



# Progoff™ Wellness Newsletter

Summer, 2005

an Entry™ Publication

Vol. 1, Issue 1

Dale Raben & Jessica Haas, Co-Editors

Jon Progoff, Director

Dear Friend:

I am pleased to share with you the premiere issue of our newsletter on emotional wellness - the *Progoff™ Wellness Newsletter*.

For over a half century, *Progoff's* methodology for psychological growth has helped thousands of individuals to work through difficult issues in their lives.

Now, Dialogue House is taking additional steps to promote wellness by initiating research studies and offering our program to people suffering from specific illnesses, such as cancer.

The *Progoff™ Wellness Newsletter* provides a forum for conveying our many initiatives in fostering wellness. Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center is conducting our first scientific research study to determine the effectiveness of the *Intensive Journal* method upon a patient population of fibromyalgia.

I welcome your interest and involvement.

Jonathan Progoff

## Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Begins Study on Fibromyalgia Population

**R**obert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Brunswick, New Jersey has hired Dialogue House to conduct a series of *Intensive Journal* workshops as part of a pilot scientific study on patients with fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS). This elusive, debilitating condition is believed to be caused by both physiological and psychological factors, but the exact cause is unknown and no definitive method of treatment exists.

The Division of Rheumatology and Connective Tissue Research of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School will conduct the study under Afton Hassett, Psy.D., Assistant Professor of Medicine.

The two-month-long study aims at measuring the safety and efficacy of an *Intensive Journal* method intervention on a population of approximately 50

women between the ages of 18 and 70 who have been diagnosed with FMS. It is widely accepted that symptoms of FMS are either caused or worsened by emotional factors; therefore, if the program can improve these women's emotional states, then the physical symptoms of chronic pain they experience from FMS may be reduced.

"This study is an important milestone in the development of the *Intensive Journal* program," explains Jon Progoff, director of Dialogue House. "We have a great deal of anecdotal evidence that the method can benefit people in significant ways, but independent scientific research is needed to help us take the program to the next level."

Dr. Hassett states, "When people are exposed to chronic stress we forego good health habits. We  
*cont. on p. 4*

Dialogue House Associates, 799 Broadway, Suite 410, New York, NY 10003-6811 [www.intensivejournal.org](http://www.intensivejournal.org)

Phone: 212-673-5880/800-221-5844 Fax: 212-673-0582 Email: [info@intensivejournal.org](mailto:info@intensivejournal.org)

"Intensive Journal" (registered) and "Progoff" are trademarks of Ira Progoff and are used under license by Dialogue House.

## A Strategy for Total Healing

*Dr. Ira Progoff, founder of the Intensive Journal® method, believed that in order to heal physically, a person must also deal with the emotional components of illness. The following are excerpts from his article "Finding the Message of Illness."*

Despite the impressive successes of the medical arts, there has been a growing number of attempts to develop healing approaches that begin at a non-Western starting point and proceed with a non-medical orientation. It would be a mistake to view the medical and non-medical approaches as alternatives to each other. Rather, the fact that the modern medical approach to healing is not universally accepted despite its many achievements should be a sign to us that, beyond the needs for which the medical arts have developed forms of treatment, there are additional human needs that reach out for help in a healing context.

When healing is successfully achieved by forces external to the integral process of the person's life--whether by modern medicine or by non-medical procedures--the net effect is to release the individual from the task of finding the personal significance of the illness. It may be, as is often the case, that the fact that the illness occurred in the first place is a message to the person with respect to the conduct of life, seeking to call attention to particular aspects of the life or to the conduct of the life as a whole.

If the healing takes place too quickly, nothing new will be learned. The pain of the illness has been experienced, but we can truly say that the pain was in vain since it led to no new awareness. We come thus to the question of whether we have to avoid the rapid healing of illnesses in order to have time to learn the messages they are carrying for us. Not at all. We may allow ourselves to be healed as quickly as possible, provided that we understand the difference between an illness being healed by the intervention of factors that are external to our personal inner process, and an illness that has been healed because its message has been absorbed into the consciousness of our life as a whole.

Our bodies are organs of experience by which meaning can enter our lives. When our bodies become ill or are injured, they need to be healed. The essence of healing does not lie in the efficiency with which the body and its parts can be restored to strength. It lies in the meaning that is added to the life of the person who suffers the illness or injury. This meaning is not something that can be given to the person from the outside, as a belief can be stated and recommended, or as a treatment of the body can be given from the outside. This added meaning can come only by means of an experience that takes place within the person as an individual finds internally the message carried by an illness, absorbs it into consciousness, and allows it in its own timing to disclose its meaning for life.

Originally published in *Spiritual Aspects of the Healing Arts* by Dora Kunz (Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1985), pp. 197-209. This is an excerpted version of the article "Finding the Message of Illness" by Ira Progoff, Ph.D.

## Progoff Wellness Committee

We are pleased to announce the formation of the Progoff Wellness Committee (PWC), consisting of prominent professionals from several major medical universities working in medicine, nursing, psychiatry, and other mental health fields, for the purpose of helping us plan and develop programs for selected populations. The members of the PWC have been involved in the *Intensive Journal* Program over the years and share a deep belief in its value and potential.

The members of the Progoff Wellness Committee are:

**Marita Grudzen, M.H.S.**, Associate Director, Stanford Geriatric Education Center; Lecturer, Division of Family and Community Medicine, Stanford University School of Medicine

**Afton L. Hassett, Psy.D.**, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Clinical Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Div. of Rheumatology & Connective Tissue Research, Dept. of Medicine, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Univ. of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey

**E. Jane Martin, Ph.D., R.N., C.S., C.R.N.P., H.N.C., F.A.A.N.**, Dean and Professor, West Virginia University School of Nursing

**Jacek J. Mostwin, M.D., D.Phil.**, Professor of Urology, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; Director, Division of Reconstructive and Neurological Urology, James Buchanan Brady Urological Institute

**B.W. Ruffner, Jr., M.D., F.A.C.P.**, Medical Oncologist; Chairman, UT Physicians

**Ron Wright, M.D., Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry; Director, Telemedicine in Psychiatry, University of Arizona

---

---

## Building a Portfolio of Case Histories

Dialogue House is preparing a collection of case histories written by *Intensive Journal* workshop participants that document how the method helped them deal with major physical or emotional issues.

- **“Surviving the Emotional Consequences of Cancer” by Vic T.**  
*Having survived three separate bouts with cancer...the Intensive Journal method has been an indispensable tool during times of hardship. [I]t has helped me deal more effectively with the seriousness of a life-threatening illness and any emerging difficult issues and emotions.*
- **“Overcoming Trauma” by Liz S.**  
*I learned to listen to my own inner voice of wisdom,...and opened up to acceptance of myself, my life situation and continuing challenges. I was able to discern what my real issues are, rather than the superficial, easy-to-identify triggers. I was able to begin to take those first tentative steps towards answering the life-defining questions: Who am I? How shall I survive? Where do I go from here?*
- **“Overcoming My Addiction” by Patricia Burns**  
*During my first workshop, I acknowledged for the first time that I was alcoholic. My drinking behavior kept coming up in different parts of the Intensive Journal workbook--I realized that alcohol had dominated my life...I felt I made a breakthrough in my problems--insight into myself and behavior instead of just experiencing confusion and depression. It was a powerful feeling.*
- **“Using the *Intensive Journal* Method to Cope With Bipolar Disorder” by Gerald C. Johnson**  
*Since my diagnosis, the *Journal* has guided me in working through feelings regarding my condition and in understanding my mood changes....I was able to hold on to a sense of my actual self, separate from my manic states....The *Journal* helped me see my life as normal, even when it felt...out of control....[B]y being conscious of my disease, I could work through it and try to prevent relapses.*

cont. from page 1

also experience physiological symptoms—loss of sleep, muscle ache, grinding teeth and increased symptoms of disease.” Hassett reported in a study published in 2003 in the *Journal of Internal Medicine* that prolonged stress can exacerbate existing medical conditions.

The manifestation of psychological problems as physical ailments seems to be the case with sufferers of FMS. These patients experience a wide range of physical symptoms, including widespread pain, headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, sleep disorders, numbness and tingling sensations, and varying degrees of jaw discomfort. FMS might be triggered by certain physiological events, such as an infection, a car accident, or the development of another disorder such as rheumatoid arthritis, but there is evidence that the underlying problem is an abnormality in pain-related chemical transmitters in the brain.

“What’s going on in the brain is very important,” says Frank Keefe, Ph.D., a specialist in psychotherapy at Ohio University. “Thoughts and feelings can have a great impact on the pain experience.” Thus, it is the brain that creates the perception of pain and, what’s more, evidence indicates that the brain changes with chronic pain. Dr I. Jon Russell of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in San Antonio suspects that FMS patients exemplify this phenomenon. “In fibromyalgia, we don’t see discernible tissue damage that would cause pain. It appears that within the central nervous system, something has happened to the pain perception process.”<sup>1</sup>

Subjects will participate in weekend workshop sessions spread out over a two- or three-month period, consisting of both the Life Context and Depth Contact modules. Before and after the study, participants will complete self-assessment questionnaires pertaining to symptoms they are experiencing; additionally, participants will be asked to complete homework assignments to ensure the continuation of work with the method between sessions.

All *Intensive Journal* sessions will be lead by experienced Journal Consultant Rev. John McMurry, S.T.L., Ph.D. Mr. McMurry serves as Director of St. Mary’s Spiritual Center in Baltimore,

Maryland, and has been a certified leader with our program since 1978. McMurry states:

I am grateful for the opportunity to lead Progoff *Intensive Journal* Workshops for fibromyalgia patients because I credit that program with helping me get at the roots of certain physical symptoms in the course of my life over the past 30 years. I believe it has the potential to play a similar role in the lives of other people. The program helps us actively engage in the process of discovering something new in old relationships which may have been troubled. Such relationships are not only with people but also with our own bodies and with events, situations and circumstances that “just happened” even though we would rather they had not happened.

After completing all workshop sessions, participants will answer the questionnaires a second time. Their answers will be compared to those of the questionnaires completed prior to the study, to determine whether the *Intensive Journal* method had a statistically significant effect on the population and if additional study is warranted. □

### Contributions

We wish to thank all of the individuals and organizations who contributed generously to help us fund the *Intensive Journal* program. In particular, we want to acknowledge the following foundations and individuals for their substantial donations:

The Aloha Fund  
The Atlanta Foundation  
Community Foundation of New Jersey  
Kitchel-McLaughlin Family Fund  
New Hampshire Charitable Foundation  
Kenneth Schroder  
Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign

<sup>1</sup>Kossoff, Mirinda J. “I Hurt All Over.” *Psychology Today* May/June 1999.

Corporate Underwriting provided by Chicago-Soft (www.chicago-soft.com), the official communications sponsor for Dialogue House Associates.