

**ENERGY, SOUL-CONNECTING AND
AWAKENING CONSCIOUSNESS**
Psychotherapy in a New Paradigm

Ruthie Smith



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To all on the path of awakening

*May we realise the open heart, and feel joy
relaxing in the stillness of our true nature
of spacious emptiness and compassion*

*TADYATHA OM GATE GATE PARA GATE
PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA
The Heart Sutra*

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¹ This is now a postgraduate Clinical Training in Energy Psychotherapy taught by Energy Psychotherapy Training. Information about new courses can be found on the Energy Psychotherapy Network website: www.energypsychotherapynetwork.co.uk

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About the author

Ruthie Smith is an attachment-based psychoanalytic psychotherapist (The Bowlby Centre) and energy psychotherapist with thirty-five years' clinical experience in private practice, and ten years as a principal psychotherapist and supervisor in the NHS. She has taught extensively on psychotherapy trainings, speaks at various CPD conference events, has written several chapters and articles, and, after training in work with subtle energy and vibrational healing, founded The Flame Centre in London in 2009, specialising in trauma work. Alongside psychotherapy, Ruthie has a passionate interest in the 'shift' of humanity's awakening consciousness, and in integrating energy and spirituality within psychotherapy. Previously trustee and chant leader of an international Buddhist organisation where she compiled training manuals about Buddhism, Ruthie currently runs Flame residential retreats. She also has a parallel career, in which she has toured the world as a jazz musician (saxophone and voice) and sings in classical ensembles. Director of a postgraduate clinical training in energy psychotherapy, hosted by ETT (Essential Therapy Training) in conjunction with Energy Psychotherapy Training, Ruthie's book, *Energy, Soul-Connecting and Awakening Consciousness: Psychotherapy in a New Paradigm*, introduces working with energy and the shift to the new paradigm to therapists, clients, and the general public.

*Be careful what you water your dreams with.
Water them with worry and fear
And you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream.
Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success.
Always be on the lookout for ways
to turn a problem into an opportunity for success.
Always be on the lookout for ways
To nurture your dream.*

Lao Tzu, Ancient Text (1973)

Preface

*E*nergy, Soul-Connecting and Awakening Consciousness: Psychotherapy in a New Paradigm is contextualised within the multidisciplinary worlds of depth psychotherapy, working with trauma, and aspects of contemporary science and energy, against a backdrop of evolving consciousness. All this is taking place within a bigger shift into a new paradigm. The book provides an introduction to energy psychotherapy, a way of working which integrates energy psychology within relational psychotherapy, using the subtle energy system, the meridians and nervous system to relieve trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and somatic stress. Easy-to-use self-applied energy methods are outlined which can regulate emotions, clear stress and trauma from the body, and help people find calm and balance. The reader may like to try these methods out for themselves.

There is so much that we don't know. While as a non-scientist I try to avoid making spurious links to other fields, we do nonetheless live in an age of synergy with increasing interconnections emerging between disciplines—for example, the ways that quantum physics interconnects with consciousness. This tentative exploration broaches humanity's evolving consciousness, the nature of the unified field and energy psychotherapy and how these come together. A lot of what is explored is subject to interpretation and not necessarily fact. Where it is possible to do so, I offer scientific backup, though such understanding may soon be superseded by new discoveries.

There are two main sections. The first part begins with a personal account of how I came to discover energy psychotherapy, and subsequent chapters look in more detail at overlaps with other disciplines, starting with an overall exploration of energy. We exist on a spectrum from matter (our bodies, or dense energy) to light (the higher frequencies of our consciousness).

The healing power and efficacy of frequency medicine is well-recognised in the medical field, where, for instance, laser surgery or infra-red treatments have been used for many years. Work with resonances and vibrations has also been developing within the field of psychology and psychotherapy since the 1970s and is becoming firmly established with an impressive evidence base and many benefits.

In the new paradigm, the book reflects on the changing therapeutic discourse which is expanding to include the idea of releasing the dense ‘heavy’ energies of trauma, to bring more light and well-being into what I term the *mindbodyenergy*. I use this word to acknowledge the multidimensional aspects of being human. Where previously psychotherapy tended to separate psyche from soma, science and ancient wisdom both show how the subtle energy system (our life force), our mind, body, and consciousness are completely interconnected.

Developmental ‘maps’ for our evolving consciousness include psychoanalytic, energetic, and spiritual frameworks for applying this work, and as a background thread throughout is my comparison between Dzogchen and energy psychotherapy—two experiential paths of energy and consciousness within the ‘ease and grace’ of quantum ‘flow’.

The second section of the book describes a range of energy psychotherapy practices for working in depth, illustrated by clinical vignettes. This is accompanied by an overview of working with complex trauma and PTSD, and how to work safely with the *mindbodyenergy* so the therapy is appropriately grounded within relational work. The unique benefits of energy psychotherapy are explored, including its capacity to overcome therapeutic blockages, integrate and strengthen the fragmented ego, create healthy resilient ‘energy boundaries’, and work relatively easily to clear all forms of trauma including preverbal, attachment, transgenerational, and transpersonal trauma. Energy work offers many possibilities including depth archetypal and shadow work and working with a ‘higher gauge’ realm—or soul-connecting as I call it. Those working in this way report relief and an experience of real healing.

Underpinning the book is an acknowledgement of the radical change taking place on our planet where humanity is evolving towards a more heart- and soul-centred consciousness. As the idea of ‘Awakening’ becomes more mainstream, people seek spiritual practices such as mindfulness, yoga, and shamanism to open their hearts and experience the luminosity of their higher consciousness. In this paradigm of energy and vibration, the work of Eckhart Tolle and many others describes this change from the egoic world of the ‘third dimension’—the world of Newtonian physics, duality, and cause and effect—to ‘the fifth dimension’, the multidimensional ‘quantum’ world of heart-based ‘Unity Consciousness’ and interconnectedness.

As we live through this ‘Shift’, we are witnessing the breakdown of outworn structures and hierarchies all over the world while, at the same time, prophets have foretold that humanity is giving birth to a humanitarian ‘Golden Age’, where new technologies and methods are manifesting in the service of the well-being of the planet. I see energy psychotherapy as one of these new methods and clients are very much benefiting from these ways of working.

In the evolving clinical terrain of the new paradigm, people increasingly come to therapy to explore confusing experiences as they ‘awaken’, and encounter such states as multidimensional timelines, transpersonal consciousness, or kundalini rising. We need to understand how psychotherapy might address this expanded remit in a grounded way, which avoids spiritual bypassing and provides a safe space for clients to work. Therapists may also need to consider their own experiences and what training might help, so that clients’ ‘altered states’ can be held, accepted, and understood.

As our states of consciousness evolve, many are recognising how we are waking up from centuries of disconnection from our souls (our spiritual selves, ‘higher selves’, ‘Source’, or the ‘Self’—or however we wish to name that numinous ‘god within’). For me, expanded consciousness is not about going ‘higher’ but becoming more grounded as we connect deeply with the earth and bring our spiritual essence into our bodies. The simplest message of this book is that of finding our true selves—and helping our clients to find their true selves—through connecting with our hearts and souls and releasing any trauma which blocks us from our light.

Caveats

Glossary

To help you navigate any territory which is new to you, there is a brief glossary at the back of this book.

Energy psychotherapy and energy psychology tools

The book describes generic energy principles and methods you can try out which can easily be integrated within therapeutic practice. Many of these—such as energy balancing—can be used by both therapists and clients for regulating the nervous system and emotions. If you would like to explore further, you may like to experience this form of therapy with an energy psychotherapist. Since energy work is powerful, training in energy psychotherapy is recommended if you wish to deepen your understanding and practise safely with supervision (especially when working with complex trauma).

Evolving truths

Psychotherapy has changed enormously in the past thirty years as neuroscience and other disciplines have brought new understanding to light. Such discoveries are emerging rapidly, so our ‘truths’ are constantly being updated and my views may well have changed significantly in a few years’ time. The book explores my perspective on a synthesis of different ideas including ones for which there may be no ‘proof’. These are provisional speculations and wonderings in the service of locating psychotherapy in the New Paradigm.

Awakening consciousness

The perspective of this book is informed by issues concerning energy and consciousness, where quantum science and spirituality have converged at similar understandings about the nature of reality. Whether you are an atheist, agnostic, spiritual, or religious, the experience of ‘awakening’ the heart is applicable to all. I draw on examples from the Dzogchen teachings within Buddhism, a tradition with which I am familiar. Dzogchen feels relevant because it speaks of universal truths beyond concepts or doctrine in the field of energy and awakening consciousness, providing a bridge between ancient wisdom teachings, quantum science, and contemporary energy psychotherapy. However, any spiritual path which follows the heart share similarities, and so—for example—‘Christ Consciousness’ is another way of referring to the ultimate reality spoken about in quantum science and the Dzogchen teachings.

Language and terminology

People use different words to denote similar meanings, so my use of language is inevitably inexact. Where some speak of ‘God within’, ‘Source’, the ‘Self’, or their ‘Buddha nature’, others might prefer the terms ‘Soul’, ‘Higher Self’, or ‘Presence’. Many treatises have been written about such things, so for the purposes of this book I use these words approximately and interchangeably. For me, the term ‘soul-connecting’—connecting with the spiritual self—has a personal resonance, but please use whichever words work for you.

Client examples

For the purposes of anonymity, all clients have been disguised and elements changed.

Repetition

It is difficult to take new things in all at once. Sometimes I introduce a concept and then return to it again to explain more—I hope this helps to absorb the information incrementally.

Generic principles for working with energy

This book focuses on the generic principles for working with the subtle energy system—meridians, chakras, thoughtfields, and intention. There are also numerous other excellent energy methods and ‘brand’ names which I have not had space to mention or explore which make a significant contribution to the field. I mean no disrespect by omitting them.

Choosing the path of joy

Throughout the global chaos of lockdowns, war, trauma, and much distress experienced by us all in the early 2020s, we have been going through tumultuous change. Some named this the ‘The Great Reset’—a New World Order run by a global elite; others, ‘The Great Awakening’—which offers freedom to humanity. According to Lynne McTaggart, (2001), this radical ‘Shift’ which has been occurring on our planet, heralds ‘a revolution ... as daring and profound as Einstein’s discovery of relativity’.

In birthing ‘New Earth’, we are seeing the crumbling of outworn structures and hierarchical top-down power, giving way to a new paradigm favouring egalitarian communities—a society based on co-operation rather than competition, an emphasis on personal sovereignty and self-responsibility, and exponential advances in science and technology.

Another aspect of this new world concerns a fundamental shift in consciousness. Eckhart Tolle’s popular books *The Power of Now* (1999) and *A New Earth* (2005) attest to an increasing curiosity about heart and soul-based consciousness beyond ego, and the ‘new energy’. These changes have been manifesting gradually, with previously fringe activities now considered part of the mainstream. For example, the practise of meditation for Western people only began to emerge in the nineteen-seventies, whereas now, fifty years later, mindfulness has become a component of treatment within the NHS and the large meditation apps ‘Calm’, ‘Headspace’, and ‘Insight Timer’ are standard on many phones. The public’s appetite for various types of generic non-religious spirituality can also be seen in the burgeoning of all types of meditation retreats, such as mindfulness, yoga, and shamanism.

Amidst these changes we are seeing a flowering of new methods in psychotherapy and counselling. Developments in neuroscience, epigenetics, biology, quantum physics, and trauma

have led to a greater understanding of the links between the body, mind, and consciousness—which I term *mindbodyenergy*—and a convergence of approaches in clinical work, resulting in radical change in the practise of psychotherapy. Energy psychotherapy is one such emerging method. For instance, acupoint tapping (EFT or emotional freedom techniques) calms the nervous system by tapping on points on the meridians to release traumatic stress. It is so effective that it is used in key statutory services such as the fire brigade, the police, and GP counselling practices and the self-help application of energy methods has become a normal part of daily life for many these days. Essentially, energy methods help remove trauma, conflicts, and blockages from our subtle energy system and their effects can often be quite astonishing.

Sceptical onlookers may wonder about this potential for bringing such wide-ranging healing to the body, mind, and soul. However, clients generally report significant feelings of relief and well-being, a finding corroborated by an increasing evidence base of research showing a lasting reduction in symptoms. All this may sound too good to be true—but I hope in introducing you to this work, that you might be interested to explore further.

After discovering and training in energy therapy and finding how helpful it was for myself and my clients, I decided to leave the security of my NHS job so I could further develop this way of working. This coincided with the end of a major relationship, when, during a period of depression and loss of heart, I experienced a ‘death’ of my old life. I knew I had to move on from the old energy and go it alone, so took a huge leap of faith into the unknown. Despite a fundamental sense of inner safety, I was shocked at suddenly being engulfed by visceral fear and part of me did not know if I would manage the ‘rebirth’. I had made the change with a curious mixture of trust—certain of having to follow the truth in my heart—and terrifying anxiety in case the universe would not support me. While maintaining a semblance of normality, I suffered absolute terrors and am grateful that energy healing got me through and beyond this—and that I was indeed supported.

There are some principles in energy psychotherapy I would like to emphasise. First, these subtle energy methods are not an ‘add on’ because they are completely integrated within relational ‘talking therapy’—hence the term *energy psychotherapy*. This is also not something therapists ‘do to’ clients. Healing is something which comes from inside us. We are our own healers—so the work is co-created, guided by the client’s own healing process. Clients are facilitated in self-applied methods, an empowering process which brings greater stability, integration, and a sense of self. The energy ‘tool kit’ for working with thoughtfields, meridians, chakras, and the power of intention described in Part II provides self-help methods for both therapists and clients.

Second, working with energy is *experiential*, beyond words. The cognitive mind may doubt and want to understand ‘why’ but largely, we don’t know, so these questions cannot easily be answered. Each person’s experience is unique. As an example, my first experience of energy therapy came when clearing a preverbal trauma of which I had previously been unconscious. It concerned being shouted at when I was a baby. The energetic release of deep shock and fear—gently, painlessly, and naturally—was a complete revelation to me. I was amazed how my body remembered the trauma and how powerful and freeing it was to clear this. Afterwards, I went

outside in the garden, stomping around on the grass, grounding the energy which ‘fizzed’ as it poured through my legs. This helped me know in no uncertain terms that energy therapy worked. It also helped me connect more deeply with my body and trust the process.

Third, energy work is very adaptable. We follow each client’s unique preferences and *mindbodyenergy*. This even applies to the way we name the work itself. For instance, some people are attracted to the word energy, whereas others find it off-putting. A more scientific-sounding—and true—way of describing this work as ‘clearing stress out of the nervous system’ may feel more user-friendly for some. We can easily introduce energy methods by using some form of mindfulness, breathing, or ‘felt sense’ as a way in—so it is perfectly possible to practise energy psychotherapy without referring to ‘energy’ at all. This may be helpful for those therapists who might be interested to try this way of working but find the whole thing a bit ‘woo woo’ or worry what their clients or colleagues might think of them if they change their practice in what may feel rather radical ways. People understandably have a certain caution about things which don’t necessarily make sense to the rational analytical mind.

My intention in writing this book is to build a bridge to support this new psychotherapeutic work, using some personal examples. So how did I discover the wonders of energy psychotherapy? On a personal level, my search was for healing, safety, and authenticity. Despite many years of therapy, the deepest layers of trauma which had caused me to freeze and be unable to speak were only finally addressed when I came across energy psychotherapy. This method felt immediately ‘right’. Its capacity to clear earliest preverbal traumas and its sensitivity and attunement to my body was transformative and has made a huge difference to my life.

More generally, I had been seeking to incorporate and integrate my personal interests and passions within psychotherapy—psychoanalytic and Jungian depth psychologies; resonance and vibration (I am a musician); trauma, and the ways it is held in the *mindbodyenergy*; energy healing; explorations in meditation, consciousness, and spirituality (I was a practising Tibetan Buddhist for many years); and my lifelong yearning to connect with my soul. Life’s synchronicities brought me via a somewhat circuitous route, providing interesting opportunities which ultimately led me to energy psychotherapy.

I thought carefully about how much to disclose in writing this book, and decided it was useful to share some personal experiences to illustrate specific points, starting first with a little about my family background. I will keep details to a minimum out of respect and love for my family, who, apart from one sister, are deceased. As with many psychotherapists, I was brought up in a family with its share of fear, anxiety, and trauma. My mother had an undiagnosed mental illness, and as her confidante, effectively, I became a therapist when I was very little. She was very busy going out at night to local committees, so, as children, we were often left alone in the evenings. I was close to my older sister who suffered agonisingly with paranoid schizophrenia, and after many years’ struggle, she eventually took her own life in the late 1980s. My middle sister was somewhat overlooked by my mother in all this, although she had a particular

place in the heart of my largely ‘absent’ father. He, with a double first from Cambridge, prized people if they were ‘bright’ or amusing and spent large amounts of time alone away from us all, developing his photos and binding books. Both my parents had terrifying tempers which, from time to time, would erupt out of nowhere. They also both had significant family legacies of trauma to contend with at a time when therapy barely existed. I am very thankful to them for giving me this life.

From ‘common unhappiness’ to joy

From an early age I carried family stresses on my face so road workers would call out saying things like ‘lighten up love, it might never happen’. When I started exploring psychotherapy, Freud’s well-known statement that

much will be gained if we succeed in transforming ... hysterical misery into ‘common unhappiness’. With a mental life that has been restored to health, you will be better armed against that unhappiness. (Freud, 1895d)

seemed quite a realistic therapeutic aim.

Buddha also spoke about unhappiness (‘dukkha’) as the fundamental human condition. However, his ‘Four Noble Truths’ offer hope for transcendence, describing how suffering occurs because we have not yet ‘awakened’ out of egoic reality. The first truth is that, as human beings, we all want to be happy but do things that bring suffering on ourselves. The second is that there is a way out of this suffering, because we all have ‘Buddha nature’—our ‘true’ enlightened nature or whatever words you like to call your spiritual self. The third truth is that following the path to liberation offers a way out of suffering. When we ‘awaken’ out of ego, realise our true nature, and stabilise this state of unity—oneness-with-the-all—we arrive at the ‘cessation’ of suffering, which is the fourth truth. This is explored further in Chapter 6.

Energy psychotherapy offers another path for the healing of suffering, which uses remarkably straightforward methods. This will all be explained fully in Chapters 7–9, so for now, I trust the following brief outline of working with energy will suffice.

At the beginning we start with simple exercises/postures to balance and calm the body’s subtle energy and nervous system. As with any relational psychotherapy, we talk together, and issues emerge. There are various indicators which help us know when energy work may be useful. The physiological disturbance when a person becomes overwhelmed or ‘triggered’ is one such signal. The free associations of the mind and body bringing out issues from the unconscious are another—these arise naturally in the work. Thirdly, kinesiology (otherwise called muscle testing or energy testing) is an invaluable skill, although it is possible to practise energy therapy without it. The body has its own wisdom and ‘knows’ things which we are not consciously aware of, so by testing such statements as ‘This is correct issue to work with now’ the Yes or No response helps guide the energy work (the therapist can use self-energy testing if it is not appropriate or possible to touch the client’s arm).

Once we have ascertained that energy treatment would be helpful, client and therapist then co-create a simple ‘clearing’ phrase which sums up the issue. In the vignettes that I share, I focus on these phrases which indicate to ‘intelligent energy’ the precise nature of traumatic stress to be released via the neural pathways from the *mindbodyenergy*. These formulations may seem a bit stark, so I wish to emphasise that they don’t at all convey the intimacy of the therapeutic relationship, nor the profound insight which emerges in the process of how we came to co-create the phrases together.

A useful feature of energy psychotherapy is that it can identify and clear ‘reversed energy’—blockages or ‘resistance’ which get in the way of healing. Once we have attended to any reversals, we select the relevant energy method, and using the clearing phrase, might: tap on relevant meridian points; hold specific chakras or other parts of the subtle energy system whilst keeping the key issue in mind; or work with words and intention alone. These processes facilitate the discharge of the stressed energy from the body via the nervous and subtle energy systems, thereby transforming neural pathways and bringing about states of balance and calm.

I feel that my experiences—both of ‘awakening’ through Buddhism and of energy therapy—revolutionised my life. These pathways offer routes out of ‘common unhappiness’ and can bring us to states of peace and joy. Now, knowing as I do the potential for deep healing in energy psychotherapy, I feel Freud’s therapeutic aims were rather limited.

I set my intention to choose the Path of Joy before either having had a glimpse of ‘awakening’ or of energy psychotherapy. I feel this intention played a key role in changing the trajectory of my life, gradually bringing circumstances to my path which helped transform my engrained outlook from one of gloom to that of joy.

From the old to the new—key themes

The so-called Aquarian Age has been coming into being for decades as several planetary cycles end simultaneously—the 2,000-year age of Pisces, the completion of a 5,000-year cycle of the *Kaliyuga* known as the ‘Dark Age’, and the ending of 12,000- and 26,000-year cycles (Perez, 2021) All this has profound implications for change and a new dawn.

It has been prophesised that the ‘New Age’ we are entering—variously called the ‘Golden Age’ or the ‘Age of Light’—heralds a paradigm of energy, personal sovereignty, expanding consciousness, and freedom. ‘Seeding’ new earth involves the simultaneous building and creation of new structures inside the system, to replace dissolving outworn structures. In what follows, I explore the transition from the old to the new as I searched for balance and integration in the way I worked. This involved grappling with various themes and dichotomies (in no particular order) ultimately converging in energy psychotherapy:

- feminism—the personal is political
- the world of vibrations, energy, and music
- medical and holistic relational models
- traditional classical and free-flowing forms

- awakening consciousness—the rational and the mystical
- finding an authentic sense of self
- hierarchy and personal sovereignty
- connecting with soul—a search for something more
- the body

‘The personal is political’ was a slogan employed by feminism in the 70s to reclaim personal power and sovereignty. This trend was echoed in Scott Peck’s *The Road Less Traveled* (1978) which blended science, spirituality, and personal growth. Peck invited people to free themselves from the pressures of conformity which stopped them from acting independently so they could find their own truth.

Another book of its time, Sheldon Kopp’s *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!* (1976) describes the necessary ‘pilgrimage’ of disillusionment we go through on our journey to individuation—a stage of growth where we recognise that others can’t teach us what we need to learn for ourselves. When the therapist or guru turns out to be disappointing, just ‘another struggling human being’ like us, we stop idealising and depending on them and begin to find ourselves. The way to find truth is to go within and look within ourselves. Kopp’s egalitarian stance made total sense at the time I read it, though it took many years of working with external and internal hierarchies of authority and self-judgement—overcoming ‘shoulds’, ‘oughts’, and acting out of ‘duty’—before I actually found my sovereignty and stopped looking outside myself for answers. This path of discovery involved confronting ego, judgement, and shame, and learning to discern the difference between the soul’s and the ego’s voice.

Kopp’s reminder that we are all ‘struggling human beings’ offers a humbling and cautionary note to therapists on our human fallibility. I have certainly made and continue to make many mistakes both in my life and as a therapist—though hopefully I am learning from it all.

In the following account I have written chronologically where possible, though some anecdotes do not always follow a strictly linear timeline because the strands of my life—of music, therapy, Buddhism, energy and so on—were operating simultaneously. Nonetheless, I trust that you can make sense of it.

A circuitous route

While there was pain and trauma in my family, I don’t want to paint too gloomy a picture—we had many opportunities, including music, travel abroad, and adventures. On family holidays, quirky humour provided respite from family tensions. We sang in the car in harmony—a favourite was the hymn ‘Guide me O thou Great Redeemer’, where we substituted the words with the longest name of a village in Wales, (Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch) to the tune Cwm Rhondda. This was obviously completely nuts. As children we constantly clamoured ‘when are we going to get there?’ as though ‘there’ was in the future, when actually, ‘there’ was each beautiful city, mountain, lake, historic site, or coastline that we visited on the

journey. Similarly, I have come to understand that as we travel along our path in life, enjoying our experiences as we go along is as important as whatever destination we aspire to get to.

One of the legacies of having a hyper-rationalising father was a troublesome split between head and heart—he spoke the language of reason, and I, that of emotion. My father and sister used to discuss Kafka in German at the dinner table. As the youngest, I said nothing for fear of being stupid. I could never find words. I was sensitive and emotional and despite sometimes knowing things intuitively, I often fell into shocked traumatised states which blocked my brain, so I was unable to think. I was so terrified of being shamed for getting things wrong that I copied my sister's entire school project, word for word, picture for picture, because I didn't have a single original idea in my head. It wasn't until long after leaving my family that I felt safe enough to find the flow of my own creativity.

I became preoccupied by spiritual questions when, aged five, I sang at a church fete and developed a curiosity and passion for the heavens:

What do the stars do up in the sky
Higher than the wind can blow, and the clouds can fly?
Each star in its glory, circle, circle—still
As it was meant to shine, and set, and do its maker's will.

In Sunday school we were taught about compassion and Ruth in the bible who 'wept amidst the alien corn', though I wasn't quite sure what it meant. Like my namesake, I often wept, and one memorable experience as a toddler was of seeing little boys torturing crabs on the beach by pulling their legs off, one by one. I was inconsolable and screamed at them to stop, with tears pouring down my cheeks. I was distraught that they *enjoyed* being cruel.

As a child there were many different worlds—music, orchestra (I played the cello), swimming, living in the South (Surrey), moving up North (Liverpool), family, school, church, travel abroad. It wasn't safe to be the same person everywhere, so I adapted to my environment to avoid at all costs the shame and humiliation of being different. When in Rome. So, if I was with posh people, I had a posh accent and if I was with Liverpudlians I was a scouser. By the age of eleven I had learned to be a chameleon.

My soul always sought joy. There was much solace to be found in nature and I survived my family through finding space. Around ten I discovered meditation by swimming endless lengths on my own in the outdoor lido. This regulated my emotions and gave me peace and calm, and later, being in the swimming team necessitated attending regular training sessions which legitimised my escape from home.

Being a musician provided another escape—perhaps that was when I first really connected with 'energy'. My family often labelled me as too sensitive, but music, with its wide-ranging harmonies and vibrations, soothed my soul and allowed me to be me, to freely express myself. When I was thirteen, I played cello at an orchestral week at Attingham Park, the family seat of Sir George Trevelyan. The only child there, I was pleased to be invited to join seasoned musicians

to play some chamber music one evening in his study. I still remember the energy of that room. Surrounded by beautiful old books, paintings, and period furniture, he and others smoked and drank fine wines while we played some of the most exquisite quartets, quintets, and octets late into the night. I was grateful that the other musicians put up with my inexperience and just let me get on with it. It was heaven—totally connected with the expansive resonances of the music and at one with my soul. Years later, I learned that George Trevelyan—in whom I had no particular interest at the time—was a proponent of the ‘new energies’, known as ‘The Father of the New Age’.

In late adolescence I went through a depressive breakdown until Richard, my first proper boyfriend, thankfully came to my rescue saying, ‘There’s nothing wrong with you, it’s your mother that is the problem’. I again found solace by singing in chamber choirs and playing in orchestras. I revelled in the glorious harmonies and vibrations of the great composers—from the transcendent vastness of works like Bach’s B Minor Mass to Purcell and the delicate beauty of madrigal singing.

At the other end of the spectrum, in the early 70s at York University I did my fair share of ‘turning on, tuning in and dropping out’¹ and went to psychedelic music festivals such as at Glastonbury, and the notorious ‘mud bath’ at the Bickershaw Festival. Seeing live bands inspired—when *The Grateful Dead* performed their well-known magic of playing the rain away into a spectacular sunset, it lifted all our spirits as we experienced that unity and oneness.

Rebelling against pressures to perform as a solo concert singer at York, I self-destructively gave up classical singing and turned down the role of Dido in *Dido and Aeneas*. I couldn’t cope with having a ‘big voice’ and felt a fake in long evening gowns when I had no clue who I was. Instead, I joined a Motown-style band with two other girlfriends where the brilliant John Telfer (currently the vicar in *The Archers*) played piano and sang extraordinary boogie-woogie. I developed a totally different ‘soul’ voice. Our one claim to fame was to be the warm-up act to Bob Marley and the Wailers, who invited us to be their backing singers—we declined so we could finish our degrees.

At university, during another trough of despair about my sweet, gentle schizophrenic sister who was in excruciating pain I wondered, ‘If there is a God, how can such suffering be allowed?’ and made an aspiration to meet a spiritual being—perhaps like Jesus, but alive today?—who could help me believe that healing was possible.

All the twists and turns of this path outside the mainstream were contributing in their way towards my becoming an energy psychotherapist.

An uncertain identity

I left York after a brief sortie living in the countryside and running a community vegetarian café with friends. Our soul band came to London and aged twenty-five I took up the saxophone. The women in the band supported one another to compose our own songs and evolve from our

¹Timothy Leary (1966), a key exponent of the ‘LSD’ experience, first coined this expression.

previous roles as ‘chick singers’ where only men played the instruments. Forming the Stepney Sisters, we became a feminist rock band at a time when there were few female rock musicians. I think the men in our lives must have had a difficult time.

Stepney Sisters was like a second family and a consciousness-raising group. We talked late into the night, angsty and sharing while we learned, laughed, and experimented together. In many ways this was a discovery about love. We were very co-dependent and not good at conflict. Apart from a couple in the band who were used to rows, most of us were too terrified to speak our minds, have good honest disagreements, or hold differences of opinion. It was a very different world then. *Hail Sisters of the Revolution* (Gilfillan & Scott, 2022) offers a vivid account of this time through poetry and photos. Despite our best endeavours to be feminists, we worried—‘what will people think?’—to such an extent that on the way to playing at the National Women’s Liberation Movement concert, we changed the lyrics of our songs to make them more PC, removing such words as ‘baby’ and other endearments characteristic of soul music. We hid behind the standard feminist uniform—short hair and dungarees, checked shirts and jeans—though I sometimes claimed some femininity by wearing flowery patchwork skirts. I was very pleased when I first met Susie Orbach to see her wearing bright-blue kitten heels.

We would be genuinely sisterly to one another overall, while suppressed undercurrents rumbled underneath. Ironically, although the women’s movement empowered women to find themselves, there was a certain demand to think the same, because differences felt threatening. I spent a huge amount of time censoring myself and what I said out loud was often quite different from conflicting thoughts inside—I began to recognise just how ‘split’ I was. I didn’t even know in those days that it didn’t feel safe to be me.

Our world expanded when Stepney Sisters was invited to play at an international women’s event in Rotterdam. We played our instruments (rather badly it has to be said, although we were keen to improve), and sang our repertoire, mainly of original songs penned by members of the band including a rousing number written by Caroline Gilfillan ‘Sisters, hold up your heads, stand up and be counted’—while one of my songs was called ‘Family’. Once again, I felt a bit of a fraud—writing songs about our lives, loves, and sexual politics, when I still didn’t know who I was.

At the festival, we were somewhat shocked and affronted by a bizarre experiential ‘happening’ called The Charm School, organised by men. How, we wondered, could there be a Women’s Festival with so many men involved? The Charm School invited visitors to have a consultation about their style and appearance. We were led through a curious, provocative installation full of challenging images, and then asked a series of questions. This gave the band much to think about and led to considerable confusion. To this day I still don’t know whether The Charm School was a horrendous sexist joke subverting a Women’s Festival, or an intelligent and thought-provoking art installation which really made everyone think and question themselves. Or perhaps both? The experience did however identify that there were a lot of judgements in my head, and that I lived life trying to work out what others felt was okay to think or feel, whereas I had absolutely no idea what I felt or thought myself. I also realised that a lot of my

energy went into second-guessing, trying to fit in, and giving my power away to others, rather than being myself. Realising just how disconnected my internal world was from how I publicly presented myself was shocking for a so-called feminist.

This was the era of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. One of the conference organisers called Franz took a shine to me, and guiltily 'forgetting' about Pete, my nice boyfriend back at home, I was thrown into a whirlwind love affair which completely blew me away. Franz was cool, sexy, and insightful, so he could see me much better than I could see myself, which was terrifying and exciting. With practically zero self-esteem and very little confidence about myself as a woman, I had absolutely no idea why he had chosen to be with me. His authenticity and emotional maturity taught me about realness, openness, love, and generosity. He spoke about the death of his father and his difficult experiences in adolescence which had led him into psychoanalysis. This helped me open up and speak of my own family's wounds. Franz normalised therapy (which, at the time was more or less unheard of in my circle). His self-awareness was a good advertisement, so I was able to let down my defences sufficiently to take the step of entering psychoanalytic therapy myself.

Therapy was initially spent either in withdrawn long painful silence or recounting florid dreams. My therapist helped me give voice to and grieve the trauma and distress. The validation of my perceptions and recognition of the reality of psychosis in my family was an important part of healing. As a traumatised client entering therapy, we have different parts operating simultaneously, with uneven levels of development. Our 'child' self longs to be looked after, fantasising about the ideal therapist who 'knows', to offer reassurance and support, all of which understandably gets played out in therapy. With intense trauma underpinning everything, it took time to work through such unmet need, especially with dissociated trauma that I wasn't aware of.

Stephen Mitchell (1998) in his book about relational psychoanalysis speaks of four different stages in the therapeutic relationship. I underwent several different therapies for various periods of time before I became resilient enough or felt worthy enough for a more real intersubjective exchange, as outlined in Mitchell's fourth stage. I kept my 'false self' going for a long time—we need to be quite strong to face the shadow elements of our psyches and heal our narcissistic wounds. It wasn't until years later that I was able to integrate the deepest fragments of trauma and resolve my internal splits through energy psychotherapy.

Medical and holistic relational models

Alongside playing in Stepney Sisters and being in therapy, I worked as a counsellor in a half-way house in London and went on to undertake a two-year full-time postgraduate Diploma at Middlesex, where I undertook psychotherapy placements at The Arbours Association Crisis Centre and one of their therapeutic communities.

When exploring what training to do, I remember a consultation with a psychoanalyst who greeted me with a powerful silence when I entered his room. It gave him such an air of authority,

and not yet knowing the psychoanalytic ‘rules’, I sat squirming with anxiety and embarrassment. Subsequently I learned that this psychoanalytic method purposefully maximises anxiety. However, as someone new to psychoanalysis it felt shaming and uncomfortable, a repetition of my family trauma. I chose to go to The Arbours Association instead, who were welcoming and kind.

One of the things which attracted me to Arbours was their holistic view of mental illness. My sister had been an in-patient in psychiatric hospitals on several occasions, so I was keen to help her by finding other ways to understand her situation. At Arbours, Dr Joe Berke (Barnes & Berke, 1973) and Dr Morton Schatzman (1973), two psychiatrists and psychotherapists from the United States introduced a therapeutic sanctuary on similar lines to Laing’s anti-psychiatry model (*The Divided Self* 1960), a trail-blazer at a time when the medical model and labelling was the norm. Arbours were pioneers in helping people in distress who might otherwise be in-patients in psychiatric wards. The treatment for guests was to live in therapeutic communities and understand themselves through individual therapy, family therapy, and community meetings. The centres were in ordinary houses which offered a normalising environment. Arbours prioritised relationship over psychopathology so although all residents were experiencing some form of extreme emotional distress, they were not labelled as mental patients. At the time I was a student at Arbours, the preference was for guests to be unmedicated.

The humanity of the crisis team (Sally Berry, Laura Forti, Andrea Sabbadini, and Tom Ryan, with Joe Berke as visiting team-leader from time to time) was key in creating a warm atmosphere. My first introduction to this way of working was to sit round the kitchen table making cakes with two very young children, while I tried to coax their mother into conversation. Recently convicted for murder, she stared blankly at the wall—the family was at Arbours for an in-depth assessment.

The balance between community—of preparing food, cooking, and eating together with the guests—combined with rigorous analytic thinking—created a heart-centred, depth approach. My feelings about that formative time of my learning might be summed up by a comment in one of Jung’s letters: ‘As you know, in olden times the ancestral souls live in pots in the kitchen’.²

During this period, I tried to come to terms with both my sister and mother being in psychotic states by immersing myself in therapy, studying psychosis, and undertaking a thesis on the Arbours Crisis Centre and its community model of treatment. I learned about the traumatic roots of Bateson’s double-bind theory (Bateson et al., 1956), where people in families said one thing and meant another, making coherent response impossible. The ‘damned if you do and damned if you don’t’ conundrum was pivotal in my understanding that *relational trauma* could be a causative factor in schizophrenia. Traumatic communications and misunderstandings mirrored my own family.

² Carl Jung (1973b, p. 168).

Arbours built a bridge with relatives in family therapy meetings, modelling non-judgement. This demonstrated how crucial it is to hold the therapeutic space compassionately without blaming mother or anyone else for the child's illness, which greatly helped me with my own mother. Writing my research dissertation about the Arbours Crisis Centre enabled me to think about, formulate, and make some sort of sense of my family. Reflecting on all this, I so value the soulful approach and therapeutic foundation which Arbours gave me in those early years. In terms of my views about medication however, after working in the NHS I came to see that when there is a chemical imbalance, contemporary medications can be very helpful in alleviating suffering, and on many occasions provide a lifeline for both clients and their families.

Fifty years ago, the medical model—both in psychiatric and psychoanalytic diagnoses—tended to define mental health conditions in terms of 'disturbance' and psychopathology, with little acknowledgment of underlying trauma. However, static labels, which fail to recognise the role of trauma, undermine the potential for recovery. A major diagnostic shift occurred when Harvard Psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman (1992) and others redefined this, by bringing complex trauma, PTSD and developmental trauma within the International Classification of Diseases ICD-11.

The pivotal role that trauma plays in mental 'disturbance' has major implications. Quite apart from no longer pathologising the client, it brings hope. When trauma and PTSD became fully recognised in therapy, it helped me make sense of the traumatic PTSD-levels of triggering that I often used to experience. Today, energy psychotherapy and those therapies which specifically work with the body, clearing PTSD and relational trauma, help regulate people's mood and emotion, and the increasing evidence base indicates that these methods bring significant and lasting healing and balance.

Connecting through a dark night of the soul

As a musician, soul music in all its forms—classical and popular—communicates a longing for and connection to spiritual essence. The word soul-ful pretty much sums this up. However, a significant trauma of our age is our disconnection from soul. While several therapeutic approaches include the soul, many don't, so one of the reasons for writing this book—apart from introducing people to energy psychotherapy—is to make a plea for the recognition of soul as a crucial aspect of our being.

Although the terms soul and higher self are often used interchangeably, I understand the soul to be our unique spiritual essence embodied in our individual physical being. Micheila Sheldan (2019) emphasises the eternal aspect of our soul, the divine spark of our spirit which is with us throughout all our lifetimes, whereas she sees the Higher Self as an energetic aspect of us which is interconnected with the wider *collective consciousness*—the keeper of our energy and 'seer' which holds an overview, supporting us while we live out our soul's path.

According to Ashbrook (1995) the ‘meaning making’ aspect of soul plays a significant role in integrating our human experience. At a time where for centuries our minds have been separated from our bodies, Moore (1992) highlighted how our loss of soul—the ‘great malady’—manifests symptomatically in obsessions, addictions, violence, and loss of meaning, the root problem being that we have lost our wisdom about the soul, or even our interest in it. Moore recognised that we can’t just think ourselves through this deep division because thinking itself is part of the problem. What we need is a way out of our dualistic attitudes—a third possibility, which he perceived as soul. Being soul-ful has to do with genuineness and depth. When we care for our souls, we appreciate ‘the paradoxical mysteries that blend light and darkness into the grandeur of what human life and culture can be’ (Moore, 1992).

Praying for light at the end of the tunnel

Despite the wonders of music, a fascination with psychoanalysis, and a positive first experience of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, my internal world still fell into bleak, disconnected states. During another bout of depression, I despaired that I couldn’t help my sister out of her deep suffering, and everything felt completely hopeless. Although I had no specific faith, I prayed for light at the end of the tunnel and suddenly became aware of a neutral part observing me. Perhaps these depressions had some purpose after all? Rather than some form of punishment, for I know not what, might this depression—this dark night of the soul—be serving as some kind of ‘training’? Who was this voice which challenged me? A new perspective opened, and I heard the words—‘Choose the Path of Joy’. In that moment of guidance and clarity, even though I had no conception what ‘The Path of Joy’ might be, I chose joy and felt much better. This was when I first consciously connected with my soul.

As I reflect, I did not find this connection with my soul by looking outside myself. It was a deeply internal experience within my body, which happened simply through listening, trusting the information I received, and acting on what I heard. We all have this capacity. We connect with our souls through our hearts—the heartbreak about my sister had opened a gateway, bringing me to the flow of a higher dimensional reality, explored further in Chapter 6

Our soul carries us through our unique experiences in life, assisting us in expanding our consciousness and energy. Drawing on our infinite, limitless soul-self by accessing the highest dimension that our imagination can reach, lifts us up. This higher frequency then helps release our problems, conflicts, and disturbances.

Connecting with my soul, learning to tune in and follow its guidance, has been key in my path to healing. Our soul guides us via our intuition—something I used to ignore but have learned to trust—rather than by our thinking minds. When we connect up with the ‘higher’ aspects of our consciousness it helps us overcome, or at least accept our limitations, and deepens our experience. Thomas Moore (1992) brings this down to earth in a very human way—a life lived soulfully is not without its moments of darkness and periods of foolishness. He feels that when

we drop the fantasy of salvation—of being rescued by another—it opens us to the possibility of deep self-knowledge and self-acceptance, which are the very foundation of soul.

A glimpse of awakening

Therapy was immensely helpful, but I ached for something more. In 1979, Jim Dvorak, my then trumpet-playing partner and soulmate, took me to hear a talk about ‘Meditation and Peace’ by his visiting teacher, a Dzogchen Master. As His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche spoke, he transmitted an ‘awakening’ experience of love and compassion which changed my life. The *dharma* teachings offered a profound explanation of human suffering which revolutionised my understanding about my sister’s pain. As I listened to the soft gentle lilt of his voice and felt the fine resonance of his energy, my heart opened, and in that moment, I experienced the light of my true nature—there was a sense of a dissolving of all boundaries as I merged into oneness with everything—a deep connection with ‘the all’—or with ‘God’ if you like. This is known in Dzogchen as the ‘Introduction to the Nature of Mind’.

Having felt plagued by a feeling of inner badness most of my life, I experienced for the first time my inherent goodness—a pervasive light and well-being throughout my *mindbodyenergy*. I had ‘come home’. It was a tremendous relief. This was the best therapy I could imagine. I cried for—quite literally—hours. This life-altering transmission led me to regard Dudjom Rinpoche as my teacher or ‘root guru’. However, as he travelled very little to the UK, I was advised to study with his translator, then a young Tibetan Buddhist ‘Tulku’.³

I entered the Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana (tantric) path of energy and transformation and later discovered this is sometimes called ‘The Path of Joy’. Taking tantric vows creates a sacred thread or *samaya* which formally connects the practitioner with the spiritual path. Jamgön Kongtrül, a Tibetan mystic, described *samaya* as the way practitioners ‘preserve the life-force of that empowerment within your being’ (Padmasambhava & Kongtrul, 1998). Another teacher defined *samaya* as ‘the truth within our heart’, or one’s inner wisdom teacher—what I refer to here as soul-connecting. Later, when I undertook a training in energy, sound, light, and colour, I discovered this spiritual link was called ‘shoshona’, a silver thread which connects our soul to our body, the vehicle through which we receive our intuitions and perceptions, and which animates our creative life force.

The women’s therapy centre and feminist therapy

Around the same time in the late 70s, after being at Arbours, Sally Berry introduced me to The Women’s Therapy Centre (WTC) in London. This was an innovative feminist collective founded by Susie Orbach, where I worked for twenty years, working variously as part-time

³Tulku is the name for a ‘treasure holder’ or reincarnate custodian of a specific lineage of teachings in Tibetan Buddhism.

administrator (a job I could do while touring as a musician), workshop leader, psychotherapist, supervisor, and teacher on the WTC training course. I greatly benefited from WTC's psychoanalytic attachment-based approach, which prioritised being client-friendly and accessible to women. I was fortunate to be there at a creative time amongst such an interesting group of women—too many to name. I learned so much from in-house training, continuous and enriching study groups, and excellent group supervision. There were also challenges when our unresolved aspects created certain dynamics. I feel rather embarrassed to look back and recognise my own contribution to these splits, as we first idealised and then projected all our maternal 'lacks' of the failing breast onto the Centre.

WTC was influential and empowering in many ways. A friend and colleague, Sue Krzowski, edited *In Our Experience* (1988), which explored themed workshops at WTC, egalitarian groups where women contributed and learned from one another. While the meaning we each ascribe comes from our own experience, it is very valuable to share and have support from others as we travel along our paths.

At WTC I began learning to trust my soul's guidance. Synchronicities seemed to confirm like a satnav when I was or wasn't on the right road, helping me distinguish between neurotic anxiety as compared with the very helpful steer of wisdom anxiety. For instance, during the early times of WTC as a feminist collective, one day I had a strong gut feeling that an Inland Revenue Inspector would come to the Centre and ask to inspect our books. I expressed my concern at our feminist collective meeting. We had started to receive grants from public funding and our bookkeeper was having problems balancing the accounts, so in many ways this was quite a rational concern, though the other therapists clearly thought I was rather batty. As my anxiety wouldn't go away, I knew I had to listen to and act on my instincts. Taking the matter into my own hands, I asked an accountant friend to help and took the books home that night. We pored over them the whole weekend, staying up late into the night, going back over months, until she eventually found the anomalies and got the figures to balance. It was quite extraordinary when on Monday morning, there was a knock on the door at the WTC—it was an officer from the Inland Revenue asking to look at our books! This taught me never to ignore my gut feelings, which I now totally trust as my soul's guidance—something that we all have, if we tune into it.

Spirituality in the closet

While playing music felt expansive, I tended to contract within the psychoanalytic world. In those days, *mindfulness* as we know it today, did not exist and hardly anyone I knew practised meditation. It felt a bit weird using my annual leave for meditation retreats while others went off on 'normal' holidays. It was also somewhat embarrassing to be following a guru, which did not fit in at all with left-wing feminist culture. I ignored this conflict and kept my worlds apart because I so valued the extraordinary learning at the WTC and the Dzogchen teachings. To

avoid the disapproval of some fellow therapists (who dovetailed into my judging inner mother), I tried to conform to the group norm.

One day in a study group about diversity, a therapist was discussing an Asian client who had been struggling with her faith when someone said, ‘Surely people don’t still believe in God these days?’ Sadly, I lacked the confidence to protest, either at the racism or the religious prejudice. In those years I generally froze in such situations, not feeling safe enough to publicly own my differences or speak my truth. Since many of the therapists frowned on spirituality, I kept quiet and put myself firmly in the spiritual closet—I had a long way to go towards individuation. With so little integration between the separated worlds I inhabited, this incident did however crystallise my desire to write something about ‘psychotherapy and spirituality’ and see how they might fit together more inclusively.

Later, a small reading group from the WTC and associates comprising Sue Krzowski, Mary-Jayne Rust, Jean White, myself, and one or two others decided to investigate contemporary spiritual writings and their relevance to therapy, from an exploration of the ‘sacred feminine’, to ecology and quantum physics.

‘They’ll do much better if you offer them love’

In the eighties and nineties, the relational approach of the Women’s Therapy Centre was my clinical base. Theoretically Bowlby’s concept of a secure base was fundamental; personally, I found it easier to open up when a relationship feels safe, so I liked Winnicott and Kohut who honoured the client’s experience and were gentle with people’s defences. Experiencing anxiety was—and still is—encouraged by many analytical schools. However, having lived in states of persecutory anxiety myself for tranches of time, and feeling dogged by the harsh inner judgement of what Kalsched terms the ‘persecutor/protector’ (1996), I knew such an approach was not helpful for me because it caused me to disintegrate and fragment.

I was somewhat relieved when I came across Margaret Little’s account of her analysis with Winnicott (1977) where she explored her psychotic anxieties and deep wounds while simultaneously working as a psychoanalyst. I had always hidden such shameful states and it wasn’t until much later when I discovered energy psychotherapy that I was able to clear and be free of my own preverbal psychotic anxieties stemming from a traumatic infancy. Subsequently, several therapists have come for energy psychotherapy to address their traumas of extreme anxiety, exacerbated by ‘old school’ psychotherapy trainings. While the fantasy that someone else has authority and ‘knows’ is comforting, it is easy to feel infantilised and for our sense of self to be overridden by interpretations from powerful analysts.

Against WTCs theoretical backdrop, I was taken aback in my early days at WTC when a client commented that therapy was like ‘beating a bruise’. ‘Hilary’ had come for therapy to find healing from the core belief instilled in her by her father that ‘You’re rotten to the core’. This powerful message had dogged her life but focusing on it in therapy made her feel worse.

This led me to question the nature and intentions of therapeutic work—what is the most effective way to help clients?

Around that time, by chance—if there is any such thing—a friend wanted to consult ‘Gladys’ about her boyfriend troubles and egged me on to go along with her. Gladys, an archetypal clairvoyant with mysterious objects around her, quite literally peered through her crystal ball and looked at me rather seriously. My heart sank—was she going to tell me something terrible about my love life too? Gladys said (I remember this vividly,) ‘Well dear, you seem to be seeing some very unhappy miserable, fearful people—they all look rather anxious and depressed. But it looks as if you are rather hemmed in, having to toe the line and say things to them you don’t really believe in. They all want love dear—just trust yourself, they’ll do much better if you offer them love.’

Gladys’ advice about the importance of love hit home. Having grown up feeling fundamentally ‘bad’, it wasn’t until I awakened that I experienced my own inner goodness and wholeness. Buddhism teaches that our inherent nature is the Buddha and that without exception, we all have the potential to become enlightened. Since, at our core, we are already whole, our spiritual essence cannot be distorted or contaminated by any event in our lives. A classic Buddhist metaphor describes our true nature as being like the sun—always there, shining, even if at times it is hidden by the clouds of our emotions.

Starting out from an assumption of fundamental wholeness in therapy—for instance, that we all have Buddha nature—brings confidence that it is possible to work with brokenness and that trauma can be healed. The task in therapy becomes that of clearing away the dense clouds/energy of trauma which obscure this light, rather than trying very hard to be good enough or better. A perspective of innate wholeness and dignity makes a big difference to our sense of self-esteem. Anyone can feel silted up by the heavy energy of trauma, but when we clear away the layers, it brings in light and well-being. If our true nature is whole, it is much easier to love ourselves and integrate our shadow elements.

Balancing traditional classical with free-flowing forms

Finding a balance between tradition and innovation—between classical and more free-flowing forms—has been another theme which occupied me. Playing classical music from an early age involved a certain amount of discipline to achieve a ‘high enough’ standard, along with all the judgement, pain, and disappointment that entails. When I later became a jazz musician, it was a relief to let go of the safety net of ‘form’ and learn free improvisation with its expansiveness and inclusivity. Similarly, in psychotherapy in general, and more specifically, energy psychotherapy; there is sometimes quite a dance between the flow of free associations which open up ‘the field’, as compared with more structured and containing ways of working.

In some ways, my preliminary training in working with energy was through playing music. When in my late 20s, Jim helped me learn about jazz, I found the expansive realm of

improvisation freeing and unblocking for an introvert like myself. Learning to trust the free flow of energy helped me break out of the inhibitions of a classical training where one can get stuck in ‘form’, too scared of being judged for playing a ‘wrong’ note. Jim’s version was that there is no such thing as a ‘wrong’ note—instead you just repeat it and improvise around it and make it part of the music. At the same time, I was, and am, appreciative of the discipline of a classical music training which helped me apply myself to learning the saxophone. It also offers exquisite attention to form, detail, and tonality when singing or making music in classical ensembles.

I am grateful to Jim, who not only introduced me to *dharma* and taught me about jazz, but also took me to see his astrologer friend. Astrology—which I speak of more later—made sense of my inner contradictions. I discovered that my placement of the planet Saturn (often associated with structure), showed a cautious, inhibited nature and a strong sense of form, whereas my Jupiter, (representing freedom, spirituality, and expansiveness) indicated my potential for excess. Touring with various jazz groups—particularly with The Guest Stars—and chanting mantra within Buddhism gave me space and time to expand and explore sound and improvisation. The power and reach of music’s energy, frequencies, and ‘flow’ provided a wonderful vehicle for pure emotional expression which helped create a balance between a more creative, playful self and a somewhat traditional, inhibited aspect of me.

Similarly, I was exploring where I stood on a spectrum from orthodox psychoanalytic models to more integrative relational approaches. Arbours had managed to combine a mixture of the two. When starting out as a novice therapist, I am afraid that to borrow a sense of authority I put forward my best analytic blank screen. This was met with short shrift by the WTC client who said, ‘Is that your brick wall impersonation Miss?’ This reduced the two of us to laughter—something which was not supposed to happen—and in that moment, I realised how being human, natural, and real was important in facilitating a relaxed connection. Offering a blank screen to a potential sufferer of trauma creates an unknown threat, so my preference has been to hold the therapeutic space with a softer energy field.

Subsequently I undertook a project alongside two Black psychotherapists at the WTC, Carol Mohamed and Rosamond Grant, to help make psychotherapy more accessible to minority groups. Being accessible involved inducting clients so they were not shamed or alienated by unfamiliar ‘rules’ or starkly triggered by the intensity of their trauma—being responsive facilitates regulation and holding.

I really enjoy psychoanalytic theory, finding its depth, structure, and clarity of clinical thinking incredibly grounding. Personally, in terms of therapeutic practice however, I found the more traditional classical models of psychoanalysis similar to the more stringent approaches within classical music. While I learned so much from many compassionate analysts, I also struggled with what I experienced as a certain snobbery within the psychoanalytic world. Some seminars seemed rather dry, with intensely head-oriented analysis. As my personal tendencies veer towards feelings, the heart, bodily countertransferences, and the felt sense, I sometimes felt like a fish out of water.

The mid-1980s saw a trend away from the hierarchical classical models of analyst as authority and the ‘one-person psychology’ model, in favour of more relational intersubjective approaches (Stern, 1985). In recognition of the neurological importance of attachment and connection as a means of establishing safety and attenuating trauma, over the last few decades, therapists have been developing more embodied and attuned ways of working. An attachment-based approach supports clients gently—especially those who have experienced trauma—in finding autonomy and a sense of self. These days, the greater emphasis on inclusion and diversity, which recognises cultural, social, and power differentials, invites more of the whole person of both client and therapist to be seen and acknowledged in the room.

As energy psychotherapy emerges as another therapeutic form, it too is working out its relationship between structure and flow. The NICE guidelines recommend a structured approach when working with complex trauma, something I explore in Chapter 9. Some energy therapy methods are structured—for instance, going down the energy centres/chakra repeating a phrase such as ‘All my anxiety when x happened’, or the ‘Tearless Trauma Techniques’. Such protocols are containing and help ground and embody the work. Alternatively, we can follow the flow of the energy which arises through the free association of the body’s sensations, words, and images. This approach tends to open up and unblock things, with the caution that we may access deep material very fast. The beauty of energy therapy is that one can work easily with both structure and ‘going with the flow’, and they complement one another.

From 3-D to 5-D—the rational, the mystical, and awakening consciousness

As a young woman I was fascinated by states of consciousness, exploring the differences between rational and mystical states of mind—states which are sometimes unhelpfully polarised. The rational world of ego operates in the third dimensional world of Newtonian physics, our consensus everyday reality, whereas the intuitive/sensate states pertain to the soul and ‘quantum’—the awakened fifth dimension. As we evolve into awakened consciousness, we move between these states, which are both important dimensions of reality.

At the turn of the twentieth century, when Victorian society lauded rationality over the mystical, William James (1902, 2010) explored the dichotomy between the rational and the experiential and the importance of ‘making proper connection with the higher powers’. His drift was towards a common-sense, non-conformist approach of personal experience of ‘God within yourself’. James’ influence was far-reaching: he validated the embodied, sentient nature of individual spiritual experience, and helped launch the explosion of awakening consciousness which manifested in the 1960s. His human approach created a foundation for developing new therapies which prioritised the client’s personal experience, such as Carl Rogers’ person-centred therapy. These trends provide a foundation for placing energy therapy within a wider historical context.

Aldous Huxley's ground-breaking *The Doors of Perception* (1954) provided another avenue for bringing mystical states of consciousness into public awareness. The 'veil' of ego was lifting, which continued throughout the psychedelic era of the 60s and 70s with The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* occupying 'number 1' on the mainstream music charts for twenty-seven weeks. I took LSD myself on several occasions—thankfully without any damage to my psyche—which opened my awareness to 'altered states', though I am not sure I would be so gungho now. During the 70s, I was also fortunate to have LSD-assisted therapy which was very beneficial—a form of treatment which has gained considerable credence these days.

New therapeutic approaches have continued to emerge which support the different work required of us these days, extending towards deeper concerns and questions traditionally considered more the preserve of religion. This includes 'soul-based' therapies (Dent, 2019); angel healing; spirit release; shamanism, and psychedelics; and of course quantum and energy therapies (Chopra, 2015; Hover-Kramer, 2002; Mollon, 2008; and many others).

Dzogchen—the path of liberation

My personal quest led me to Dzogchen. After the life-changing awakening with Dudjom Rinpoche, I joined the local Buddhist group who were studying The Longchen Nyingtik tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. This graduated path to enlightenment culminates in Dzogchen—the 'direct path' of liberation. Dzogchen's special feature is that it operates beyond mind and concept in the fifth dimensional state of pure awareness and light-consciousness—the realm of energy.

Practising Tibetan Buddhism was in some ways a continuation of therapy but at a different level. Tantric visualisation practices work directly with emotions including the shaming, frightening, and split-off shadow-aspects of the psyche's energy. 'Purifying' energy (as it was termed) increasingly made space for glimpses of expanded consciousness. Dzogchen practice helped me find a deep underlying peace—the 'ground of being'—even if emotions fluctuated on the surface.

I felt at home in the world of mysticism and followed this devotional path for thirteen years. Being a musician, I ended up as the umze (chant leader) which allowed me to express my soul-self. A number of enlightened masters visited, so chanting in the presence of their refined energy was like bathing in blessing—people sometimes used to fall asleep because their transmissions resonated at such high frequencies.

After my sister died, I went on a pilgrimage, visiting the sacred Buddhist sites to honour her, including visiting His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche in Nepal, asking for blessings and practices to be done for her. Then, shortly before his passing, Dilgo Khyentse gave a special Dzogchen transmission high up in the Pyrenees. He had written a new form of 'Guru Yoga' so I sang him the chant I composed for it. We were in an open-sided marquee, looking out directly over the mountains—it was a vast, glorious location where it was easy to dissolve into oneness with

the space, exploring the furthest reaches of the sound and its vibrations. Later, when recording the chant, the studio engineer said the wide range of frequencies were difficult to capture—perhaps this was because of all those years connecting with the wider whole while chanting.

Body

Energy work—which includes all aspects of the *mindbodyenergy*—requires that we are properly embodied. It has certainly helped me link more meaningfully with my body. At the simplest level, we can at least be aware when we are operating from our heads as compared with from our hearts.

As a young woman, I was rather disconnected from my body, going through my first experience of psychotherapy without even realising I was more-or-less dissociated from terrifying early trauma. It was when I had my first glimpse of awakening that I realised just how much spirituality was an embodied experience.

As a therapist, my bodily countertransference always provided me with information. Years ago, when working with—or even supervising—the work of clients with early unmet needs, I would start yawning. I later came to understand this indicated that I was connecting energetically with the client. It wasn't until a consultation with Hans King, who named my clair-sentience, that I fully recognised that my sensitive body was a conduit for communicating and picking up information about others. I then began to own and care for my body differently. I became increasingly aware of my habit of overriding my body's needs, or unknowingly 'taking on' others' energies. This would deplete and exhaust me energetically, until I learned through energy therapy how to have better energy boundaries, a process described in Chapter 8.

My body sometimes communicates to me through illness. Once I was flat on my back for three months unable to do anything at all. In one of the universe's synchronicities, I came across Raquel Spencer through a webinar. An energy and 'body technician', Raquel was enormously helpful. She recognised my need for specific antibiotics and defined this 'healing crisis' as my body needing to take 'time out'. Raquel told me I was going through an 'energy upgrade' of my subtle energy systems which required a period of complete stillness as I went through 'ascension symptoms'. She worked with my body energetically via remote healing using sound to activate the dormant mind/body pathways and 'multidimensional cellular codes of light' to help me better access what she terms the 'quantum self'. I am so grateful that my soul found her—and other such people—at critical turning points when I needed help.

During this new dawn of 'New Earth', our planet and all beings are being bathed in fine vibrations of photonic light from the photon belt. This light it is like an etheric plasma, a golden space dust or 'aurora network' (Pixie, 2022⁴). As it touches our field, we take in directly a golden

⁴ Dee Taylor-Mason and Friends presented Magenta Pixie 'New Earth Enlightenment', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4Xnij-G9zU> (webinar, accessed December 2022).

knowledge from the collective library of all experience from the beginning of time, which is held in the morphogenetic field.

Since humanity is considered to be ‘genetic royalty’ (Perez, 2021), our DNA is important. It was thought that we have just two strands, with the remaining vestigial ten strands being considered ‘junk DNA’ by scientists. However, when we absorb the photonic particles pouring onto earth, our being recognises these ‘codes of light’ which activate and light up our vestigial DNA strands as part of the awakening process. This upgrades us spiritually and brings increased creativity. These days many children are born with several strands already activated—it is said we have the potential for up to 144 strands of DNA, and even more.

The awakening process requires that we take good care of our bodies—our spiritual ‘temple’. I have learned to listen to my body and am responsive to natural remedies. At different times I have had specific needs for vitamins, minerals, good-quality water, and electrolytes, which help the electromagnetic aspects of our energy. Adding Himalayan sea salt, with its wide range of trace minerals, and lemon is a good start.

I am completely indebted to allopathic medicine in times of clinical emergency. However, I have also learned to take charge of my own body and well-being. For example, standard blood tests—such as checking thyroid—do not always identify my conditions. One time, exhausted with my hair falling out, my doctor said, ‘I don’t care what the blood tests say, I am putting you on thyroxine’. On account of the overlay between *mindbodyenergy*, viewing ourselves holistically is important and I have learned to keep myself informed about health and medical issues.

Vibrational healing

Fascinated by archetypes I debated training as a Jungian analyst, but at the same time, an opportunity arose to undertake a three-year training in the vibrational medicines of sound, light, colour, and energy. Buddhists habitually seek divinations and blessings from Lamas when undertaking new projects. Surprisingly, the divination favoured the course in energy, which was quite ‘out there’ in those days, and entirely different from the world of psychoanalytic therapy or analytical psychology. I undertook this training from 1989 to 1992. It taught on subtle energies; *Ta Yin Fa* (a qigong-like practice which connected us with the energy of the stars); working with the energy field or aura doing ‘etheric massages’ using colour; working with the chakras using ‘aura soma’ essences connecting with ‘Ascended Masters’; using sound and Tibetan bowls; and discovering the subtle energy of meridians using tuning forks. I loved this training and felt totally at home in the world of energy.

Astrology, soul maps, and archetypes

Lots of people are sceptical about astrology, but various Jungian analysts have offered tremendous insight into depth astrology which has nothing whatsoever to do with superficial

horoscopes. Birth charts provide energetic blue-prints for the soul. Studying my chart significantly expanded my understanding, helping me identify multifaceted aspects of myself, so I was better able to accept and integrate them. I had previously struggled to manage my energies but astrology helped me recognise the contradictions of my character—beneficial, shadow, and stressful aspects—laid out clearly and objectively. I spent years devouring astrology books, grateful to understand more about fulfilling my soul's purpose and the archetypal energies (represented by the planets) inherent on the journey. At times of personal crisis, astrological transits clarified specific archetypes I needed to work with. For instance, Pluto transits often involve a painful dive into the underworld to plumb the depths—which also brings its own healing gifts. These archetypes also bore similarities with Tibetan Buddhist 'deities'.

Integration

My lives and worlds remained separated. At the Women's Therapy Centre, I was a young psychoanalytic therapist, developing my practice. As a Tibetan Buddhist, I was the chant leader on retreats, taught foundational courses, and wrote practice manuals on Buddhism. A third part of me was a musician—my jazz self went abroad on tours, playing at jazz festivals. (Later, in terms of classical music, I was accepted on a postgraduate training in opera singing. My mother developed dementia so I could not follow this through, but I did nonetheless find an excellent teacher who helped my singing feel the freest I had ever known.) A fourth part of me taught psychoanalytic theory and spent a lot of time writing training manuals. A fifth part was exploring 'energy'—the cosmos, astrology, energy healing, colour, light, and the chakras.

My worlds started coming together. Aspects from one fed into another, so that, for instance, in 1989 I presented a paper entitled 'Dzogchen and Psychotherapy' about the 'awakened state' and the dangers of splitting and projection for those who did not have healthily functioning egos at a conference in Amsterdam on 'Psychotherapy and Buddhism'. Meanwhile in The Guest Stars, I was writing songs about awakening consciousness, such as 'Wake It Up' whose lyrics concerned working with energy and emotions—'Love, Joy, Pain and Anger—all emotions—it's energy in motion ... wake it up ... keep it light'.

Disillusionment

The hierarchy of Buddhism started to feel problematic. In the early 90s, the Tulku with whom I had been studying (who had become an international best-seller) increasingly emphasised 'subjugating ego' and frowned on autonomy. He used judgement, public shaming, and angry outbursts as vehicles for teaching his students. The devotional path of Vajrayana requires that one perceives the Vajra Master with 'pure perception' as a Buddha. However, the teacher's erratic temper became increasingly abusive. While initially ignoring my doubts, my psychoanalytic understanding compelled me to acknowledge that the teacher had a narcissistic

personality disorder—we were unhealthily co-dependent students, idealising the Vajra Master in debasing servitude.

Despite the benefit from connecting with other realised Dzogchen Masters, studying with this Lama was no longer viable. During those thirteen years, I became a bit of a door mat, re-enacting early subservient relational patterns. Unfortunately, playing the role of Echo in relationships with Narcissists has happened more than once in my life.

When you enter the *dharma*, which essentially means truth, you take Refuge vows ‘until enlightenment’. However, I was perceiving untruth all around. The Master was abusing his power and exploiting students—sexually, emotionally, physically, and financially—and I had to take action. The temporal responsibilities of being a Trustee helped me confront the situation and speak out against the oppressive culture in the organisation. My attempts to speak directly with him were to no avail, so I wrote to the Dalai Lama, left the group (viewed by all as a pariah), and reported the teacher to The Charities Commission. It was my connection with my soul which gave me the courage to overcome my fear and withstand the backlash both during and after this debacle.

That the Lama had feet of clay was profoundly disillusioning. Spiritual betrayal is agonising and losing a devotional spiritual path which had been the foundation of my life felt deeply traumatic—which of the Buddhist teachings could I still trust? Which ones were distorted by the Lama and needed to be discarded? Although I knew in my heart of hearts that I had not lost my sacred link because the truth of the teaching is inside us, it was time to grow up and rely on myself. In fact, as the Buddha himself taught, ‘You are your own master. No one else is your master.’⁵

I had drawn a line in the sand concerning the Buddhist hierarchy and there was no going back. I was now on a fast track to individuation to recover my autonomy. On telling my family what had happened, my father was remarkably sanguine. I was surprised when he told me he admired me for going my own way in search of myself—something he hadn’t been allowed to do himself. I was grateful for these perceptions and a positive perspective.

Still grief-stricken at the losses—both of my sister who died in 1987 and leaving the Buddhist community in 1992—I maintained a front to the external world and decided to continue exploring energy by studying the chakras in depth. I also returned to the idea of training as a Jungian analyst, which would help me process what had gone on. The training analyst—fortuitously a musician, and sensitive—attuned well. His experience in pre-natal and early infant trauma meant that when I lay on the couch, he recognised my attachment needs to see his face, so he turned his chair to face me. It was very upsetting when, through ill health, he was unable to see me through my training and needed to end with me prematurely. ‘The universe’ seemed to be pushing me out on my own again. Nonetheless, I set out to find another analyst.

⁵ Article posted on 14 August 2017 in Buddhist Facebook group called ‘What’s Now?’ written by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche.

At my assessment, the analyst—who wore a tight pencil skirt and extremely high white stilettos—interpreted my spiritual path as an avoidance of dealing with trauma about my mother. This was definitely not a good fit. I eventually found an analyst who, I knew instantly, was a safe pair of hands. I am not sure whether it was helpful—or not—that she had a Thangka (spiritual image) of Guru Rinpoche on her wall. This was an image of the same Buddha whose mantra I had chanted for years. It was a strange piece of synchronicity. I cried non-stop four times a week as I went through the shellshock of all that happened. Preferring to have face-to-face contact, I hadn't yet lain down on the couch with this analyst. However, the rules of the Jungian organisation required that to enter the next phase of training, after eighteen months all analysands should be lying on the couch with the analyst sitting behind the patient. I had already lost time when accumulating this prerequisite with my previous analyst.

Although the analyst genuinely didn't want to push me, these were the rules. Perhaps the energetic presence of Guru Rinpoche—a powerful symbol in her consulting room—made it impossible for me, like a re-enactment having to submit to The Master. Having already accumulated one hundred thousand prostrations as a Tibetan Buddhist, my body would not allow me to submit again. It just wasn't doable. (Incidentally, the true meaning of doing prostrations is in essence to bow down to one's own Buddha nature and is actually quite an amazing practice.) My analyst was kind and generous. While encouraging me to stay on and train, she recognised that I knew my own mind and respected my decision. I was grateful she did not pathologise me.

This encounter with institutional power was another opportunity to reflect. Submitting to rules can prevent people from being themselves—a man in training as a psychoanalyst went through his entire five-times-a-week analysis without coming out as gay since it wasn't safe to do so. On the other hand, the discipline of training can temper character and be useful. The structure and framework of rigorous trainings both as a musician and in Buddhism had helped me, and I had benefitted. However, I did not need to put myself through a similar process again.

Jung in *The Red Book* speaks about re-finding the soul, and one of his key points is that we must each find our own path:

Who knows the way to the eternally fruitful climes of the soul? You seek the way through mere appearances, you study books and give ear to all kinds of opinion. What good is all that? There is only one way, and that is your way. You seek the path. I warn you away from my own. It can also be the wrong way for you. May each go his own way. (Jung & Shamdasani, 2009, p. 241)

After years of following others, spiritual sovereignty—growing up, and being fully responsible for my choices—was challenging. It was a question of trusting my soul and following its guidance. Step by step this involved listening to gut responses, or the feelings in my heart—does this feel right?—and then choosing the next step. Obvious as this may sound, having overridden

and doubted the quiet promptings of my inner voice for a lifetime, learning to trust myself took time. The paradigm of hierarchical authority really was at an end for me—it was no longer an option to give my power away with false-self compliance.

As I look back, it wasn't until my debacle with the Buddhist organisation where I had to stand up to those 'above me', that I shifted the internal hierarchy of my inner judgemental parents and started to fully trust myself. The truth of Sheldon Kopp's idea that 'the Guru is Dead' was finally sinking in. It is empowering when we stop idealising the 'other' or expecting them to know, or to be perfect. There is no one to tell us what to do—we are our own arbiters—it is up to us.

As I went forward in life it was hard to bear other Buddhists feeling sorry for me, perceiving that I had lost my way, especially when I so loved and longed for the Dzogchen teachings. I still had a nagging doubt. To be spiritually realised, Dzogchen requires that one follows a Master, so when the possibility of entering a classic three-year retreat, overseen by a different, rather radical Lama, came up, I was tempted. The retreat was doable because it had been arranged to fit in with people's daily lives.

Part of me already knew the answer but perhaps I just needed support in confirming this, so I consulted a spiritual director called Hans King to talk this through. I was about to engage in discussion, when Hans made short shrift of my question by saying that I was already 'on my own path'. He then abruptly changed the conversation with 'When are you going to get on with that book?' I was astonished because I had made no mention of this. After various attempts to write 'Psychotherapy and Spirituality' I had given up because it seemed too daunting. Having known deep down it was not right to undertake the retreat, I was glad for the clarity, and returned to thinking about the book.

All this—eventually—was leading me to energy psychotherapy.

Energy therapy training

From 1989 to 1992 I undertook a three-year training in energy, sound, light, and colour and afterwards continued studying about energy and the chakras with various people. Alongside being a psychoanalytic therapist, I practised colour healing, using etheric massage as a separate discipline. My consultation room was literally split in two—on one side was a colour healing area—on the other, my chairs and couch. One day, a private analytic client was very traumatised, so I offered her colour healing to ground her—she felt the calming results immediately, and thereafter generally asked for colour work rather than talking therapy. It struck me just how powerful energy work could be, and I yearned to find a holistic approach where I could integrate energy work within psychotherapy.

I eventually left the Women's Therapy Centre in 2000 and worked in the NHS for ten years as a principal psychotherapist, supervising the work of a tertiary psychoanalytic psychotherapy service with complex trauma and so-called 'personality disorder'. I also taught at The Bowlby Centre and other psychotherapy training organisations.

In 2005, my different worlds converged. I was invited to give a presentation in the United States at the Hershey Research Medical Centre, Pennsylvania State University, a neo-natal unit for premature, sick, and traumatised new-borns.⁶ Michal Levin was training a group of doctors and medical professionals in energy work and had invited me to contextualise energy in relation to psychoanalytic/attachment theory, Dzogchen, and consciousness—a synthesis was beginning to happen.

Around the same time, I helped plan a training day in the NHS where we invited Phil Mollon to teach about trauma. He agreed, as long as he could speak about energy psychology. After his training session which used tapping, I was hooked—this was what I had been looking for. I spent many years travelling backwards from the USA to study various energy modalities including Asha Clinton's Advanced Integrative Therapy (AIT), Jo Dunning's 'Quick Pulse' Technique, and Kenji Kumara's 'Quantum Lightweaving'.

I am very grateful for the weekly energy psychotherapy I had on the phone with a lovely woman from the States (we didn't have zoom in those days). Margaret had a 'light touch' and was very sensitive. She was a good role model. I learned that it is more helpful to spend most of the session time clearing traumatic stress rather than overly talking about things, something I had already done for years. When we focused on my mother's terrifying angry volatility, using clearing phrases such as 'Her angry eyes' my body gradually came to a place of peace and calm as all the shocked energy and stress was released while I breathed out through each chakra. I was astonished at the speed and thoroughness with which Margaret helped me clear anxieties, stresses, triggers, and frozen traumas which had been buried in my body all my life. I became stronger and more resilient and noticed huge changes in my well-being. Where previously I erred on being easily triggered by things, clearing traumatic stress transformed and integrated my ego so that life felt calmer and smoother. I also noticed that when the trauma is thoroughly treated, it really is gone.

I also met Sarfaraz, a Sufi, in upstate New York, who kindly invited me to stay with her during trainings. She became a dear friend and training buddy. The work we did together addressed archetypal, transpersonal past life, and transgenerational trauma, and accessed deep splits and unpleasant, ugly shadow elements in my psyche. One day, when she was challenging my passivity, Sarfaraz declared: 'You're not a mouse, you're a lion' and was intent on getting me to 'roar'. The transpersonal work unblocked (as I discovered) lifetimes of traumas at my throat, of being persecuted for speaking my truth which had contributed to difficulties in finding my voice. Interestingly, there is a teaching in the *dharma* about 'The Lion's roar'—which means the 'fearless proclamation of truth'.

I began integrating energy work into my private therapy practice, attended an online supervision group in the USA, and went on to train in how to teach energy therapy and supervise others.

⁶ Dr Charles Palmer, MD, Head of the Neonatal Unit had invited Michal Levin to teach about energy as a contribution to the development of the work of his department.

Then after a second dark-night-of-the-soul experience, I left my NHS post to set up the Flame Centre in London so I could focus on developing energy psychotherapy and working with trauma.

I continued to drag my feet about the book. ‘Life’ had intervened for many good reasons. Together with psychoanalytic and integrative therapy colleagues who had also trained in energy work, we began offering peer support to one another as we honed our skills in working with trauma and expanded our study of energy methods. There was much new in the ‘field’ about the neurobiology of trauma, *The Biology of Belief* (Lipton, 2010) epigenetics and so on, and we began integrating these ideas. We developed an informal network, (now known as the Energy Psychotherapy Network), taught ‘Converging Streams’ trainings in energy psychotherapy, spoke at conferences, and introduced ways of using energy methods in psychotherapy. Most of my writing about energy went into training manuals.

Then one day, listening to a webinar from the USA on contemporary spirituality, the webinar leader saw my name in the ‘chat’, and out of the blue called out to me saying ‘It’s time you stopped procrastinating and wrote that book now’. I was utterly startled because I had never seen this teacher before, nor he me. This confirmation from the universe provided further impetus for writing. At the time, I was working with Jane Ryan, the founder of Confer, devising a weekly programme entitled ‘Psychotherapy and Soul’. Writing my introductory lecture helped me get going again with this book.

The rollercoaster of awakening

This path of learning to live from my soul rather than my ego has been a rollercoaster. I had to stop going against my inner truth to fit in with others. Instead of following a guru—or placing intermediaries above me—there were many ups and downs before I started properly believing in myself and embedded ‘going direct’ to source.

Valuing our own experience—what Buddhism terms our ‘inner teacher’—involves honouring and loving ourselves and seeing ourselves as worthy to be our own guide. In the shift from ego to the ‘Great Awakening’, the head-based effort and drive of ego—of not feeling good enough—sets ‘self-improvement goals’, whereas the soul sets intentions and trusts in the flow of life which is a gentler path of ‘ease and grace’.

That said, if we wish to fully avail ourselves of the precious life we have been gifted with, the path of awakening does require a certain commitment to ‘work’ on ourselves. As well as enjoying life as much as we can, there are certain challenges and upsets to face on the path. The ‘rollercoaster of awakening’ for me has been concerned with finding balance—letting go of the trauma-based pressures from childhood where I was constantly striving to be better, learning to relax and accept myself, and aspiring to make positive choices in each moment. One measure I use to check if I am still being driven by duty and/or a stressed nervous system, is to enquire if my energy is moving forward with enthusiasm, inspiration, and joy.

Reflections

Looking back over the last few decades, there have been considerable shifts in psychotherapy. While the therapeutic relationship remains central, there is increasing recognition that the states of fear, terror, and shame associated with trauma require work with the body. Books such as *The Body Keeps the Score* (Van der Kolk, 2015) and *The Body Remembers* (Rothschild, 2000) have led us to understand the vital role played by the body in therapy, so these days there is considerably more emphasis on integrating the body and ‘the felt sense’.

As a therapist and client, I feel energy psychotherapy offers a relatively comfortable approach for those who have been fragmented by trauma. It facilitates autonomy and integration, prevents and lessens re-traumatisation, and offers balm to ease and soothe. It is relational, respecting the client’s needs, and pacing the work in a way that can help people rebuild themselves and find their self-possession. When trauma is cleared thoroughly and completely, it brings an end to dysregulation and triggering, and helps us find calm and balance. In so many ways we can say that energy psychotherapy is about healing rather than therapy. The natural simplicity of this work helps people feel present, embodied, and connected with themselves. And as we connect with our bodies, feelings, mind, and spirit—in turn we connect more easily with others.

Choosing the Path of Joy set a healing trajectory in my life that I could not have imagined. We all receive the same light—the same ‘Source’. However, it depends for each of us, where we are on our soul’s journey. When we can get our egos out of the way and transform our pain into peace, we can experience our light, allowing it to blossom and radiate—naturally, joyful, and spontaneously. In the new world, in our search for happiness, freedom, balance and so much more, may the development of heart and soul-based wisdom be one of our key therapeutic aims.

I hope you will find this introduction to energy psychotherapy whets your appetite to go on and try it out for yourself, and if you are a therapist, undertake further training and experience the wonderful ‘grace and ease’ offered by these quantum methods.