Synchronicities!

By Linda Patchen
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"When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."

–Tao Te Ching



My friend and neighbor, Lydia Dugan, planned an Esalen event in her home in April, 2004. At the time, I was a contributor to Esalen in order to receive their catalogue, which I always found very interesting and imagined someday going there. I was surprised to receive an invitation from Esalen for the event at Lydia's. I knew it was meant to be. Lydia was surprised when I knocked on her door that evening.

Like a fairy tale come true, I met Michael Murphy and the Esalen staff that accompanied him at the Houston event. I also met Joe and Marion Hirsch. I quickly discovered that Joe and Lydia had created the ITP Houston Group in 1996 of which they were co-leaders. My husband Jerry and I were invited to attend.

And thus, began my Life Journey with Integral Transformative Practice and Esalen.

Because I had difficult experiences from childhood through to young adulthood, I was always observing the world around me, questioning family values, analyzing social and religious cultural norms, reading self-help books in my solitary journey to understand myself and the world around me – all in my attempts to continue to learn and grow.

The Houston ITP group was, and still is, an exciting and novel experience. The practice of the Kata was transformative, and the ITP Houston group became a vital source of support and renewal.

Over the years as a member of Integral Transformative Practice, I have been through many, many life changes in all areas of my body, mind, heart and soul. Through my ITP practice, I have developed a new dynamic awareness of KATA and exercise as a daily practice. I have become more conscious of my diet and how nutrition affects my overall well-being.

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The totality of the KATA, from GRACE all the way through Check-in is an all-embracing experience. It enhances and fortifies the energy in my entire being. The Kata raises my awareness, opens my heart and connects me with my body. It takes all participants to a higher level. Check-in, or personal sharing, and deep listening generate a profound feeling and connection for all participants and create a community bond with trust to share deeply.

Through the concepts and practice of Balancing and Centering, I have learned to approach different situations by pausing and evaluating the moment at hand. I am significantly more resilient in confronting life's challenges.

I was so fascinated by ITP, a few months after joining, I attended an ITP workshop with George and Annie Leonard held at the Dance Dome at Esalen (later renamed The Leonard Pavilion). Their sweet and gentle presence was mesmerizing. I have embodied Annie's GRACE practice and George Leonard's wisdom to "Take the Hit as a Gift."

Through visits to the Bay Area for annual ITP conferences, Mastery workshops and Esalen trips, I met and engaged with Michael and Dulce Murphy. Michael's spirited discourses filled with his brilliance, good humor, philosophy, psychology, extraordinary experiences, and stories of Esalen history and relationships with cultural pioneers, bolstered by his phenomenal memory and Dulce's charm and pleasant friendliness, has been an unimaginable rich experience. All of which were synchronistically were fostered by a letter in my mailbox!

Establishing lasting friendships with Pam Kramer and Christina Grote, and their partners, Rich and Jim, and also with the wonderfully skilled Mastery teachers and many participants has created a circle of love and strength for me.

Because most of us have been sheltering at home during this difficult time, the ITP virtual Kata gatherings for the last six months have been a wonderful way to tap into deep parts of ourselves and our community and have helped us refocus on all the values we continue to practice. This has helped us deal with all the life-changing experiences that we have been going through.

A beautiful bond has been created in our ITP Houston Community. Based on the Nine Commitments, we study, explore and share many different ideas that enhance our being and encourage our daily practice and attendance.

Affirmations have played a very large part in my personal growth. This is one of many Affirmations that have helped me have a present moment awareness, as I go through my daily life: "My Heart is radiating Love, Joy and Compassion to everyone I meet."

An ITP Houston story: Once upon a time, I had an inspiration to honor each member on or around their birthday. I quietly gathered the birth month and day of each and created the "ITP Houston Sacred Birthday Circle." The element of surprise is very important. No one knows who and when they will be honored, so no one gets to rehearse their lines. This Sacred Circle is done the last 20 minutes of the 2-hour ITP Houston session. This has fostered a spontaneous sharing focused solely on the honoree that encompasses deep sharing and deep listening, straight from the heart. It creates such a profound moment. At the end of the evening, the energetic vibrations are high, the members are transformed and just want to visit and stay longer. This is an example of an ITP Evolutionary Love Practice.

Integral Transformative Practice and experiencing this awesome practice together with the ITP Houston and ITP International community, is, for me, my life-long journey toward my personal growth and transformation and "Becoming All That I Am."

