



# Recovery of Your Inner Child: The Highly Acclaimed Method for Liberating Your Inner Self

By Lucia Capacchione

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*Recovery of Your Inner Child* is the only book that shows you how to have a *firsthand experience* of your Inner Child -- actually feeling its emotions and recapturing its sense of wonder -- by writing and drawing with your non-dominant hand. Expanding on the highly acclaimed technique introduced in *The Power of Your Other Hand*, here Dr. Capacchione shares scores of hands-on activities that will help you to embrace your Vulnerable Child and your Angry Child, find the Nurturing Parent within, and finally discover the Creative and Magical Child that can heal your life.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Melody Beattie author of *Codependent No More* The best book I've read yet on how to talk to your Inner Child and find what it needs. Practical, helpful, and easy.

Louise Hay author of *You Can Heal Your Life* Healing is making ourselves whole. Healing our Inner Child is a major part of our recovery. Lucia Capacchione is a master at gently guiding you through this process. Love yourself enough to recover from the past.

#### About the Author

Known for her discovery of the healing power of writing and drawing with the non-dominant hand, **Lucia Capacchione** is an art therapist with a Ph.D. in psychology, serves as a consultant to Walt Disney Imagineering, and is nationally recognized for her workshops in recovery and co-dependence. Her work has been highly praised by such leaders in the health-care field as Dr. Bernie Siegel, Norman Cousins Joan Borysenko and Dr. Gerald Jampolsky. She has written six other books including *The Power of Your Other Hand*, *The Picture of Health* and *The Creative Journal*.

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### CHAPTER ONE

"A Little Child Shall Lead Them"

*Inside every adult, there is a child crying, "Let me out."*

Who is this child living within? Why is it trapped inside? What does it have to offer? How can it be liberated? You will answer these questions for yourself as you do this book. I say *do* rather than *read* because this is a hands-on approach. Through a combination of words, pictures, and activities you will be guided in discovering, nurturing, and protecting your own Inner Child. My goal is to help you love your Inner Child and invite it to be a part of your life.

The concept of the Inner Child is not new. It actually has roots in ancient mythology and fairy tales. Virtually all religions have told stories of the child who becomes a savior or leader. The child is usually orphaned, abandoned, or its life is threatened. Moses was found abandoned in the bull rushes. Jesus was born in the humblest setting because "there was no room at the inn." His life was threatened by King Herod's slaughter of the infants. Similarly, Krishna's birth was accompanied by great danger. King Kansa had been told that the man who would eventually kill him was about to be born, so he consequently decreed that all newborn males be slain.

In Greek mythology the child Zeus was in danger of being devoured by his father Chronos. And as the father of Dionysius, Zeus was absent when his son was being torn to pieces by the Titans. The twins in Roman mythological lore, Romulus and Remus, were abandoned and set adrift on the river Tiber. European fairy tales also abound with child heroes who are threatened by ogres and demons: Hansel and Gretel had their witch, Cinderella had her wicked step-mother and nasty step-sisters, Jack had his giant, and Little Red Riding Hood had the wolf.

In this century, psychologist C. G. Jung and mythologist Joseph Campbell have shown us that these myths and legends have widespread appeal because they illustrate universal human experiences. For instance, all human beings have one thing in common: we all start out as vulnerable, dependent infants. Therefore, we can all resonate with the helpless, misunderstood, and abused children in these stories. Who has not experienced some kind of physical or emotional mistreatment in childhood?

The very nature of childhood leaves the infant or youngster open to harm. Insensitive or violent adults can certainly appear as giants, witches, and ogres in the eyes of a child. That is why the classic fairy tales hold our rapt attention time and time again, whether they are told from memory, read from a picture book, or portrayed on the screen. Walt Disney was well aware of this when he chose the story of Snow White for his first feature-length animated film. Even though he was scoffed at by financiers, he would not be deterred. He knew that the public would respond to this classic story in a new medium. His success rested on his ability to speak to the child in us all.

In many cultures we find this theme: the endangered child who must remain in obscurity and undergo trials until his true heroic nature is revealed. Jung saw the child as an archetype, a universal symbol existing within the collective unconscious. In his essay "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," he wrote:

It is...not surprising that so many of the mythological saviours are child gods. This agrees exactly with our experience of the psychology of the individual, which shows that the "child" paves the way for a future change of personality. In the individuation process, it anticipates the figure that comes from the synthesis of conscious and unconscious elements in the personality. It is therefore a symbol which unites the opposites; a mediator, bringer of healing, that is, one who makes whole. Because it has this meaning, the child motif is capable of numerous transformations...I have called this wholeness that transcends consciousness the "self." The goal of the individuation process is the synthesis of the self.

Jung's words "the child paves the way for a future change of personality," and his reference to the child as "bringer of healing...one who makes whole" echos the biblical prophecy, "And a little child shall lead them."

Since the 1960s the Inner Child has become a popular theme in psychology. The Inner Child is that part of us who feels like a child and may cause us to behave in a childlike or childish way. Hugh Missildine wrote about it in his groundbreaking book, *Your Inner Child of the Past*. The Child state is also an important aspect of Transactional Analysis, which was developed by Eric Berne in the sixties and popularized in the seventies. Berne presented us with a picture of the inner world made up of a parent self, a child self, and an adult self. The parent self sets out the rules and regulations (the shoulds and the oughts). The child self feels and reacts. The adult thinks, makes decisions, and solves problems.

The 1980s saw the development of still another model in which the Inner Child plays an important role: Voice Dialogue. Developed by psychologists Hal Stone and Sidra Winkelman, Voice Dialogue demonstrates that the psyche is peopled by countless sub-personalities such as the Child, Critic, Pusher or Taskmaster, Protector, Beach Bum, Artist, Playboy or Playgirl, etc. The goal is to develop an *aware* ego at the center whose job is to be conscious of the sub-personalities. Like the director of a play, the aware ego decides which sub-personality will be allowed on stage at any given time. It must also be aware of which "actors" are lurking around backstage (the disowned or *shadow* selves, as Jung called them). In Voice Dialogue the goal is to be conscious of and accept all of our sub-personalities, allowing them appropriate expression. The Inner Child is often one of the disowned selves, one that we left behind as we grew to adulthood. As a trained Voice Dialogue facilitator, I have integrated this method into my work in art therapy and journal process. It provides an excellent framework for re-parenting the Inner Child.

The Inner Child also received recognition in the 1980s as part of the rapidly growing recovery movement. Treatment for addictive behavior is being addressed more and more in hospitals and rehabilitation centers. Much of this treatment includes work with the roots of addiction in childhood. Twelve-step programs applying the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon (for co-dependents affected by alcoholism) have now been extended to include the Adult Children of Alcoholics. This program has now been broadened to support Adult Children from any type of dysfunctional family. Experts have estimated that ninety-five percent of the population received inadequate parenting. This may explain why programs for Adult Children have gained such great popularity. Almost all of us have some Inner Child healing to do.

In recent years, one of the most articulate writers on the Inner Child has been Charles Whitfield, M.D. In his best-selling book, *Healing the Child Within*, Whitfield led the way toward acknowledging the role of the Inner Child in recovery from co-dependence and being an adult child of a dysfunctional family. At the same time, through media coverage, there has been a growing recognition of the rampant child abuse in our culture. For instance, it has been estimated that one out of every four adults suffered some kind of sexual abuse in childhood. Clinician Alice Miller has shed light on the childhood roots of dysfunctional adult behavior. Her deeply moving book *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, lays bare the shocking truth of widespread violence against children and how this affects them in later life.

Based on my experience as an early-childhood educator and art therapist, I have concluded that we cannot eradicate child abuse in our culture without healing the wounds of our own Inner Child. We will never cure the epidemic of child abuse in the *outer world* until we stop abusing the Child in our *inner world*.

But how does Inner Child healing pertain to someone who was not severely abused in childhood? I would propose that in order to survive in our world we have all denied the Child Within to one degree or another. And this is also abuse. It is virtually impossible to grow up in our era of addictions and crime, wars and threat of environmental devastation, without our Inner Child going underground. Our world is not safe for that sensitive, vulnerable part of ourselves. But as you will see throughout this book, the Inner Child is at the core of our being. As our *feeling self*, it brings us enthusiasm and energy. None of us can be whole, happy adults without bringing the Inner Child into our lives and thereby healing it.

How do we do this? How do we heal our Inner Child? First of all by recognizing and experiencing it. That will be our task in Chapter 2. When we meet our Inner Child we often discover that our childhood needs were not met -- needs for love, safety, trust, respect, and guidance. The absence of these basic conditions may have brought about a state of chronic anxiety, fear, shame, anger, and despair in our Inner Child. Recurring emotional and physical problems in adulthood are a sign that the Inner Child is trying to speak.

When basic human needs go unfulfilled, the individual is at high risk for developing abusive behavior toward self and others, creating problems in virtually all areas of life. It is also a well-known fact that family violence sets up a chain reaction. Parents violate their children. When those children grow up and become parents they often abuse their own children, and so on. Addicts who become parents frequently have children who become addicts. The brand of addiction may change -- an alcoholic mother may have a drug-addicted son -- but the pattern is the same. Violence and addiction are a tragic downward spiral. They get handed down from one generation to the next and have become epidemic in our society.

As individuals, how can we build our adult world on the shaky foundations of a frightened and isolated child who never got its basic needs met? It can't be done. Sooner or later a crisis hits -- an illness, divorce, career upheaval, or financial disaster -- and the structure crumbles. The mask of the adult persona begins to crack. At this point, some individuals look inward to examine and reevaluate their lives. They may seek assistance

from therapists and self-help books, or join support groups where it is safe to acknowledge the damaged Child Within.

If you identify with this scenario, let me suggest that you use this book as part of your own personal program of healing. Complement this work with a support group, a 12-step program, therapy, or workshops. Inner Child healing cannot be done in isolation. After all, that little Child Within has been alone long enough. It is essential that we all find companions along the way -- other individuals who are committed to caring for their own Inner Child. A support system creates a foundation for truly loving relationships.

It is important to remember one thing, however. *Only you can re-parent your Inner Child.* No one can do it for you. Only you are responsible for knowing and meeting your Inner Child's needs. So if you have been looking for love in all the wrong places, for someone to take care of your Inner Child for you, this book can help. It can also help you stop rescuing other people's abandoned and abused Inner Children. *Re-parenting themselves is their responsibility.*

### ***Experiencing the Inner Child***

The term "Inner Child work" is used a great deal these days. Many therapists are including "Inner Child work" in their practice with groups and individuals. Workshops and books on the subject are plentiful. And yet in my lectures and seminars throughout North America, many people tell me they are struggling with Inner Child work. They have read countless books, written personal histories, and shared their childhood fears and traumas in therapy and support groups. Yet they are still confused and unable to feel their Inner Child and bring it into their everyday lives. Many have reported that they had their first true *experience* of the Inner Child at one of my workshops or while doing exercises in my earlier books. They are the ones who encouraged me to share these methods of Inner Child healing in a book.

It is one thing to *talk about* the Inner Child; it is another thing to consciously experience it as a real living presence. Unless we "become as little children," we will not be healed. Unless we enter into the Child state *in a safe setting*, the Child Within will remain isolated and alone. Unless we reclaim our childlike feelings, sensitivity, wonderment, and aliveness, our Inner Child will remain wounded.

How do we know that our Inner Child is present? When we have feelings. The Inner Child is the emotional self. It is where our feelings live. When you experience joy, sadness, anger, fear, or affection your Child Within is coming out. When you are truly feeling your feelings you are allowing your Inner Child to be. Your Child Within is also active when you are being playful, spontaneous, creative, intuitive, and surrendering to the spiritual self. The experience of these states is often referred to as "being in your Inner Child." When you share this state with others it is referred to as "coming from your Inner Child."

The activities in this book are designed to give you safe, *firsthand experiences of your Inner Child.* Through drawing, writing, creative arts, and play you will find the voice of the Child who lives within you. You will discover its needs and wishes. You will also learn to activate the loving Parent Within who can nurture and protect that Inner Child. For no child exists in a vacuum. Our Inner Child will automatically draw out either a positive, supportive Inner Parent or a negligent and critical one. Without awareness, we automatically repeat the kind of parenting we received as children. We parent ourselves the way we were parented. However, if we do not like the way we were parented, we do have a choice. We can change. We can create a loving connection between the members of our own Inner Family and heal the wounds of childhood. We can re-parent ourselves.

Psychologically, the Child is indeed "father to the man." *Recovery of your Inner Child is the way to begin*

*anew and to heal your life.* As the often quoted phrase promises, "It's never too late to have a happy childhood." I know this from my own personal experience and from observing others who have successfully re-parented themselves.

### ***Discovering My Own Inner Child***

Before I had ever heard of "the child within," my Inner Child began crying out to me through a physical illness. She had been abandoned so long that the only way she could get my attention was through a condition that made it impossible for me to function at all. The symptoms were extreme exhaustion and disorientation. This was aggravated by a series of medical mistakes that began when my condition was incorrectly diagnosed. As a result, the pharmaceutical drugs that were prescribed led to a chain reaction of side-effects.

All along my Inner Child knew that I had a serious disease. But as is so often the case with children, she did not have the words to express what she knew deep down inside. When the doctors used long Latin names, treated me with clinical coldness, and prescribed still another drug, my Inner Child felt intimidated and went further underground. Secretly she was panicked. For a while I tried to ignore her promptings. I rationalized and excused the inadequate medical treatment I was receiving, trying to believe that the doctors knew what they were doing (even though the facts showed otherwise).

Meanwhile, I had begun keeping a journal. I also read some books that had a profound impact on me. The diary of Anaïs Nin showed me that writing out the inner world of feelings could actually affect one's outer life. At the same time, Carl Jung's *Man and His Symbols* inspired me to draw my feelings out in the journal. The art that poured forth at this time was clearly coming from the unconscious. It had a strangely mysterious quality, as though I was writing in a foreign tongue. It was filled with symbols that I did not understand intellectually, but which spoke directly to my soul. After these drawings I always felt better physically and emotionally.

In this early drawing, a child appears underground crouching in a fetal position. Her tears of sorrow are watering the roots of a tree in which a heart has been split in half by storms. But up high in the sky is a butterfly, a harbinger of new beginnings. When I did this drawing I had no idea what I was doing or why. The images appeared mysteriously on the page, as if my hand had done the drawing on its own, much like automatic writing. The symbols came from a very deep corner of the unconscious.

This self-reflective journal process led me into therapy. In my first session with therapist Bond Wright, I was formally introduced to my Inner Child in the context of Transactional Analysis. In role-playing I discovered that my Inner Child was filled with rage at the doctors who had misdiagnosed my condition and almost medicated me to death. In another role-play I became a Nurturing Parent with my arms holding an imaginary baby. As I crooned a lullaby, I realized that the infant in my arms was me: a new self being born. This experience was deeply empowering! I knew that I would no longer submit myself to medical negligence and mistreatment. So when my therapist recommended a truly caring woman physician who practiced preventive medicine, I contacted her immediately. This was a major step forward in my healing.

In the next therapy session my Inner Child was encouraged to speak again, this time in writing. Bond sat me on the floor in front of a large pad of newsprint paper and put a fat kindergarten crayon in my non-dominant (left) hand. She instructed me to write a contract with myself on how to apply what I was learning in therapy to everyday life. As soon as I began printing with my awkward, unschooled left hand, I regressed to about age four or five. I felt like a very young child just learning to write. This is what my Inner Child scrawled:

## **Give myself permission to let my child out and feel my feelings and say I'm O.K.!!ar**

I left the session feeling lighter and more energetic than I had in years. My Inner Child had finally been liberated and allowed to speak. It felt as if a huge burden had been lifted from my shoulders. After four years of personal crisis and the stress of juggling family, career, and everyone else's needs, I finally turned inward and embraced my own Inner Child. The cloud of heaviness and low energy I had been struggling with for months suddenly seemed to lift.

Getting in touch with my Inner Child in that session had a profound effect on my physical health. During the session my therapist recommended a physician, Dr. Louise Light, who she said practiced preventive medicine and educated her patients in self-care. Upon leaving the therapy session a childlike inner voice insisted that I call Dr. Light immediately. I stopped at a telephone booth and made an appointment to see Dr. Light on her first available opening. At my appointment with her a few days later, I found that she paid attention to my *feelings* as well as my physical condition, something that the other physicians had never done. She treated me with compassion and respect. My Inner Child could finally relax and feel safe. Both Dr. Light and my therapist, Bond Wright, acknowledged the importance of journaling as part of my healing process. This validation of my discovery and my own experience had great meaning for me. My energy and enthusiasm for life began to return, and within a few weeks I felt well enough to resume work as an artist.

Thinking that I had been "cured," I excitedly started planning a new art project. No sooner had I begun, however, than the old pattern of self-criticism and self-pressure (which had contributed to my illness in the first place) resurfaced with a vengeance. As I was writing in my journal one day the voice of inner criticism began shouting in my head. "You've got to get back to work. You're not moving fast enough. You're not good enough. You'll fail..." Without warning my left hand yanked the pen out of my right hand, drew this picture, and then scrawled a message:

### **Don't push me though let me happen in my time**

What followed was a lively dialogue between my right hand and my left, between my Critical Inner Parent and a very assertive Child Within. As you will notice, the non-dominant handwriting appears in a different typeface. That will be the case throughout this book.

Left Hand: WHY ARE YOU SO IMPATIENT

Right Hand: Because I'm tired of waiting -- feels like sitting in a rut --

Left Hand: BUT LOOK AT THE PAINTINGS WE'VE DONE. LIKE NOTHING THAT WENT BEFORE.

Right Hand: I know but it seems like so little. I feel so ignorant when I look around -- all those other designers with all that technical skill -- THIS IS PIG PARENT SPEAKING. YOU'RE SO STUPID -- UNPROFESSIONAL CAN'T DO PERSPECTIVE DRAWING -- DO SAME OLD THING -- MOVE -- GODDAMMIT MOVE -- DO SOMETHING NEW -- I WANT TO SHAKE YOU -- HURRY UP

Left Hand: I HATE YOU WHEN YOU DO THIS. STOP PUTTING ME DOWN -- STOP I'M BEAUTIFUL AND MY BEAUTY GROWS AND GROWS AND MY STRENGTH GROWS I AM ALWAYS GROWING UP THERE'S NOTHING THAT CAN STOP ME

Then my right hand wrote a commentary from the Observer Within:



Right Hand: Sitting in a rut feels like

being shut in -- in the dark --

in the womb -- waiting to be

born into the light -- waiting

until the time comes

naturally -- not forcing,

not pushing -- just relaxing

and letting life happen

and letting me happen

naturally

What a relief I felt after writing this dialogue. And what an incredible discovery! I had found the key for dealing with that tyrannical critical voice living within. It was like watching my own fairy tale. My Inner Child freed herself from the spell of the "wicked step-mother" -- the Critical Parent within -- by expressing her natural reaction to criticism and pressure. A beautiful feeling of calm welled up from within as I wrote the last passage with my dominant hand. I realized I had found my own fairy godmother -- inside!

This dialogue between my right and left hand, between the Parent and Child, gave me a new perspective on my illness. In rereading the dialogue I was able to stand aside and witness the inner conflict. The inactivity of being sick in bed had felt like "sitting in a rut...shut in the dark." Suddenly, I understood the significance of my illness. It was part of being "born into the light." As I wrote the words "until the time comes naturally," and drew the little crouched fetus about to be born, there was a sudden shift. I could feel this loving and nurturing fairy godmother voice within coaching me through this rebirth. She spoke soothingly -- "not forcing, not pushing -- just relaxing and letting life happen and letting me happen naturally."

Of course, the inner Critical Parent had not been banished permanently. But now I had the tools for dealing with that nagging voice when it returned again. After acknowledging the critic, all I had to do was let my Inner Child express her feelings and know she was okay just the way she was.

Within a few weeks of this journal dialogue, I fully recovered from my illness. Incidentally, many years later the intuition of my Inner Child was confirmed regarding the nature of my condition. A diagnostician trained in iridology and sclerology informed me that I had been suffering with a life-threatening disease affecting the collagen, or connective tissue in the body. He also saw that I had recovered completely.

After resuming my career as a free-lance designer and artist, it became clear that my heart was no longer in that work. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that my Inner Child had lost enthusiasm for the decorative and commercial art that I was doing. All she wanted to do was write and draw the inner world of feelings and intuition. Of course, my Critical Parent panicked, believing that such personal art and writing was ugly, a waste of time, and incapable of providing me with a livelihood. Fortunately, I turned up the volume on the Inner Child's voice and followed my heart right into a career as an art therapist.

As my private practice evolved, Inner Child healing became the core of my work. This was not by conscious design. It just happened that way. I kept finding that regardless who my clients were, or which workshop I was leading, all roads seemed to take us back to the Inner Child. So I developed the techniques that had been central to my own recovery, and showed others how to use them. These methods include drawing, writing, play, movement, drama, and creative activities with clay and other media. These are the same tools and techniques that you will be using in this book to re-parent yourself.

### *Tools for Re-Parenting the Inner Child*

#### **DRAWING**

Those who have raised or educated children with awareness know that the creative arts are the natural language of the child. Given a healthy environment and the guidance of nurturing adults, children spontaneously express themselves through the arts. No one has to tell young children that creative expression is fun, and that it makes you feel good about yourself and the world. Pre-schoolers and kindergartners draw and paint, play with clay, build and construct, act, dance, and sing with great enthusiasm. They do not have to be coaxed or instructed.

When I was training teachers, my work included observing young children in classrooms throughout the United States, from inner-city ghettos to rural farm areas. These were children of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds: Asian and Hispanic refugees, blacks who had survived the Watts riots, farm workers, upper-middle-class suburbanites. No matter where these children were or what they looked like, they all had one thing in common: the language of art. This is no coincidence. Drawing comes before writing in a child's development. In fact, art therapy is used with children who cannot verbalize their feelings. What cannot be spoken can often be expressed more safely in art. And even if a child is articulate, sometimes words are not enough. Who can translate into words the precise meaning of a bold, black scribble? Watching a child release bottled-up rage or fear with crayons or clay is a profoundly moving experience.

It is no accident, then, that the *Inner Child* also expresses its feelings and needs more easily through art. In my workshops drawing has been one of the most direct and enjoyable ways of reaching the Inner Child. Drawing gets people out of their rational, analytical, adult frame of mind and immerses them in the Child state. We know that drawing comes predominantly from the right hemisphere of the brain. This is the side that seems to specialize in visual/spatial perception, as well as emotional and intuitive expression. What we often forget is that young children, by their very nature, are predominantly right-brained. That is why scribbling and drawing are so natural for them.

However, this enjoyment of right-brain, multisensory activity gets shut down through restrictive parenting and a left-brain school system that places an inordinate emphasis on verbal logic and memorization. With the exception of sports, right-brained learning modalities are the first to be dropped from school budgets. It is a well-known fact that the arts are the step-children of the curriculum. When the arts are eliminated from education, children lose one of their most powerful and enjoyable means of self-expression. As they "advance" through school, they are systematically forced to deny the voice of the Inner Child -- the feeling, playful, creative self.

This brings us to another dilemma: the widely held belief that only a few are talented and capable of expressing through art, and that the rest of us should not even bother. This erroneous belief has robbed most people of their natural birthright: the ability to express the Inner Child through creative arts. The truth is that anyone can draw or, for that matter, express him or herself through movement, dance, music, etc.

It is the Critical Parent Within (the product of society's brainwashing) that stops us from engaging in art activities just for the fun of it. It is the Critic who says, "You'll make mistakes. You'll look stupid. You make ugly art. Heaven forbid!" Sounds like a parent or schoolteacher belittling a child, doesn't it? If this all sounds painfully familiar to you, if you have heard this battle in your own head, then take heart. In a later chapter, we deal with inner criticism and judgment that blocks us from letting the Child Within express itself. And you will be guided in simple drawing and art activities designed specifically to let your Inner Child out.

As you allow yourself to draw, in spite of self-doubts and inner criticism, you relearn the language of the child. For if you want to embrace your Inner Child, it is important to meet it halfway. The intellectual, verbally complex language of adults keeps us separate from our Child Heart. On the other hand, when we draw our feelings out, we are speaking the language of the Inner Child.

The following drawings of the Inner Child were done by adults attending my workshops.

## **WRITTEN DIALOGUES**

In the early days of my art therapy practice, I shared with my clients the right/left-hand writing process that I had discovered in my journal work. It soon became clear that this technique helped *everyone* experience their Inner Child. They seemed to reach deeper levels of feelings, memories, and intuition than they did with art therapy alone. One explanation might be that the awkwardness and lack of control experienced when writing with the non-dominant hand actually puts us into the Inner Child state. Picture a young child just learning to make marks on paper, struggling to control the writing instrument. Many adults say that is exactly how they feel when first writing or drawing with their "other hand."

Now picture a slightly older child attempting to write words that "mean something," that communicate thoughts and feelings to others. For a youngster, this is a formidable challenge. Many adults regress to that experience when they begin writing with their unschooled hand. Their spelling and grammar resemble that of a little kid. This is even true of people who are highly educated and normally have very sophisticated verbal skills. It is obvious to me from watching this phenomenon so many times in workshops, with thousands of adults of all ages, that we are tapping into a part of the brain and a part of the psyche where the child lives.

Now there is often some resistance to writing with the non-dominant hand. We believe we cannot write with our "other" hand, so we never do it. We view the non-writing hand as retarded, and it is. It has had no training and practice. Our non-dominant hand has atrophied from lack of use, and has stayed frozen at a very early stage of development. The paradox is that it is this retarded "other hand" that can lead us back to our Inner Child.

There may also be some physiological reasons why the Inner Child speaks so naturally through the other hand. When I first began teaching this method, a student told me of a conversation she had had with Roger Sperry, a pioneer in right/left brain research. Upon telling Dr. Sperry about the creative and emotional expressiveness she was discovering through writing with her non-dominant hand, he responded: "You're opening up your right hemisphere." Sperry's comment stimulated in me an intense personal interest in brain research. I believe there are connections between brain research and Inner Child work, so I would like to discuss it briefly.

### ***The Brain, the Hand, and the Inner Child***

Each hemisphere of the human brain controls the opposite side of the body. It also appears that there are specialized functions for each half of the brain. The left brain contains language centers that control verbal

and analytical processing. It has been described as the linear and logical side of the brain. By contrast, the right brain appears to be primarily non-verbal and governs visual/spatial perception, as well as emotional expression and intuition.

My observations show that writing with the non-dominant hand directly accesses right-brain functions. This phenomenon holds true for both right-handers and left-handers. As we will see, this hand expresses feelings much more directly and with greater force. It also taps into a deeper level of instinct and emotional memory, which are so important for healing the Inner Child. When we write dialogues between the Child (non-dominant hand) and the adult or Inner Parent (dominant hand), we seem to be conversing between the two hemispheres of the brain.

A different model of the brain, which seems to hold great promise for understanding these deeper levels of instinct and feeling, is the Triune Brain Theory, developed by Dr. Paul D. MacLean (formerly chief of the National Institute of Mental Health Laboratory for Brain Evolution). MacLean's theory describes three separate but intimately connected brains, each successively nestled within the other, which reflect distinct stages of human evolution.

The oldest and deepest part of the brain, the *Reptilian Brain*, corresponds anatomically to the R-complex (medulla, pons, and spinal cord). It governs *survival instincts* such as food finding, mating, defending one's territory, and habitual behavior. The next layer to develop was the *Old Mammalian Brain* (Limbic System), which is the seat of *emotions*. It also receives and processes sensory input and communicates it to the other two brains. The youngest and outermost layer of the brain is the Neocortex, or the *New Mammalian Brain*. It is the "thinking cap" and controls abstract reasoning.

Much of psychotherapy has been done at this outer level of the Neocortex. These are the analytical and "talk" therapies. But as so many of us have found, these modalities do not reach the Inner Child. It could take years. The Inner Child speaks much more readily in the language of feelings: body movement, play, and the arts. When the Inner Child does use words, they are simple and direct and full of feeling.

Recently psychologist Álvaro López-Watermann has developed a theory based on his dream research correlating these evolutionary layers of the brain with distinct states of psychological experience. (His model adds a fourth brain, the *Peiskian Brain*, corresponding anatomically with the pineal gland.) According to López-Watermann, when consciousness identifies with a particular part of the brain (Peiskian, Reptilian, Old Mammalian, or New Mammalian), it produces a corresponding state -- transcendental, abstract dream, dream, or waking. (Every night our psyche experiences the cycle of the first three states while sleeping.) The activity of each of the four brains can be thought of as a semi-autonomous psychological entity. López-Watermann refers to these corresponding parts of the psyche as the *Regulator*, *Governor*, *Supportive (Emotional) Mind*, and *Intellect*. According to his theory, the language of the *Supportive Mind* is memory-images and feelings. It may be that when we experience the Inner Child state, this deeper and older emotional part of the brain (the Supportive Mind) is being brought into dominance.

Our present dilemma is that this deeper emotional part of the brain often becomes sealed off from our conscious awareness. Recent research shows that there are "gating" mechanisms that inhibit memory of painful early experiences. For survival's sake, the feeling Inner Child goes into the closet and the door is shut. Healing happens when we open the door and invite the Inner Child to come out and be a part of our lives. This is done in a safe atmosphere with respect and protection for that tender being. The techniques in this book are designed to help you create that safe atmosphere of trust so essential for healing your Inner Child.

One of the writing techniques you will be using most frequently is dialoguing with both hands. In these conversations you will ask questions with the dominant hand, the one you normally write with. And your Inner Child will respond through the non-dominant hand, the one you usually do not use for writing. As you see in the fragments of dialogues below, the Child speaks in its own voice: simple, to the point, and often charged with feeling.

You will also notice that the style of the dominant hand's writing is visually quite different from that of the non-dominant hand. This is to be expected. Through training and practice, our *dominant hand* developed manual dexterity, strength, and control. The "other hand," which was neglected, looks awkward, weak, and childlike.

In dialogues written with both hands, the skilled dominant hand speaks for the adult as well as our parental voices. Psychologically, this is perfectly understandable. It is the very nature of these adult and parental voices to value skill and control. In doing these dialogues the Critical Parent often becomes extremely frustrated with the slow and sloppy writing of the non-dominant hand (Inner Child). Like an impatient parent, the dominant hand will try to control the situation by yanking the pen away so it can speak for the Inner Child. Its attitude is that it knows best and can write better and faster. This occurrence mirrors what has happened to the Inner Child in our lives -- it has been dominated and controlled by our impatient and critical Inner Parent.

The problem is that this impatient parental self *does not know* how the Inner Child feels and therefore cannot speak for it. In these dialogues penmanship, spelling, and grammar are unimportant. It's the *feelings* that count. Try to listen to what the Child is saying and enjoy its precious little voice. You may be surprised at what it has to tell you!

If a critical reaction to your Inner Child's writing comes up, simply notice it. This is just your Critical Parent speaking. (We will deal more with the Critical Parent in Chapter 8.) Allow the Inner Child to keep writing with your non-dominant hand. One of the most beneficial aspects of right/left hand dialoguing is that it gives you a tangible experience of how you have been treating your Inner Child. With this new awareness you now have a choice to stay with the status quo or to change your ways and begin to honor the Child Within.

### ***Play and Creative Activities***

It is a well-known fact that children develop and learn through play. While playing they explore, test their limits, and develop skills. Allowed to play without pressure and criticism, children's true creativity blossoms from within. Watch any group of nursery school kids or kindergartners. Left to their own devices they will play with finger paints and clay, scribble with crayons, erect entire cities with building blocks, create magical castles and landscapes in the sandbox, and invent their own world through dramatic play with costumes and props.

Metaphors are natural to children. They adore make-believe. The youngest children create scenarios and act them out. They can turn anything into a prop. A broom handle becomes a sword. A garbage can lid becomes a shield, and a packing crate becomes a fort. No one has to teach children the fun of creative play. It is an intrinsic human ability that shows itself best in the child. On the contrary, society teaches children to *stop* being creative, to grow up, and to be "practical." If the Inner Child is to be fully reclaimed, this innate creativity must be allowed to express itself. This creative aspect of the Inner Child is often called the Magical Child (to be discussed in Chapter 10).

The expressive arts have a great deal to offer in healing the Inner Child. Creative activities done for the sheer

joy of the experience (without pressure to perform) inevitably allow us to revive the Inner Artist that we lost in growing up. The enrichment of our lives that results from this bursting forth of the Creative Child is so far-reaching as to be almost beyond words. You must experience it to believe it.

Interwoven throughout this book you will find playful activities for bringing out that delightful child/artist within who is full of wonderment, curiosity, and joy. You will get to put adulthood aside for periods of time while you experiment with crayons, clay, and other simple art materials. There will also be time to dance and move spontaneously from your Inner Child, to role-play, and to explore the mysterious world of your dreams.

At this point your Critical Parent may rear up its head and say to your Inner Child, "You can't paint. You can't draw. You don't have any talent. And anyway, I don't want you making a mess around here." If this happens just observe it. But do not let your Critical Parent stop you. If it becomes obstinate, have faith. You will learn to deal with the voice of criticism in a later chapter.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that these playful and creative activities are the Inner Child's natural realm. You are not imposing anything foreign or strange upon yourself. You are simply allowing your Inner Child to speak a forgotten language. Creative expression is the Child's true mother tongue; all children understand and speak it. This is your human heritage. Reclaim it. Experience for yourself what Joseph Campbell described as "the rapture of being alive." This is the gift your Inner Child has to give you.

## **MATERIALS**

Plain white paper (Xerox or computer paper)

Newsprint paper (18" x 24")

Felt pens (assorted colors)

Crayons (assorted colors)

Wet ceramic clay (hard work surface such as masonite or wood)

Scissors

Grocery bag

Personal calendar

Magazines with photos

Glue

Finger paints

Recorded music and sound system

Tape recorder and tape

You may wish to do the exercises in a notebook, sketchbook, or blank journal. Feel free to draw with colored pencils or pastels instead of felt pens or crayons if you wish.

## **GUIDELINES**

You can do the exercises in this book whenever you want, whenever you have something to work on with yourself. It is not necessary to work on this material every day; however, the more you do it, the more you will benefit. If it's suitable, set aside a special time each day, such as just before falling asleep. Keep a notebook and try to keep your entries in chronological order. It's a good idea to read this book one chapter at a time, in order to digest the material. Then do the exercises and continue on to the next chapter. If your style is to skim the entire book first to get an overview, then go back and do the exercises, that's fine; just don't expect to read and do all the exercises in one sitting.

*Safety* is essential, whether you are healing the Inner Child with the guidance of a professional, in a self-help support group, or on your own. Creating a home for the Child requires that you welcome it into an atmosphere that is safe.

When using this book as a guide to recovery of your Inner Child, it is very important *to keep your work confidential*. This is especially true when getting to know your *Vulnerable Child*. That is not to say that you cannot share certain portions of your work. But if you do, be highly selective. Share only with those who are supportive of your healing process and of you, such as your therapist, a trusted member of your support group, etc. If your Vulnerable Child feels safe with your spouse, lover, or best friend, sharing might be appropriate. If you have any doubts about who to share with, ask your Vulnerable Child. Do a right/left-hand dialogue. Ask the Child if it feels okay about sharing any of your work with this person or that one. Ask how much you should share and what specific content. Your Inner Child will let you know.

Do not share with individuals who are judgmental of you and try to control your feelings, thoughts, or behavior. It is foolish and destructive to expose the Inner Child to that type of energy or attitude. Highly opinionated people who are not receptive to who you are, and adults who are out of touch with their own Inner Child, cannot understand this kind of healing work. If you share your process with them, you will certainly be opening yourself to more damage of the Child Within.

In later chapters you will be given tools for providing healthy protection for your Inner Child. As you strengthen your Nurturing Parent Within as well as the Inner Protective Parent, the Child will feel stronger because it has both safety and support. Paradoxically, the little Child Within leads us to our true power. This is not power *over* others, nor control and manipulation. Rather, it is the power of the Inner Self, which is synonymous with our Higher Power or Higher Self. I prefer the term Inner Self because it reminds me that this power resides within, not on some remote mountaintop or far away in some unreachable heaven.

The Inner Child resides in the heart. As we open our heart to our own Inner Child, we open our heart to all. And that is how we find the source of our true power: love.

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