



# Presencing

An Introduction to *Presencing*  
*Jack Blackburn's Newsletter - 2006*

## ***What's in a Newsletter?***

This newsletter has grown out of a number of years of bodywork, writing, and teaching. Last year we sent out the first issue of *Presencing*. That was certainly a worthwhile project but was very expensive because we used regular mail. So this time we are using email. The goal is to have at least one newsletter per month. I realize that I have a lot to learn about emails, but I have been getting a lot of help from friends and associates. I receive many emails and I know that it is hard to decide which ones have value and which just need to be deleted. So I won't be offended if you decide to do what I do when I feel information overload.

I want to make *Presencing* is interesting and useful enough that you will read it, print it, and forward it to friends. So I'm asking that you give the first issue, which comes out in a week, a read and see what you think. I also realize that if there is a possibility of an interactive forum, say a blog or a chatroom that makes the newsletter even more interesting. With the help of others with more experience, we will be heading in that direction. Whether you are a friend, a colleague, a student or a client, I hope you to find these pages interesting and useful - enough so that you will want to keep your contact information up to date. I these pages must be inspiring and gratifying to me - otherwise I won't stick with it! Here are a number of subjects for future issues:

- Presencing the body - bodyworkers' key contribution to these times
- Creating a container of presence - in business and caregiving
- Presencing trends in business and organizational development
- Growing the inner witness - becoming the inner witness
- Elements of spiritual direction in body-centered therapy
- Presencing our fears and doubts
- Fear or presence - that is the question!
- Practical presencing - exercises for bringing everyday life to presence
- Ethical dilemmas and personal growth
- Somatics as body awareness - tools of discernment and decision making
- Presencing pain and symptoms as doorways to healing
- Body-centered verbal interaction - listening into being
- Caregivers and business professionals as presencing role models
- Discovering and applying the gifts of presence in ourselves and others
- Finding the silence, the stillness, the intrinsic in our work
- Preparing the way - prayers of presencing

*Presencing* will include links useful information and resources. Also I will link to my web page, which contains class schedules, session descriptions and

packages, book reviews and sources, articles, registration forms and upcoming class videos and products designed by my daughter, Kirsten. My current web site is: [jackblackburn.homestead.com](http://jackblackburn.homestead.com)

We are working on a new web site: [presencingsource.com](http://presencingsource.com)

Thank you for your attention,

Jack Blackburn with assistance of Beth Oppliger and Kirsten Blackburn

### Samples from Upcoming Articles

**Presence:** *Presence* is a state of being in which one becomes conscious of the interconnectedness of all life, all times, all places, all existence. Each of us has had moments that stand out because we've felt these connections. Abraham Maslow called these moments, in a bout of understatement, "peak experiences." Sometimes the feelings in these moments seem like love, but that too seems like an understatement. Mystics have called it an experience of God's Love, or like Rumi, the *Lover inside*. The experience of presence can seem fleeting and even impossible to recreate. Many of us have pursued these moments much of our lives... like searching for hidden treasure. Some have dedicated their whole lives and have journeyed far and wide to find better and better ways to recreate these experiences.

Presence can be seen as a practice and a goal. As a practice it has included the following expressions: continuous or centering prayer, mindfulness, watching the breath, concentration on this moment, remembering now, presencing. The experience of presence is so powerful that it has become a goal in itself. The rewards of presencing can be seen as secondary to experiencing the state of presence. Like other things we choose to do for the sake of the enjoyment of the doing; like music, like art, presencing produces a state of joy and harmony, appreciation and love, peace and forgiveness.

**Presencing:** Probably the biggest change to occur in human consciousness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be shifting to a different center of consciousness, *presence*, which exists within each one of us. Once we discover the presence inside, each of us becomes responsible for our own awakening. However the movement towards conversion will create a cumulative effect, sweeping many towards the goal. Once we recognize that this center is the only real antidote to the fear and suffering we humans have created, we will choose to activate our own shift in awareness. Once we have set our intention to move beyond the chaos of our fearful minds, all of life becomes useful for practicing presence. The body surprisingly is the key link to this change. Upon feeling this connection, bodyworkers can become facilitators and advocates for this change.

By presencing I mean the conscious choice to practice presence. The operative word is *choice*. Throughout this newsletter the main undercurrent will be our conscious choice to practice presence individually or together. This choice is certainly not unique in human history. Whole spiritual movements, mystical paths and monastic communities have been devoted almost entirely to the practice of presence. Some of the most profound spiritual and inspirational writings like: *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *Brother Lawrence*, *The Way of the*

*Pilgrim, A Course in Miracles, The Miracle of Mindfulness, The Fourth Way, The Power of Now*, to name a few have been preponderantly directed to teaching a practice based upon observation of the present moment. Each of these practices acts like a compass in a ship on a stormy sea. No matter how much the ship may be tossed and turned, the compass always indicates the ship's direction. But the practice of presencing does even more than the compass because it also takes stock of the condition of the ship, and like modern navigation tools like GFI *always* points towards the goal, a goal far beyond our limited understanding, far beyond our mortality.

**The Body and Presence:** Experiencing presence is only possible because we are in bodies. As a bodyworker of many years, I have noticed that the body is an incredible communicator in that it always reveals one's state of being to its owner and to the practitioner if one learns to listen to the forms of expression unique to the body. When our bodies are perceived through the lens of presencing our bodies can become reliable loadstones for our lives. As such a bodywork session can be seen as an opportunity for practitioner and client for first establishing and then sharing this unique form of communication.

The body, it can be argued, exists only in the present moment and is reflecting the present moment continually to its owner as sensation and awareness. In that sense "the body never lies." By design the body communicates through its various systems: mental, chemical, affective, neurological, positional, sensorial. These channels of communication produce internal sensation and thought. When thought is consciously directed towards tracking these processes, thought changes from brain-centered and abstract, to body-centered and present. If we train our minds to pay closer attention to those communications we establish somatic links to the body. The body and mind form a somatic unit that is capable of tracking inner and outer phenomena reflexively.

### **My Background**

*Spirituality:* I have been an earnest spiritual seeker since the 1960s. I studied and practiced various types of metaphysical teachings - Eastern and Western: mysticism, prayer, meditation, yoga, tai chi and Zen. In 1979, I moved my family from Palo Alto to Washington State and settled on Orcas Island in the San Juans. I managed a Theosophical camp on Orcas and a vipassana Buddhist retreat center on San Juan Island.

*Medical:* From 1981 to 1984, I worked to reorganize the emergency medical system on Orcas, became an Emergency Medical Technician, hospice volunteer, kidney dialysis helper, and manager of Orcas Island Medical center. During that time I also was a patient advocate, medical researcher and did regular blood draws and white blood cell counts for my wife who was suffering with leukemia. Though we are not still married, we remain close friends. She is living today and thriving thanks to the loving support of many persons and especially the community of support on Orcas Island. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn about the medical system in these ways. I still assist my clients today, helping them research their illnesses, build networks of support and advocacy.

*Bodywork:* Prior to becoming a professional bodyworker, I practiced Therapeutic Touch and Re-evaluation Counseling, and took workshops in Orthobionomy and Feldenkrais. After certifying as a Trager® Practitioner in 1986, I worked as a Licensed Massage Practitioner in private practice and at Rosario Resort Spa on Orcas for 5 ½ years. During that time I took classes in Polarity, cranial sacral and Reiki, and became a Reiki Master in 1989. Starting in 1988, while still living on Orcas Island, I worked on weekends at various clinics in Seattle. In 1994 I began teaching classes and tutoring *Trager* students and practitioners; I also switched entirely to private practice.

*Spiritual Direction:* In 1991, I moved to Seattle and was accepted into a graduate studies program in Spiritual Direction at Seattle University. After completing my Master's Degree in Theology 1994, I began practicing spiritual direction and combining counseling with my bodywork practice. I had been a student of *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM) since 1985 and had facilitated various ACIM study groups. From 1995 to 2000, I facilitated an ACIM group for prisoners at a state prison and participated in Gestalt therapy sessions for prisoners.

*Supervision and writings:* While attending graduate school, I was exposed for the first time to formal peer, group and individual supervision of my bodywork and spiritual counseling practice. I started various peer supervision groups, including an inter-professional group in 1993 that continues to this day. I have worked as a supervisor for bodyworkers since 1994. My writings and classes have grown out of this diverse background of research, study and practice.