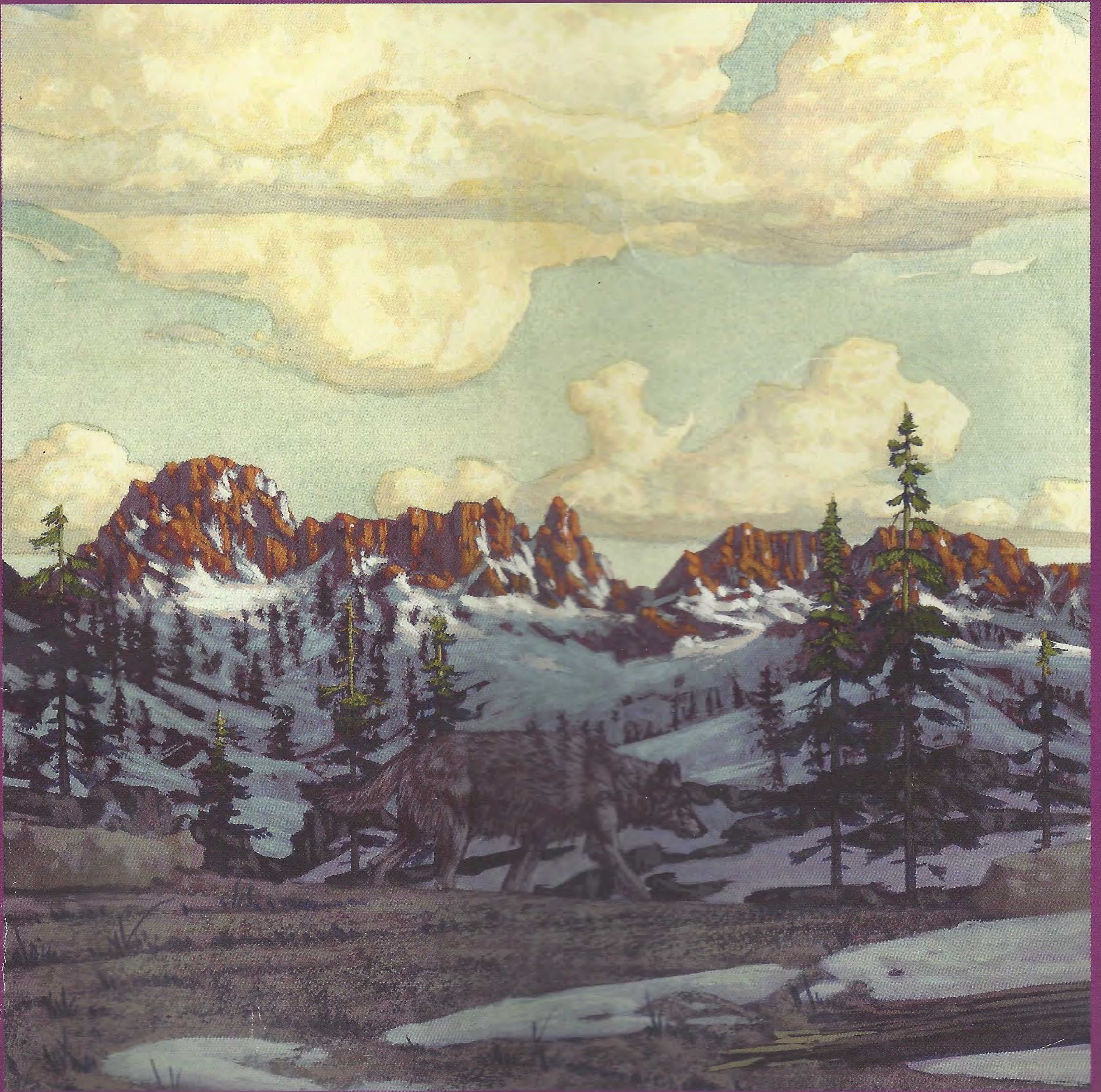


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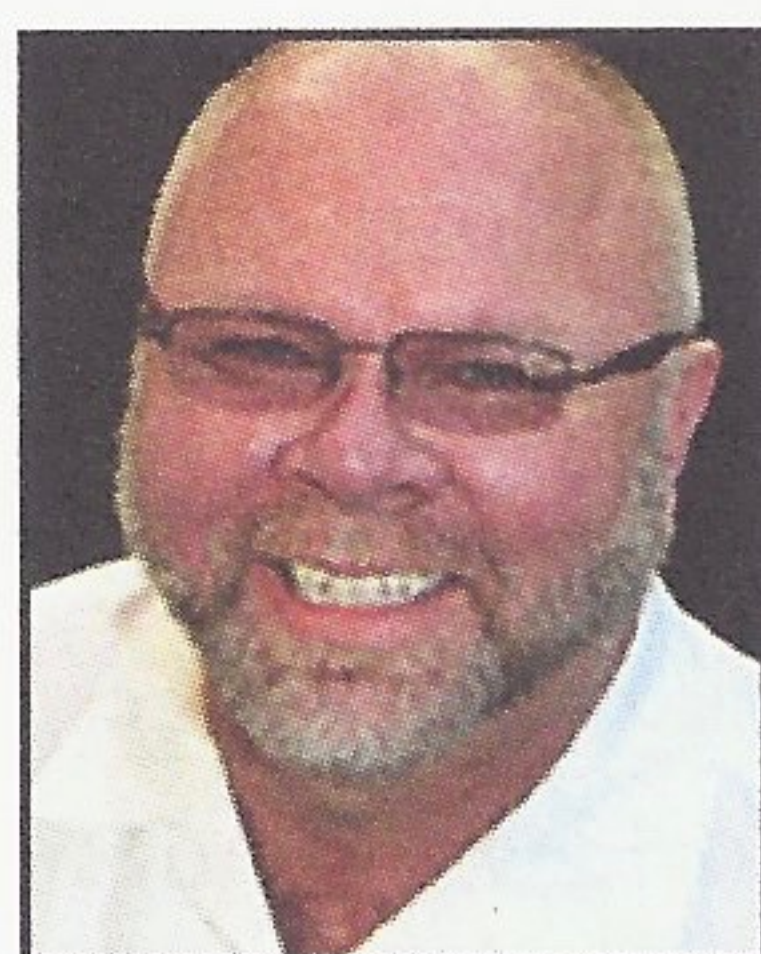


From My Chair: An Understanding of Spiritual Abuse, Trauma, and Well-Being as a Spiritual Companion
Spiritual Direction and 12-Step Sponsorship • Touchstones: Experiences in Nature as Encounters with the Divine
Kindling Divine Fire: The Spiritual Direction of Amma Syncretica



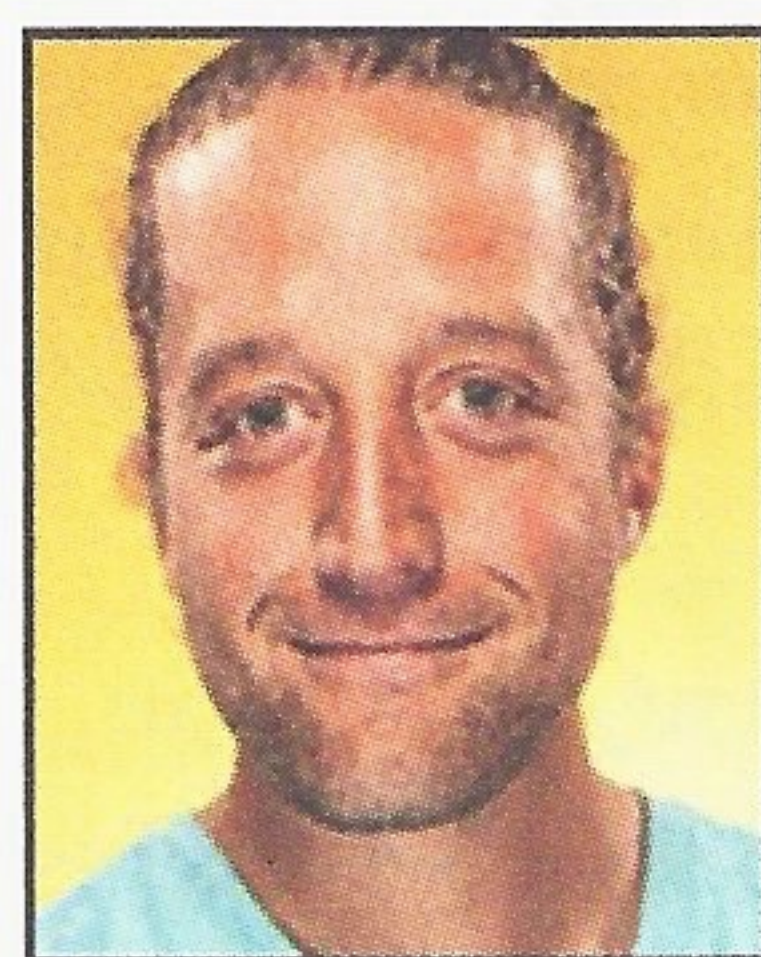
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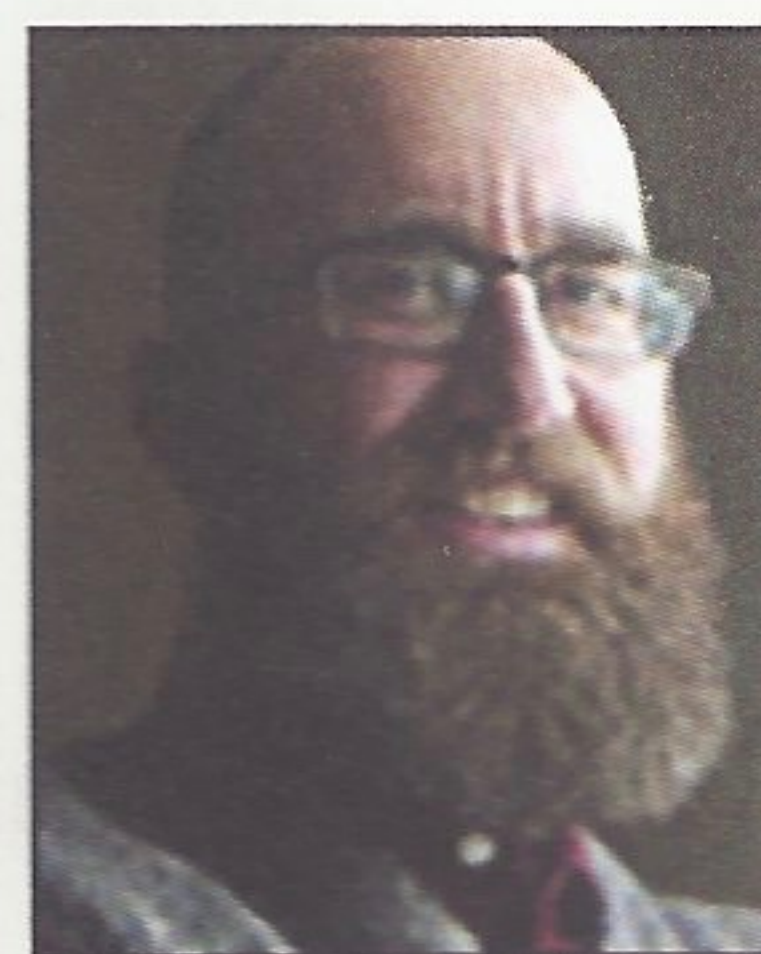
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From My Chair: An Understanding of Spiritual Abuse, Trauma, and Well-Being as a Spiritual Companion

Kathryn Walczyk

For most of my life I lacked confidence in myself, lived with a dualistic “bait-and-switch” kind of god, and yet carried a knowing, a deep groundedness calling my name, calling me back to my origin, and calling me to purpose. My foundational understanding of God was corrupted in childhood when my innate knowing of God collided with experiences of childhood clergy sexual abuse and Catholic teaching. Silent for decades, I was led to healing through relationships within the Catholic faith, as well as relationships outside of religious affiliation. My healing journey included reinjury, added spiritual trauma, injury to others, integration, and transformation. Lack of spiritual trauma understanding contributed to the reinjury I experienced. Through this article I intend to contribute to the understanding and offer a personal view using life experiences.

It was during a spiritual direction training weekend that the words “sit in your chair” struck a chord with me. The weekend presenter shared preparations she made before meeting with a spiritual directee. She told us that she sits in her chair, meaning, she grounds herself in herself, in the God of her knowing, and in the truth that she holds. As she spoke, I felt myself sit higher in my own chair. I felt roots growing from my feet, through the floor, through the foundation of the building, reaching deep into the rich, brown earth beneath us. As I listened, my body settled in and opened up all at the same time. In the settling, a familiar, strong, stable, earthy, palpable God held me firm. In the opening, a gentle, wispy, unpredictable, spirited God was let loose. I recalled, in an instant, all the experiences that led me to this program. Spiritual trauma, spiritual abuse, and the path toward spiritual health have led me full circle. I have become what I once most needed, a spiritual companion with understanding of healing from spiritual trauma and an advocate.

The Desire to Advocate Began Early

The priest had us stand in line to sit on his lap. We sometimes forgot why we were standing in line. We were little and would get caught up in what little girls talk about with each other. When it was my turn I would remember. The shame would wash over me like a dark blanket. My eyes would sometimes catch hold of the sunlight. I would escape into the small dust particles floating freely in the sunlight, while the priest sexually abused me in front of my friends. The shame would return when I was alone. One day when he asked us to stand in line, I remembered. I ducked behind a chair and hid. As I listened, both guilt and pleading filled my body. My friends were being hurt. Oh, please stop.

When memories of watching others being abused began to surface, the suppressed feelings of guilt and a responsibility to “tell” surfaced as well. As healing progressed, I got involved with youth ministry and became a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer for children taken out of the home because of abuse and neglect. As I worked on myself, I worked with young people. The young people taught me how to listen well and how to advocate for them. The feelings of guilt diminished as I could finally begin to live out the compassion beneath the guilt.

Compassion is what drives me to advocate for others, for myself, for a deeper understanding of spiritual trauma, and for changes in how we respond to those who have experienced spiritual trauma. Through sharing key foundational pieces of my practice, I will give you a glimpse into the history behind the development of these foundational pieces.

My Foundation

Go gently with those who come for spiritual companionship. If I discover the other has experienced violations of the soul, I go even more gently. I think it is safe to say that all people have experienced or will experience, sometime in their life, spiritual wounding. The spiritual wounding I am referring to is different. Let me share an example from childhood.



From My Desk as a Seven-Year-Old

Sometimes I would look at them, the teachers, when they spoke of Jesus who loved children. Sometimes I listened to their stories and forgot to be afraid. I felt warm inside. I felt the love they spoke of. My heart would soften and defenses melt. They told us that Jesus was the Father's son and that we would need to be friends with Jesus so the Father would love us. That is when the anxiety would begin. I did not want to be friends with Jesus. I did not like the way the Father loved us. The Father hurt us. Hot shame would rush through my body. My brain could not figure it out. Was this a trick? "Stop talking!" I would silently scream. My head would hurt. My stomach would churn. The insides of my body would begin to move fast. It felt like the cells of my body were rapidly moving, bumping up against each other, repelling each other. The conflicting understanding of God was physically happening within me. I would try to escape my body. There was no escape. I could not run. I could not hide. I could not stop the teacher from talking about God. Father priest and Father God became one and the same. I was too little to understand. The room would feel as though it was spinning. Suddenly everything would stop. I would feel nothing. I became nothing, nobody. The teachers would talk. I could not hear them. The world was moving. I became a statue, an invisible statue. I could not move or speak. Time stood still. Similar experiences would happen at church, at school, and at the home of the priest. Sometimes I would faint. The teachers would have me sit down. Some said that I fainted because I was growing too fast. I fainted because my body was shutting down. My brain could not understand. My body could not escape.

This is how it happens. When the threat becomes too big, when we see no way out of danger, our brain takes over sending signals to our body. Our body responds, attempting to save us. You may never have thought of trauma in this way, in the spiritual sense, like I have described above. When the violence I endured as a child was linked with God—with the sacred—spiritual trauma resulted. Psychiatrist Bessel A. van der Kolk explains what happens inside an individual experiencing trauma.


When the brain's alarm system is turned on, it automatically triggers preprogrammed physical escape plans in the oldest parts of the brain. As in other animals, the nerves and chemicals that make up our basic brain structure have

a direct connection with our body. When the old brain takes over, it partially shuts down the higher brain, our conscious mind, and propels the body to run, hide, fight, or, on occasion, freeze. By the time we are fully aware of our situation, our body may already be on the move." (54)

The threat I faced that day was a threat to my soul. The loving words of Jesus drew me in and opened me in vulnerability. In this specific experience, I was confused by the word *Father*, used interchangeably by Catholics to mean either "father the priest" or "Father God." As a young child I could not distinguish the two. The contradiction of a loving God being one and the same with the abusive priest was overwhelming. I could not escape this inner spiritual contradiction. I felt the contradiction in my body and my body responded automatically to this spiritual threat.

Jim Henry, project director and professor of social work at Children's Trauma Assessment Center at Western Michigan University, USA, described, in a simple way, how the brain responds in trauma. I remember his description this way. Hold your hand at eye level and make a fist. Think of the palm of your hand, the part just above your wrist, as the primal base of your brain. This is the part that reacts to life-threatening experiences. See how all the fingers and thumb are securely connected to the base and to each other? When we are functioning normally, the survival part of our brain is connected to logic, speech, critical thinking, judgment, and the like. Now, quickly release your fingers stretching them up and apart from each other. This is the brain on trauma. The brain separates from higher functions and operates out of its base, its primitive survival mode. It does this in an instant, seeking a way to protect one from a life threat. It is biologically impossible for the brain to access thinking or logic when experiencing significant trauma. This trauma response happened to me as a child during the sexual abuse, during times when I witnessed the abuse of my friends, *and* during times in the classroom and at church. My soul, my relationship with the Holy, and my identity as a *child of God* were at great risk. My brain and body responded to this spiritual threat.

"If the fight/flight/freeze response is successful and we escape the danger, we recover our internal equilibrium and gradually 'regain our senses.' If for some reason the



normal response is blocked—for example, when people are held down, trapped, or otherwise prevented from taking effective action, be it in a war zone, a car accident, domestic violence, or a rape—the brain keeps secreting stress chemicals, and the brain’s electrical circuits continue to fire in vain. Long after the actual event has passed, the brain may keep sending signals to the body to escape a threat that no longer exists” (van der Kolk, 54). In the example of the classroom, I was held in place by fear and confusion. I was afraid that any move I made could worsen the situation. There was nowhere to escape to. My small world of family, friends, school, and church were loyal followers of this faith teaching. Without help, my brain kept sending signals to my body to escape. Even after the abusive priest left, I remained on high alert for extended periods of time during my eight years in Catholic school.

“Dissociation is the essence of trauma. The overwhelming experience is split off and fragmented, so that the emotions, sounds, images, thoughts, and physical sensations related to the trauma take on a life of their own. The sensory fragments of memory intrude into the present, where they are literally relived” (van der Kolk, 66). Time does not heal nor does it lessen trauma responses. Trauma remains just as it is until it is responded to appropriately. When triggered, we feel exactly as we did when the violence first happened. For example, as an adult during times that I felt *genuine feelings of love from or for Jesus*, my brain sent messages to my body initiating the exact feelings I felt in that classroom. The bodily sensations split and separated from memories of the classroom experience itself. Dissociation also split my God in two. It was like two polar opposite gods lived within me. The god with all the names—Father, Jesus, Savior—stirred emotion and confusion. The unnamed, unidentified, incognito kind of God was the real deal. The split sometimes kept me sane and at other times caused an inner battle between the gods with no recollection of where the turmoil came from.

“These reactions are irrational and largely outside of people’s control. Intense and barely controllable urges and emotions make people feel crazy—and make them feel like they don’t belong to the human race” (van der Kolk, 67). This scientific understanding directly conflicts with the Christian foundational belief that humans have free will to choose their behavior. When our body reacts

to current or past trauma, extreme emotion can jump forth. Christianity names this *bad* behavior sin. Trauma responses are not sin nor can they be willed away. Trauma directs behavior. This specific conflict between science and religion is a significant barrier to understanding and addressing spiritual trauma. Trauma biologically and neurologically changes the body and pathways in our brains. Our behavior can look like one thing and be something totally different. Religious or spiritual responses to our behavior can sometimes add insult to injury.

Spiritual trauma looks different in everyone. When it is not resolved, or treated appropriately, it can result in post-traumatic stress disorder, or what I refer to as *spiritual* post-traumatic stress disorder. Words, symbols, rituals, smells, scents, sounds, spiritual authority figures, God, and spiritual directors can trigger buried memories. The emotion released can be targeted at ourselves, God, or religious figures, including spiritual directors.

For these reasons I go gently with those who come to me for spiritual companioning, especially those who suffer spiritual trauma. I keep current on trauma understanding. I know that I can become the target for some of the rage and defenses that are common with unhealed trauma. I take responsibility to be watchful for transference in our relationship. I know that I can trigger memories and reactions simply because of who I am, a *spiritual* companion.

I Am Not the Spiritual Director

I prefer the term *spiritual companion*. Beginning as a child, the directing of my spirit was handed over to others and as a result, I lost my ability to trust my inner Guide. Clear guidance through one’s inner Source may be buried or confused by trauma. Purity of Direction remains fully intact and deep within each of us no matter what has happened to us. No one can eliminate the powerful Love force within. My job is not to direct but to walk with, listen to, and encourage the one whom I accompany.

Directed by the Light as a Child

My friend and I were sent to church to return or retrieve the cruets, the tiny pitcher-like vessels used to hold water and wine during Catholic mass. It was a warm day. We were happy as we walked to the church and into the side sacristy. The church was quiet. The sunlight caught my eye as it



always did. The way the sunlight bounced off the cruets and reflected outward drew me close. Suddenly an arm grabbed me, forcefully. My friend ran. The priest took me under his vestment. It was dark. I couldn't breathe. I was choking. I thought I was dying. I struggled, then ran into the sanctuary huddling against what I believe was the altar. The priest then put a host in my hand. It broke. He left. I was alone, cold, and frightened.

Directed toward Spiritual Health as an Adult

Water drips from my mouth and my nose. I shake. My face goes numb. I look to the walls. My stare focuses on the closet door. This stare is familiar. The stare leads to the nothingness. In the company of a spiritual helper, nothingness leads to memories. The solemn stare makes way for memory to be unearthed. Emotion erupts. Memory comes, not full and complete but in pieces and only one piece at a time. I turn my head to the wall, to the corner. I go to the corner and sit on the floor facing the corner. My stomach aches. The spiritual helper sits next to me. I begin to flail my arms. The movement brings the memory closer to the surface. Once again, I am in the sacristy, under the priest's vestment. I cry and make noises. My adrenalin is high. A piece of the memory rises to the surface. I am afraid to know more. The fear stops the progress for today. I feel some relief.

Directed to Give Voice

I sat with a Catholic official, someone I came to know as a friend. For years I had been trying to share understanding for the benefit of positive change. It was not working and sometimes my attempts backfired. Emotion came easily that day; articulation, slow. Confusion set in as I was under pressure to do the right thing, to tell my truth. As this person spoke, I began to see clearly but could not articulate. I panicked, got up to leave, then turned around and forcefully stood up for myself, but the "standing up" came out rough and with bad language. I was standing up for a chance to live from who I was meant to be. I was standing up against the direction others wanted me to go. The message was lost in the delivery. I left in a rush.

As a young child I was led by attraction, naturally, just as all children are. The sunlight reflecting off the cruets drew me close to the Sacred. As an adult I followed that same inner attraction. It was kindness experienced in a

Catholic community that nudged me closer to the Holy. As a child, the beautiful moment in the sacristy was disrupted by the priest forcefully pulling me from the sunlight. As an adult, the draw toward kindness (Jesus incarnate, perhaps) forcefully pulled me down into the turmoil of buried memories. Both instances, following a natural attraction toward Goodness, led to violence, inner turmoil, and extreme emotion. I grew to mistrust my inner Guidance. It seemed as though God intentionally attracted me with Love for the purpose of destroying my soul. I trusted others with my wounded soul looking outside myself for guidance. I found compassion for my wounds all the while my spirit revolted against the direction from others.

The day I met with the church official, I saw clearly how my soul was in danger of being further compromised. I realized that I had been trying to live up to the direction of others, and in doing so I denied myself participation in the broader mission of bringing about positive change. I could no longer live this way. As I sat with the church official, the truth rose up and out through the entanglement of leftover emotion. Rage is normal when one moves from trauma toward freedom. "As people revisit, move through and then move out of immobility in therapy, they frequently experience some rage. These primal sensations of fury (when contained) represent movements back into life. However, rage and other intense body sensations can be frightening if they occur abruptly" (Levine, 65). It takes time and it takes practice to live differently when we have been directed by trauma responses. It takes great courage to trust our inner Guidance when that Guidance, God, seems to have betrayed us.

I am not the spiritual director. The Director lives within each individual. My job is to point to the sacred within the person I am meeting with. When I am with her, it is my job to *believe her* and to *believe in her*. When I am meeting with her or holding her in prayer, my responsibility is to believe in *her* faith more than I believe in myself and in my faith. Some may contest this, but I stand firm. Jesus said, "Go, your faith has made you well" (Mark 10:52). Jesus did not say, "Go, *my* faith has made you well." He did not say, "Go, *God* has made you well." He did not say, "Go, *your spiritual director* has made you well." He said, "Go, *your* faith has made you well." My practice is based



on the concept that inner Wisdom, Sacred guidance, and one's personal road map to wholeness dwells within every individual. Recognizing and affirming the Sacred within another is a vital tool in my practice, especially with those who have been spiritually violated. I try my best to stay out of the way.

Mary Kathryn Fogarty, the founder of the Franciscan Spirituality Center spiritual direction program in La Crosse, Wisconsin, USA, told us that each individual is a song of God. She invited us to listen for *their* song and sing it back to them when they forget. Believe in the other; believe in *their* inner Guide and in *their* faith. Remind them of who they are by using *their* words.

Limits and Open Lines of Communication

Those with whom I companion do not need superwoman. I have limits. To know them and to be honest and forthright with them will benefit those I listen to. As a spiritual companion to others, it is my responsibility to be aware of my personal limits and to communicate those limits when necessary. It is my responsibility to initiate conversations, or check-in times, so that we can discuss any complications that may arise in the process of spiritual companionship.

What Happened?

I saw the spiritual helper who stayed with me through the tumultuous years of reliving childhood memories. We were in public, in church. I thought I was done with the flashbacks, triggers, and memory retrieval. This day, that spiritual helper triggered my memory of the classroom experience, the one that I described earlier. Emotion began to rise. Confusion set in. I was in public. Betrayal. Panic. Anger. Confusion. I could not see straight. I could not think. I could not figure it out. I just sat there. I could not say anything. Anger, then tears, then disbelief, then confusion. I could not stop the circle of emotion. I did not know what was happening. I left the church to gain composure. The tears kept coming. I drove home. Rage filled my body. I left anger messages on the spiritual helper's telephone. That helper answered, and then hung up. The triggered trauma doubled. Childhood emotions mixed with adult emotions. I was spinning. I felt the emotion of the classroom experience just as it was happening right now, without the memory itself. After arriv-

ing at home, I began to freeze up. Pain filled my paralyzed body. I was in full panic and could not move. I threw up. A friend came over. She stayed until I could fall asleep. Immense emotion would sometimes lead to suddenly falling asleep. Maybe the sudden sleep replaced the fainting of childhood. When I woke, I felt lost. Full-blown trauma came and went for days, then months. I had been programmed to go to one person. I had found God in that person. That door was shut. With unknown memories at my doorstep, I felt abandoned, ashamed, frightened, angry, guilty, confused. I brought too much for anyone to handle, I thought. Shame dominated. Shame held me down for years to come.

“(The) fear of fear and helplessness, and of feeling trapped, can come to dominate a person's life in the form of persistent and debilitating shame. Together, shame and trauma form a particularly virulent and interlocked combination” (Levine, 59–60). “The energy level of Shame is close to death, and can lead to suicide or lack of care to prolong life. In Shame we become a non-person, hang our heads, lose face, slink away. Shame pulls down the whole personality and is vulnerable to other negative emotions—anger, guilt, false pride” (Cane, 64).

When a spiritual companionship relationship of any kind ends suddenly or with little explanation of its ending, or when a spiritual companion exits during a trauma crisis, the other is left with additional trauma and confusion. To bare one's soul to another, to reveal hidden secrets in vulnerability, and then to be rejected can reverse progress, compound, complicate, and traumatize all over again. Shame became my god, again. I hid from God and tried to hide from myself. I hid from most everyone, only reaching out occasionally for some connection or to lash out. I felt ashamed for trusting another with my soul. Again, I felt that God, the Catholic Church, and this particular person had betrayed me. For over a year I couldn't take a deep breath. I was afraid to breathe. My spine froze up. My body function slowed. I lost the will to live, for a time.

There is nothing any of us can do to completely safeguard the other and ourselves from harm. As a spiritual companion, I hold responsibility to do what I can to prevent further harm and to hold myself accountable in my practice. Informed through personal experience, I find it important to know my personal limitations and to voice



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those limitations. I do my best to define my role as a spiritual companion. I keep in mind that transference is possible. It is my responsibility to initiate conversations to address any complications. Having a toolbox of outside resources is helpful.

There is a greater volatility in spiritual companionship relationships in which the one whom we companion has been wounded spiritually or harmed by spiritual authority figures. It is important to recognize this. Current trauma understanding is not only helpful but, I believe, is necessary when companionship with those who experience spiritual trauma and spiritual post-traumatic stress disorder.

Boundaries

We sat together in silence for up to twelve hours a day. We were each assigned a square cushion. That square cushion became our boundary. Less than two feet on either side of us sat another. I felt vulnerable and was afraid in my vulnerability. One day I envisioned a tent around me. I could feel the presence of the others through the tent while protecting my personal space. Through this space I was able to release emotion and memory. Through this space I was able to feel acceptance, love, and peace. My tent became a container for the expelled fear, shame, guilt, horror, and confusion that would mix with the love, compassion, acceptance, and peace. The blending of it all resulted in awareness, enlightenment, integration, and transformation without my initiation. I did not will any of it to happen. Within the tent, I lost nothing and gained everything. Within the tent I was free to release whatever needed releasing with a barrier of love to protect the others from my inner turmoil. Within the tent I was protected from the turmoil that others were releasing. Only love moved freely within, around, and between us.

“Vipassana, which means to see things as they really are, is one of India’s most ancient techniques of meditation. It was rediscovered by Gotama Buddha more than 2,500 years ago and was taught by him as a universal remedy for universal ills. Vipassana is a way of self-transformation through self-observation. It focuses on the deep interconnection between mind and body, which can be experienced directly by disciplined attention to the physical sensations that form the life of the body, and that continuously interconnect and condition the life of the mind” (“Vipassana Meditation”).

Learning to meditate through Vipassana has changed my life. I found it at a time when I renounced God. Through Vipassana I received a tool of self-reflection that is free of religious connotations. Through Vipassana I found balance and growing stability. The precepts of Vipassana are simple: observe the body’s sensations, allow emotion and memory to rise up and be experienced, do not cling to anything, do not avoid anything, do not judge anything, and accept change for it is constant and continual. Through Vipassana I found God again and I received a valuable gift, a gift that I had been lacking for my entire life—the permission to set and maintain spiritual boundaries.

As a child, the boundaries I had developed were the result of natural trauma responses. As an adult waking up to spiritual trauma, I woke with a childhood



understanding and vulnerability. I did not have the skills or understanding to set spiritual boundaries, guarding my soul when I needed to. My very most inner knowing of the Sacred was twisted and corrupted when I was a child. As an adult trying to untangle the inner mess of confusion, I adopted the God of others rather than trust the entanglement within. Vipassana held me in place so that the God of my knowing could find me.

1. *My Boundaries*

It is important that I continue to practice Vipassana in my everyday life. Self-awareness allows me to separate what is mine and what is not mine. Through Vipassana I am given permission to protect my relationship with the Divine so that it can never again be taken from me.

2. *My Boundaries and the Spiritual Companionship Relationship*

Individuals who have been spiritually violated have a sixth sense for spiritual deception. They may watch me like a hawk and be skeptical of my every move. They may resist my words or spiritual language. They may resist me. They may try to adopt my God as their own. Or they may see me as a savior, *their* savior. These responses and others are natural for those who have been spiritually violated. I try to meet them where they are at by being open and authentic, hiding nothing from their view. I try to put up a window to my inner God all while keeping the window closed to adoption, adoration, and negative infiltration. My body and spirit remain windowless, inviting a free flow of energy between us and within the Sacred.

3. *Their Boundaries: Respecting, Encouraging, and Uplifting*

When inner spiritual boundaries have been violated, our bodies react. Just like a life threat to our body or mind, we can experience life threats to our soul. Our primal brain immediately takes over reacting to spiritual life threats.

Those whose spiritual boundaries have been infiltrated deserve the dignity and respect of space and time needed to work through spiritual complications. It is not advisable to take charge and lead them back to spiritual health. In our compassion or impatience we, as spiritual companions, can find ourselves nudging others along the path we may consciously or unconsciously think they need to follow. We can find ourselves nudging them to open up and let us in so we can walk with them on this journey. When we do this, we are asking individuals to open up in the place they have been so violently wounded—their soul. They have every right to protect that area from us for as long as they need to.

In spiritual companionship relationships, I encourage others to develop and practice maintaining boundaries around *their* souls, *their* spirit, the essence of *their* being, and *their* relationship with the Divine. I do not tell them that I am safe or that our space together is safe. They will determine what and who is safe. Some have never been taught, encouraged, or given permission to develop and practice holding *spiritual* boundaries. In our spiritual companionship relationship, I invite others to set, regulate, and practice upholding spiritual boundaries.

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When I recognize something happening in individuals and when it seems right, I invite them to put up a “tent” around themselves. I assure them that I will remain here in my chair, not entering their space unless invited. Sharing what goes on in their “tent” is optional, only if and when they are ready to do so. I encourage them to set boundaries with me. I remember that it takes time and practice to trust one’s own abilities. I encourage them to “sit in their own chair.”

4. Boundaries: *With My Peers*

I am rarely hooked and never triggered when I am with those I accompany. This has been a grace in my life. My hooks come in other ways and from other people. I am hooked and triggered by my peers, spiritual companions, and ministers of all kinds. I guard my relationship with the Sacred when I am near those with spiritual or religious titles. Understanding the spiritual violation and complications experienced during childhood and in the adulthood healing years have informed me of my limitations and of the need to move slowly toward deeper relationships with peers. The small triggers I experience now serve as reminders to set spiritual boundaries. The small triggers I feel now remind me of how important it is to speak about spiritual trauma.

The boundaries I set for myself may be different than the boundaries set by other spiritual directors. My trust has been violated and reviolated by *spiritual* individuals and in sacred settings. For my own well-being and in respect for others, I limit my time at retreat centers by staying off site at night and spending time outdoors. I give myself a cushion of time and space when interacting with peers. I am up front with my spiritual director, letting her know my boundaries. I have learned that I cannot socialize very often with peers. The casual talk, jokes, and sharing of childhood or adulthood memories, of being raised in, or of working in a religious or church setting, are not casual conversations for me. Some jokes are not funny. I am aware that while my peers sometimes trigger me, I sometimes trigger and confront them. I am aware that I can confront by my very presence. What I bring can silence a room, divide people, and can result in people consciously or subconsciously putting up inner or outer barricades against what I bring or against me personally.

The image of the permeable “tent,” the tent that allows the connection with others to remain, the interchange of Love to remain, and the invisible protective barrier to remain, is essential to my spiritual health and important to my work as a spiritual companion.

Conclusion

Christians profess an incarnate God, a Holy Essence that embodies humanity. To become aware of how our bodies and minds function, how we are naturally attracted to Love and Goodness, and how our bodies automatically respond when our relationship with the Sacred is threatened, is to come to know the Divine more fully. God’s Spirit and our body are One. Trauma science not only informs us of how our bodies respond to threat and how our bodies respond to various trauma responses, but it also provides us with a different lens to view God and ourselves. ■

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