lesson is birthed. We must *cell our soul*.

The recipe is simple. Be authentic and true to your felt experience. Feel the heartbreak. Feel the anger. Feel all of your feelings. If you had a cruel father, move your anger and feel into the heartbreak below. If you lose a loved one, go through all the stages of grieving. Don't stop halfway. Never stop halfway. Let the feelings tell you if the fire was destructive or benevolent. Some fires are creating the way for new life.

Be careful not to go into your head. There is a meaningful difference between a cerebral interpretation of an experience ("I *know* why this came into my life") and an embodied awareness of it ("I *feel* why this came into my life"). Unless your knowing arises from your felt experience, it is meaningless. Stay with the emotional process until your soul food is digested. It will be difficult at times, but the feelings will only hurt until they convert. *Repressed emotions are unactualized spiritual lessons*. Once they make it all the way through the conversion tunnel, the spiritual lesson will be revealed. Divine perspiration.

The Fire of Essential Light

As I sat inside myself, I knew that I had become the surrendered man I had seen by the fire of essential light. For this moment at least, I saw the world through his eyes. Through them, I opened to the next stages of my journey. My path did not end here. The next scriptures were waiting at the gate to unfold.

My callings began to flash before me. What a surprise—I had seen them all before! What a surprise—all that stumbling in the dark had been grounded in a deeper knowing. By becoming a surrendered man, I could now do the work I was called to do. This loving work was the gift back to the universe that every soul longs to make.

At the heart of my callings was the presumption of Essence. I was here to invite others to surrender to Essence and to ask the real questions of their lives: Who am I, really? What are my soul-scriptures? Why am I here?

The most pressing call was to write my first book—this book, the story of one person's struggle to identify and honor his entelechy amid the minefields of misidentification. It was the story that I had lived, or that had lived me, being used as karmic fodder for the mill of human expansion. I saw myself sitting on the floor in the back room of my house, writing it.

I saw myself writing other books as well, including an uncommon-bond love story. In that book, the couple would get lost in the triggers as Rachel and I had, but they would take a different path. Instead of turning away from the fire, they would do the work to heal the issues that kept them apart. They would fight tooth and nail for their gateway to God.

I also saw myself working as a body-centered psychotherapist, perhaps one day constructing an approach that integrated more subtle and surrendered ways of working into the therapy.

Although the images were clear, it was also clear that it didn't have to happen in exactly these ways for me to live a complete life. There were ways that better honored my gifts, to be sure, but the key was the intention behind it. The key was staying true to the surrendered heart, wherever that path might lead.

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A former criminal lawyer and psychotherapist, Jeff Brown is the author of "Soulshaping: A Journey of Self-Creation," recently published by North Atlantic Books. Endorsed by authors Elizabeth Lesser and Ram Dass, "Soulshaping" is Brown's autobiography - an inner travelogue of his journey from archetypal male warrior to a more surrendered path. You can connect with his work at www.soulshaping.com

