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**Beginning to Reclaim My ENCHANTED SELF – Part 1**

**By Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein**

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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

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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.

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 2**

**By Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein**

### **Beginning to Reclaim My ENCHANTED SELF – Part 2 by Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein**

Thank you for staying with me as I continue with part two of this excerpt from The Enchanted Self, A Positive Therapy. This section concludes the way I began to reclaim my own Enchanted Self.

The third unwrapping came when I needed major surgery, an emergency hysterectomy. I found myself able to permit women to nurture me through this emergency in a way that I do think I was able to do before I began this project. I no longer felt I needed to rely on the authority of the male. I yearned for the care taking, nurturing capacities that many women offer so much more freely than do most men. My surgeon was a woman and I insisted on private-duty female nurses for a while. I allowed them to cradle me, soothe me, massage me and nurse me.

The next layer that was reached was my capacity to run my practice differently, as I recovered. I was able to relinquish some of my controls and to soften professional/client boundaries as appropriate. I gave them the best that I could while still being totally honest. Why was in a recovery state, I saw clients in my living room or provided telephone sessions. I put my feet up; accepted gifts and food from clients. I let them nourish me and take care of me for a while.

During this time, my clients and I shared our competencies. They even paced their subject matter to my recovery level. Usually this was done without explanation. I accepted their pacing as one of the beautiful gifts they were able to offer me. As I grew stronger, their problems reemerged in ways that was able to cope with. They re-parented me into recovery as I had attempted to re-parent them before my sudden surgery. From women clients came gifts and cards and the presentation of beautiful sweets. All were accepted with joy and from the heart. I made no attempt to interpret them, which I

thought would have been demeaning because these tokens came out of mutual caring. To have tried to interpret this material as transference would have been a diminishment of our humanity. If need be, I could always use this material again, anyway. And if some transference material never reemerged, what a small price to pay, to give so many of my clients an opportunity to show their competencies and caring. Most were able, with grace, to rely on their own capacities while still being aware that they were staying in treatment not to have tea with me but to further heal and grow. In helping me heal, I believe they felt empowered.

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