

# The Awakening

I was introduced to alternative healing in a very alternative way. I had a vision. In my vision an old Indian woman approached me. When I asked who she was, she replied:

I am you, I am your mother, I am your sister, I am your grandmother, I am the Earth. She had gray hair pulled back tightly in a bun, and her skin was wrinkled and weathered by life. She was wrapped in a wool blanket and smoking a pipe. She asked if I wanted to join in the sisterhood, but warned me that my life would be forever changed. I was doubtful, but kept hearing the word "trust" in the background. I nodded my head and spoke the word yes.

When we finished smoking the pipe, she spoke again. "Your guidance will be provided. Your medicine that you carry is North, Wisdom, Healing, and Love. Begin at this time to start reading and learn to understand the Ways."

Looking back on this experience, I see the meaning of the vision with clarity and understand fully the intent of the visitation, but at the time I was left perplexed and wondering. I had had no exposure to any indigenous teachings. I did not know what sisterhood meant. I did not know anything about the pipe ceremony; I did not even know that it was traditional for Indians to smoke pipes. I had no idea what the word "medicine" meant except as some combination of chemical elements to take when you are sick. I was engulfed in the mystery of the vision, but confused as to its meaning. Why had I had a vision? What did it mean? What, if anything, was I supposed to do with these strange images that had invaded my consciousness?

Even to start reading about the Ways presented a mystery. What were the Ways? Where would I find readings that would teach me the Ways? I was involved in psychology in a very traditional way; I knew no other way. I was active at the time in the Methodist Church. In fact, I was considering studying for a doctorate in theology and perhaps pursuing a ministry. This vision was not at all a part of my existing reality system; it left me completely baffled. However, my love for God was so great that I honored the experience. I reminded myself of the many stories in the Bible where visions had occurred with wondrous messages accompanying them. I believed that this vision had come to me for a purpose I did not yet understand; however, for me to fully honor this spiritual visit, I needed to seek greater understanding. Thus began my voyage of discovery. It would prove to alter my very existence, and it is a voyage I continue to this day. The wonder of it has proven to be in the journey itself, not in any final destination.

I committed to joining the sisterhood, whatever that was. I had made a contract with the vision, and I would keep my commitment. I just had no idea what to do or where to start. I felt that I needed guidance, but there was no one in my network of friends with that kind of knowledge, and only one with whom I was comfortable even mentioning the experience. It took one year before I found anyone who could help me understand what it meant.

I had moved with my family from Dallas to Portland. This move created whole-sale changes in my life: a new job, new community, new church, and new friends. I did not know at the time, but I understand now, that this move was part of a major shift that would lead to a reordering of my life.

Shortly after the move, I was at the Oregon coast with my husband, who was attending a convention. He burst into our hotel room saying, "Jan, come down to the vendor displays with me and meet this person who has a booth with some very unusual books. I think you will be intrigued."

I followed him down and browsed through the various books. They addressed a wide range of spiritual matters, many from nontraditional perspectives. I do not remember the specific titles of the books, but I do remember feeling an uncontrollable urge to ask the sales woman if she knew anything about visions. She did not, but offered me the name of a woman who might help. I remember the excitement-the bolt of energy-that ran through me as she handed me a business card with the woman's name and phone number written on the back. I called immediately when I returned to Portland.

The woman referred to herself as a channel, and claimed that she connected with the client's guardian spirits, or angels, for guidance. She told me over the phone that she felt my own guardian spirits could help me understand my vision. I caught my breath. The whole concept of guardian spirits was completely foreign to me. I had been to psychics in the past, but I had never experienced anyone who claimed to channel. I had little idea what the word channel meant or what I had gotten myself into. Yet still I was curious and felt innately that this was the right choice. I drove to her house. From that point on everything changed. Due to this shift in my awareness and my willingness to open to new possibilities, I became exposed to the people, training, and concepts that completely remolded my life and my profession. Each shift has been a step along the divine path of my development and my understanding of how we all can heal.

Since the original vision, I have had numerous additional spiritual experiences. I began to reorder my life, renew my thinking, and interlace my knowledge of psychology with elements of spirituality and actual teachings from the spiritual realm. As I integrated these experiences into my own consciousness, I became acutely aware that my experiences were not only for me but were also to be used as teachings for others. The teachings and experiences hold universal messages, or basic truths, that need to be shared.

As I observe clients moving through their personal journeys from head to heart, two main themes emerge again and again-the need for self-awareness and the need for redefining self. The first is a need for awareness of their own intrinsic worth. Spirit is continually providing evidence that God not only loves, but also values each being beyond all imagination. In the process of becoming yourself, you become open to this reality. The second need is for redefining self in terms of this unconditional love. It is often difficult for the mind to grasp the meaning of a love with no conditions, but the heart is capable.

Unconditional love is not based on what you do, how hard you try, whether you are successful, or even if you are a "good" person. There is nothing you could do to not be loved. In the journey from the head to the heart, one comes to understand this type of love and apply it to self. When you truly understand the unconditional love from God, you move closer to being able to love yourself unconditionally. Your complete self-acceptance replaces prior doubts, disappointments, and regrets. All of life's "should have," "would have," and "could have" feelings dissipate in a newfound awareness of one's own immense worth in the eyes of God. Through my own experiences-my own head-to-heart journey-I have found that healing and the restoration of one's wholeness can be complete. Answers to the questions of life's mysteries-what is life all about, why do people become so wounded, how do people heal, why does it take so long for some to heal, why aren't people happy, and why do so many people stay entrenched in the past instead of alive in the present moment-all can be answered. The beauty of the answers is that they bring wholeness, understanding, happiness, and new beginnings for the people who employ them. What I have learned on this divine path is that life is to be enjoyed, and being whole feels wonderful!

---

Jan promotes self-healing, empowerment, better communities, a healthier world and conducts workshops for shamanism and journeying. Her book, *Becoming Yourself* is at <http://www.janengelssmith.com> . Jan is a shamanic practitioner and has done over two thousand soul retrievals. She is a Licensed Counselor, a Chemical Dependency Specialist, and Marriage and Family Therapist. She is also a water pourer for sweat lodge, a minister, and a Reiki Master