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An Excerpt from THE ENCHANTED SELF, A Positive Therapy

By Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein

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The women I interviewed caused me to look at my clients in new ways. As Proust states, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." I discovered many aspects of enchantment in my clients as I began to look anew at them. I began to recognize, within my treatment room, extraordinary human beings. Yes, they often had difficult life situations, dysfunctional backgrounds, poorly functioning and damaging marriages, problem children and other disappointments, but they were still able to achieve many moments that worked well for them. Here were people who felt passion and excitement about many aspects of their lives.

What I saw led me to agree with those innovative professionals who have challenged the "disease" model, i.e.: the old way of looking at our clients or patients as primarily having problems, difficulties, dysfunctions, personality disorders or sickness. Classification numbers seem to be attached to them, labeling them as if they were items of clothing hanging from a department store rack. I began to perceive my clients differently, as if through a new lens−−as people who have talents, who are survivors. They came equipped with a multitude of talents, capacities, hobbies, knowledge and passions. In the histories of their lives they experienced many enhances mental and/or physical states, even in far from ideal circumstances.

As children, my clients may have had special, peaceful ways of feeling when they went fishing alone by a pond, or when they were watching a sunset. This contented ego state of the ten−year−old was one way they experienced their ENCHANTED SELVES. Retrieved in adulthood, the positive state of being can serve as one Positive Fingerprint of the Mind and Positive Shadowprints are unique, as individual as one's fingerprints, utilizing different positive capacities within them.

The women I interviewed made me aware of how we can forget what it felt like to be experiencing one's ENCHANTED SELF. The way we were raised in our particular family may get in the way of recognition. This is particularly true if one's family has dismissed something a child once loved to do, as being unimportant. For example, one might have enjoyed daydreaming while sitting on a swing. An

irritated mother, calling from the back door, might have felt such an activity to be an unwise use of time. Someone else may have longed to be an artist or writer, but her family discouraged such "impractical" dreams. Another may have felt whole and pure while organizing a chaotic home life. Although not an ideal circumstance, the competencies one experienced and the sense of power may well have been another Positive Fingerprint of the Mind.

I began to realize that we, as therapists, need to understand, as well as help our clients to understand, that many of our earlier integrated moments, hours, days, weeks, our "optimizing opportunities" may have been long forgotten and discarded aided by family as well as societal values, opinions and options. Each of my clients may not have had the chance, in terms of personal growth and education, to recognize or validate his or her Positive Fingerprints. But still, enhanced times have happened. Inside of each client is an ENCHANTED SELF.

Dr. Holstein is the originator of The Enchanted Self and a psychologist since 1981. She is the author of two books: The Enchanted Self, A Positive Therapy and Recipes for Enchantment, The Secret Ingredient is YOU!Dr. Holstein speaks on radio, and appears on television in NY and NJ. She gives lectures, seminars, retreats and audio interviews on LadybugLive.com and is in private practice in Long Branch, NJ with her husband, Dr. Russell Holstein.

Beginning to Reclaim My ENCHANTED SELF − Part 1

By Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein

Beginning to Reclaim My ENCHANTED SELF − Part 1 by Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein

Please stay with me as I share this excerpt from The Enchanted Self, A Positive Therapy over two weeks with you. This section reveals the way that I initially began to reclaim my own Enchanted Self.

My enchanted self was beginning to emerge, unpeeling as an onion is unpeeled, layer by layer. This is important because I think so many of us shy away from our innermost positive feelings perhaps as much as we do from the dark shadows around us. The search for The Enchanted Self is intimate in revealing and it's scary −− and maybe people really won't understand or appreciate it. Maybe we have to fight through shame or humiliation before we find it. Maybe we won't understand or give credit to our own enchanted selves when we do! That would be the most violating thing of all, if I were to find my own enchanted self and then discard it. If I can't have it anymore, because I thrown it out.

One of my first self−discoveries was recognizing my lost capacities for engaging with people without being paid. As I interviewed the women I realized how much fun I was having, how I felt on equal footing and yet privileged to be hearing their stories, how "female" I felt and how connected. I loved this wonderful opportunity to have time with women that was not social time and yet not work time, either. I began to realize how hungry I had been for this kind of "at ease time" with women. My childhood had pushed me away from such time with women. After all, I had to get out, to get going, to be competent and, often, competitive, not connected.

The second layer was feeling profoundly more connected to women, all women, than I had ever felt before. I found myself suddenly able to ally myself with and have compassion for many women, an ability which had eluded me prior to these interviews. Family members, friends, my mother, all took a softer hue.

As therapists, we can certainly wonder why this hadn't happened as a result of my training and my time in therapy. After all, I had been exposed to hundreds and hundreds of intimate stories over 15 years. My hunch is that while in the treatment room, I, like any paid healing professional, saw myself, to some extent, as being in the authority position. This may have reinforced some natural biases that I carried with me from my childhood. I think I continue to withhold some deep level of empathy, still seem myself as being apart. When interviewing the women, however, I was automatically their equal, and that placed me differently. Having the privilege of listening to the 18 women, began to listen to other women's voices with less bias and value judgments. For example, I had always valued certain capacities, such as pragmatic decision−making and the capacity to carry through once a decision had been made. This is a capacity which can be restricted for women. After this glimpse into the girlhood dreams and shattered hopes of many of the women interviewed −− the compromises made with life and the painful, yet successful ways of salvaging one's soul after many lost opportunities −− I was able to cross a barrier and join them at some level of womenhood −− removing my old iron bars, my negativity and judgments.

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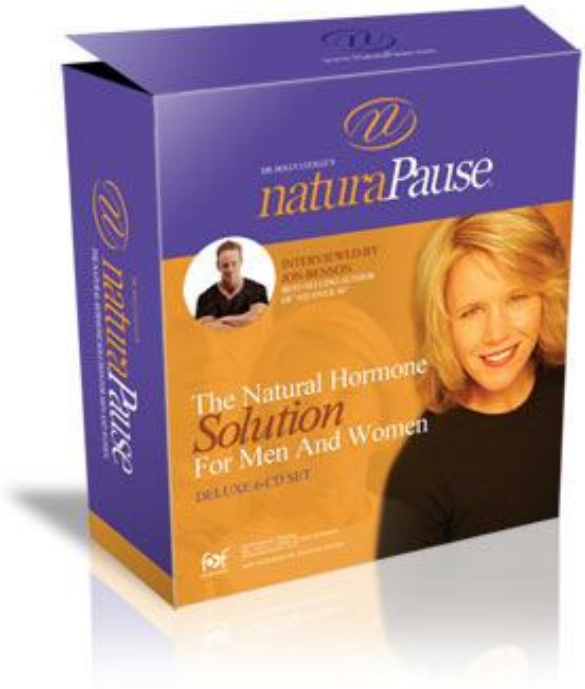

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