



Photograph by John Allocca

## Author's Reflections

### The Sacred Path of the Therapist: Modern Healing, Ancient Wisdom, and Client Transformation

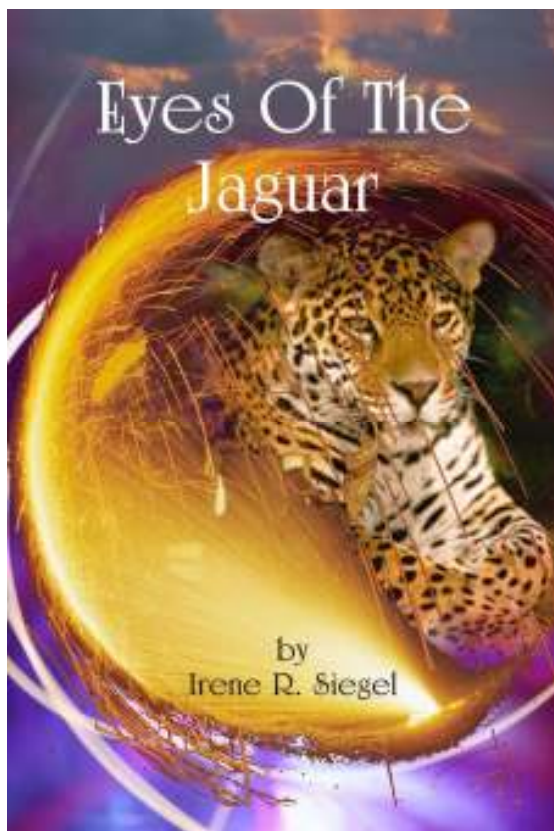
by Irene R. Siegel

There was a time when I couldn't imagine how to integrate my spiritual path and my Western training as a psychotherapist. I was traveling down to Peru periodically over a 10-year period, stepping into the mystical non-ordinary world of the shaman, while working as a clinical supervisor in a psychiatric hospital. I felt hurled down to South America, as if literally picked up and thrown down there by the circumstances and synchronicities in my life. I knew I had a choice, but not really. Destiny was calling to a tradition so foreign from my upbringing, but it activated a deep knowing and memory of ancient wisdom and truth.

My first book, *Eyes of the Jaguar*, was about the beginning of this mystical journey. I didn't consider myself to be a writer and felt as if this book wrote itself through me. The words of the book refused to stop moving through my thoughts until I put them down on paper. It felt as if it was part of my spiritual initiation process, with a life of its own and an impact that I could not have known.

I believed strongly in a holistic interrelated paradigm of body/mind/spirit, as taught in the shamanic tradition. I meditated on how to integrate it all, and the inner wisdom of my soul whispered back, "It will integrate." I learned to trust my inner guidance, and as time went on, I was able to see the integration within myself. As the therapist and the shaman became one within me, my work became more integrated.

*Continued on page 48*



I began to have extraordinary experiences in my work when I took the EMDR Basic Training in 1996. In the silent spaces of bilateral stimulation and client processing of traumatic memory, I began to sink deep within myself, accessing a shamanic state of inner focus and heightened intuitive senses. I tracked the energy flow between myself and my client. There was information in this flow, far beyond what the client could consciously verbalize. Using my inner vision and bodily sensations, I sensed the ebb and flow of energy and the processing of my clients. All I did was maintain my connection to the earth, and to my higher self, or soul. My clients' traumas were being reprocessed quickly, as they reported extraordinary experience of their connections to a greater cosmic whole. The processing took us from the negative beliefs, disturbing emotions, to body sensations. Trauma therapists know that memory is not just stored in the brain, but in the body as well. I was learning to access the energy field through the body—within the cellular structure itself, where not only traumatic memory is stored, but ancient memory and higher wisdom can emerge. Through the imagination, my clients were learning to do the same. In my own

imagination, light filled the room and my clients' energy field expanded. My clients were quickly shifting from negative beliefs such as "I am not lovable," to "God loves me, so I must be lovable," to "I am love," to "I am light," to "I am." The meaning and context of their traumas and their paths in the world were transforming as inner wisdom was infused into their expanded perceptions, and spiritual consciousness was evolving. I identified this experience as *spiritual resonance*, as the client and I would resonate with the energy of a larger cosmic whole.

I wondered if this experience was happening for other therapists and their clients. I was almost afraid to ask because it sounded so unusual to me. Other therapists were not talking about this experience openly. I had reached the point where I needed to explore further. Although I had a master's degree in social work, I decided to go back to school to get a doctorate in the field of transpersonal psychology through the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (now Sofia University). I learned to conduct transpersonal research. My study was called: *The Therapist as a Container for Spiritual Resonance, and the Observed Impact on Client Transformation: A Heuristic Approach*. I learned that I was not alone, and that although other therapists could relate to the topic, it was difficult for them to find a language for it.

It has been this long and winding lifetime journey that led me to write *The Sacred Path of the Therapist: Modern Healing, Ancient Wisdom, and Client Transformation*. And yes, the work presented in the book is integrated because it is integrated in me. The presentation of the information and lessons in the book feel like an expression of my purpose and mission in this lifetime - to contribute to the growing and evolving field of psychology, translating transpersonal psychology into a practice of transpersonal psychotherapy as I know it. Once again, I know I have a choice, but not really. I have felt driven and have overcome the concern of being different from the rest. The shaman and the psychotherapist can be one, and the potential is in all of us. The processing of trauma cannot be complete without the

integration of body, mind, and spirit. Psychological healing has the potential to entwine with spiritual awakening, as consciousness evolves.

My experience and my continuous study of the subject has led me to the realization that a true healing must be holistic in nature. Every aspect of us, body, mind, and soul, holds the holographic pattern of the larger whole. My shamanic teachers have taught that a true healing must include healing of the ancestral wounds. In our culture we are limited by our focus on the healing of our current moment and our past from birth to the present. The doorway to those deeper unconscious wounds can be accessed from any entrance point, but must include the vibrational patterns of the current, past, and ancestral wounds held deep in the body, the energy field, and the depth of the psyche. My experience has shown me that the consciousness of the therapist becomes a vibrational tool of transformation with which the client may choose to resonate. As the therapist opens to his or her sacred path, there is an opportunity to become the tool of transformation and awaken consciousness within the client. This goes beyond creating change and adaptive functioning for our clients.

Prior to writing the book, I had presented this topic for several years in a row at the EMDR International Association conferences. It is that interest and support of my work that had given me the strength to write the book. Therapists expressed great appreciation for my putting words to an experienced that they knew deep within themselves. Once I started to write, the process took on a life of its own. Once again, I was driven, and couldn't stop until all was expressed. I have come to a place of realization that I am a writer. I feel that I have something important to share and to contribute. I have taken this concept and this way of approaching my work and my life and have done my best to apply it to my writing. My book, *The Sacred Path of the Therapist*, has been a heartfelt attempt, from a level of expanded awareness, to bring forward an integrated, cohesive, and at times scholarly explanation of an experience that has no words.

*Continued on page 50*

It has been this long and winding lifetime journey that led me to write *The Sacred Path of the Therapist: Modern Healing, Ancient Wisdom, and Client Transformation*. And yes, the work presented in the book is integrated because it is integrated in me. The presentation of the information and lessons in the book feel like an expression of my purpose and mission in this lifetime - to contribute to the growing and evolving field of psychology, translating transpersonal psychology into a practice of transpersonal psychotherapy as I know it.



According to ancient Mayan cosmology, we are in a new planetary cycle of awakening consciousness. The timing of the writing of this book connects to the initiation of a larger planetary cycle that the Mayans predict will take us beyond linear time and space into multi-dimensional cosmic awareness, over the next 1000 years. It is at some point during this cycle that we will realize that we are all inter-connected and that all living things are our brothers and sisters. It's a beautiful vision, with an unclear and uncertain road to that end. I want to believe that my book and my teachings will contribute to the forward movement of the field of psychology, as we all are called to adapt to new belief systems and ways of thinking. The Mayan Elders, at a United Nations presentation in 2010, said that to change the planet we need to work on ourselves. "Meditate every day," they said. It is this message that I have tried to articulate in the book, offering exercises for readers to go deep within and find their own spiritual resonance. It is through experience that the therapist and client can hold a vision for transformation beyond normal functioning, expanding the context of treatment.

Transpersonal psychologist Frances Vaughan (1993) wrote in *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*, "Consciousness is both the instrument and object of change. The work aims not only at changing behavior and the contents of consciousness, but also at developing awareness of consciousness itself as the context of experience" (p. 160). Her inspirational

message reverberates in my heart and thoughts, as her message proves itself true in the confines of my office between myself, my client, the earth, and the Great Spirit. It is through this awareness of higher consciousness and interconnection that I set an intention and vision every day for my life, my writing, my teaching, and my psychotherapy practice. You will see my vision and intention in my book dedication:

This is dedicated to the healing of the earth;  
the conscious evolution of the human  
species;  
and the unity of all living things.

Aho, Great Spirit...

**Irene R. Siegel, PhD, LCSW** received her doctorate from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (now Sofia University) and her master's degree from Columbia University School of Social Work. As an Approved EMDR Consultant, speaker, and teacher, she conducts her integrative psychotherapy practice in Huntington, New York. She studied authentic ancient healing traditions in North and South American, and teaches the integration of Western psychotherapy and science with ancient healing arts. Her website is [DrIreneSiegel.com](http://DrIreneSiegel.com)

#### Reference

Vaughan, F. (1993). Healing and wholeness: Transpersonal psychotherapy. In R. Walsh & F. Vaughan (Eds.), *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision* (pp. 214-222). Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher.