

# Learning to Listen to a Greater Knowing

Tom Monte

In the summer of 1985, I found myself driving on a busy boulevard in Los Angeles looking for a street that would eventually lead me to the home of Lorne Greene, the actor who starred in the long-running television series, *Bonanza*.

The reason for my visit with Greene was that I was writing a biography of Nathan Pritikin, who had healed tens of thousands of people of life-threatening illnesses with a plant-based diet and a gentle exercise program.

Lorne Greene was among the many people whom Nathan had helped; he was also one of Nathan's earliest supporters.

On the day of my interview, the weather was hot and humid, and as I hurried along on that busy street, I realized that I was hopelessly lost and getting more stressed by the minute. The street on which I traveled was an L.A. nightmare—strip malls, liquor stores, and check cashing outlets—and not a soul in sight. Lorne Greene lived in the hills of Bel Air, which was only a few miles away, but at that moment felt like another universe.

Complicating matters was the fact that Lorne Greene was something of



**TOM MONTE GATHERING FIREWOOD**

an icon in the family in which I was raised. We rarely missed an episode of *Bonanza*, and Greene, who played the patriarch of the Ponderosa, Ben Cartwright, was a symbol of rectitude. You didn't show up late for Ben Cartwright.

My inner critic, judge, and saboteur filled my mind with dark scenarios while it feasted on my stress. And then the unexpected happened.

I was driving south when I happened to look to my left, across the northbound lane, to a used car lot on the other side of the street. On the edge of the lot was a sign, about six feet high, and six feet wide. The message on the sign was spelled out in small, flashing light bulbs, which caught my attention.

The sign had a simple message: "Let us help you." The message kept flashing, "Let us help you... Let us help you... Let us help you..."

Cars were rushing by, traffic was heavy, and part of me was focused on driving, but a deeper part was stirred awake by the startling synchronicity of the moment, and the comforting message that had reached my heart. A visceral impulse pinged in the area of my solar plexus and rose into consciousness, offering a small elaboration on the sign's message: "You are not alone. We can change everything for the good. Let us help you." Suddenly, I was open and every cell in my body functioned differently.

To my surprise, I saw a man stand-

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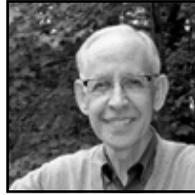
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- ◆ Past dean of Oriental medicine school

ing on the corner to my right, waiting for the traffic light to change. Without even thinking, I pulled over, lowered the passenger-side window, and asked the man if he knew how I could get to a specific street, which was the street where Lorne Green lived.

He did. And with a certain pleasure that people feel when they know they are being helpful—and indeed, when they realize their help is received with gratitude—he directed me to Lorne Greene’s street. I arrived at Greene’s house on time, in fact, a few minutes early.

### MORE COMMON THAN ACKNOWLEDGED

Experiences like this one happen to everyone. I’m sure that, at this very moment, you could recall several of them off the top of your head.

Just as significant is the fact that they happen with some regularity, though most of us are pretty good at overlooking them, or forgetting them fairly quickly.

Still, some of these experiences are stored in our memory as precious reminders of an unexplainable magic that took hold of us when we were lost, or in trouble, or when failure seemed inevitable, and yet somehow we were guided to safety or success by a power greater than our circumstances.

These experiences are not limited to times of stress. Ask people how they met their partner, or spouse, or a beloved teacher who changed their lives, and they will tell you a story filled with the most improbable coincidences, and the most delicate and unbelievable timing. Inevitably, they

will tell the story with a smile on their face, and often with child-like laughter, knowing full well that these experiences are real-life fairy tales, though all too often rejected by the overly rational or cynically minded.

The very universality of such experiences (not to mention their regularity) is of great significance, because they reveal the nature of their Source.

As Fred Rogers, the beloved sage of the PBS children’s program, “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” used to say, “Whenever you’re in trouble, look for the helpers. They’re always there.”

That’s worth remembering, especially in times like these, when chaos seems to be rising, and the cultural tensions seduce us into the false belief that our challenges can be overcome through argument and conflict. Perhaps more important is the possible message that that Help may be communicating to us: “Let us help you learn to listen and receive Our help.”

Learning to listen to the Source-of-Help is a good idea no matter what one’s current life condition may be, but it can be especially important when life seems challenging.

Listening is one of those activities that everyone thinks he or she understands, and practices, and therefore doesn’t have to take seriously. In the age of chaos, talk is king, and all too often, the loud, frustrated, and violent king.

Listening is something else entirely. Indeed, it is a way into another dimension of life. The journey into that dimension takes us beyond the chaos of fear and anger, beyond the confinement of our all-too-familiar thought patterns, and into the expanded states of compassion, insight, and love.

We have all experienced those places, too. But even as we experience this mysterious web of life, even as we acknowledge that, at times, we have felt guided by a larger force, we still seek tangible proof that a Greater Intelligence is present within us, and is offering help on a day-to-day basis.

For that, you need look no further than to your own physical body.

## THE WONDERS WITHIN

About nine years ago, I spent an afternoon with one of the leading geneticists in the world, a man by the name of Jim Broach, PhD, who was then the associate director of the Lewis-Sigler Institute for Integrative Genomics at Princeton University. Dr. Broach was describing the awesome events that take place within each of our cells, and how our cells are constantly adapting to the ever-changing conditions of our internal and external environments in order to sustain health.

He pointed out that within each of our cells, tiny messenger proteins, known as *kinases*, travel along a complex system of pathways to turn on, or turn off, myriad activities within the cell.

To help me understand the magnitude and complexity of this intracellular communications network, Dr. Broach held up a chart of the pathways within the cell of a fruit fly. The schematic looked like a map of the Los Angeles freeway system, only doubled.

Each protein messenger, or kinase, has to travel along these highways, making turns left and right, up and down, to arrive at exactly the right location on the cell membrane, or to the mitochondria, or to a specific gene on the genome.

The genome, shaped like a twisted ladder, is composed of 3 billion

base pairs (the rungs of the ladder) and contains approximately 25,000 genes. When you consider that your life depends on these little kinases arriving at exactly the right place on the ladder, activating or silencing exactly the right gene, at exactly the right moment, you start to appreciate how complex the work is, and how important it is that these tiny messengers get things right.

Meanwhile, the entire symphony is constantly adapting to myriad changes in your biochemistry, which itself is constantly in flux as a consequence of your food, beverages, nutritional status, drugs (if taken); the quantity and quality of water you drink; your blood levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide; the presence of pathogens and poisons; the relative strength of the immune system; your insulin and other hormone levels; the inflammatory conditions throughout your body; any malfunctioning and aberrant cells that you may produce; and, of course, the biochemical consequences of your stress, fear, anger, sadness, joy, and various lifestyle habits, such as your exercise patterns, or the absence of exercise patterns. And then there are the potentially infinite energetic changes, both from within and without.

The web of interconnecting influences to which your body must adapt goes on forever.

And all of these adaptations are taking place in every one of your cells, which number between 60 trillion and 100 trillion. You are made up of more cells than the number of stars, not just in the Milky Way Galaxy, but in more than a hundred galaxies.

Each of us is a mini-Universe, functioning on the micro and macroscopic levels simultaneously, striving for, and often achieving, a harmony

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that is at once awesome and at the same time unimaginable.

The more clearly we witness the miraculous workings of the body, the more we realize that we live on a constant stream of information that flows from a Source that can only be described as Divine.

It's by no means a stretch to use the word Divine, because the job would be analogous to writing not one book, but 100 trillion books, simultaneously, managing all the plot lines, and all the characters, and bringing all 100 trillion books into a single unified epic, one of singular beauty and artistic perfection that, yes, ultimately emerges as a living thing that can write its own story.

Right, I can't do that either, but I bow to the Intelligence that can.

What's more, there is no reason to believe that the information flowing from such Divine Intelligence is limited strictly to the function of cells, organs, and the overall system. Indeed, such an Intelligence could easily offer us guidance in all matters of daily life, even as it gives us a choice to listen to that guidance, or simply ignore it.

## FOUR POSSIBILITIES IN THE WAKE OF DR. BROACH

I immediately saw four crucial insights that could be drawn from my talk with Dr. Broach.

1. The information flowing to cells is constant. Without the Maestro conducting this symphony, it would be impossible to maintain the human form, much less human health. Existence, if such a thing were possible without the Maestro, would be reduced to a soup of cellular chaos.

2. The guidance flowing from Divine Intelligence is most easily accessed from within the human body. The information flows into the body

first, most abundantly in the heart and solar plexus, and is then made conscious in the mind. (Research done on intuition by HeartMath Institute confirms this observation; scientists have found that intuitive perceptions are received first in the solar plexus and heart channel and then transferred to the brain, where it is made conscious.)

3. The Intelligence flows most efficiently and abundantly when the body is experiencing compassion, a form of love, and love itself. Love is a balancing, healing, and creative energy that is conveyed through many

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mediums. It is abundant in nature, and all of nature's creations, including whole, unprocessed plant food. It flows in a lover's embrace, a healer's touch, in beauty, in art, in true wisdom, and in words spoken in truth from the heart. Wherever love is, so too is the Healing Intelligence.

4. Finally, the greatest obstruction to receiving Divine Intelligence—that is to say, receiving the information in our cells, in our consciousness, and thus sustaining health on all levels—is internal dissonance, or sustained chaos, within cells and the overall system.

Where does this dissonance, this internal noise, arise from? The short answer is dualities that have not been

reconciled in love.

## THE DANGER OF EXTREMES THAT DO NOT HARMONIZE

We of the macrobiotic enterprise have a great advantage over many other healing and spiritual practices. Our great forebears, the Ohsawas, the Kushis, and the Aiharas, et al., passed on to us the wisdom that everything oscillates between yin and yang and in the process creates frequencies that, when they fall within certain ranges, give rise to order and health, and when they exceed those margins, lead to dissonance, chaos, and destruction.

As we all know, this oscillating reality is present in all phenomena, including our food, thoughts, emotional states, behavior, and environmental conditions.

The energetic states of fear, anger, hostility, hatred, greed, and violence are essentially states of conflict, or energies in opposition within themselves, and therefore are unreconciled dualities. When viewed on an electroencephalograph or polygraph test, these energetic states (high beta waves, ranging from 16 to 50 cycles per second) are illustrated as chaotic, jagged waves, with high amplitude (waves that rise well above a median line).

The body can't bear these waves for very long—they cut off the Intelligence that sustains life—and therefore attempts to discharge them in order to restore some degree of rest. Unfortunately, discharging anger, fear, hostility, and violence infects others with those same conflicting energies, and thus leads to more of the same.

Dualities are not inherently the problem. Rather, the real concern are dualities that do not reconcile and achieve a state of balance, which

forms the basis for feelings of safety, understanding, and compassion, and thus restores the flow of Divine Intelligence.

## THE EVOLUTION OF LISTENING

Listening is generally considered an activity that takes place between two or more people, but the practice of connecting to the Deeper Knowing begins with learning to listen to your own inner world. Once that happens, you can use the practice to listen to others. But the process begins with learning to listen within.

As everyone knows, that's a lot harder than it sounds. There are barriers and painful encounters waiting in us all.

When traveling to mysterious and sacred places, it helps to have a map. A map of the inner world reveals that human consciousness is layered. The upper layers—that is to say, the energetic states closest to our daily awarenesses—are most often dualistic in nature, meaning they are dominated by fear and its many conflict-producing derivatives, including fear-based beliefs, judgments, anxiety, anger, rage, and terror—the whole dark menu. These states are covered over by persona, but they are easily evoked, precisely because they tend to be closer to the surface of our awareness.

A little further down, things begin to quiet and stabilize, and as they do, your inner virtues appear—your honesty, courage, power, and dignity. Below these are the softer states of sadness, grief, openness, and vulnerability. And below the tender states are found the truly great healing forces of compassion and love.

These states exist within us all, but when we begin the journey inward, the first feelings to arise are

usually the situations, feelings, and memories that cause us distress. Our culture has trained us to judge feelings such as fear, anger, anxiety, rage, and hatred as unacceptable, and that experiencing them automatically make us wrong or somehow inferior.

Yet, these and other dark feelings exist within us—indeed, they drive the news cycle—and are part of the human condition. Unless we confront these extreme states within ourselves, and restore them to harmony, they will drive our thoughts and behaviors, and thus cause more suffering for ourselves and others.

Among the ways we can reconcile dualities is by turning our attention to our own inner lives, to listen deeply to whatever is thought or felt within. As we do, we can begin to utilize a special power that we all have been given, the gift of pure awareness,

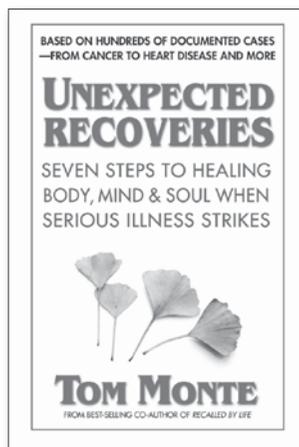
which is to say, the ability to listen, and feel, without any judgment, or denial, or emotion, or attachment, or any trace of self-rejection.

In the light of pure awareness, the darker states become calmer, and with a little time, start to dissipate, allowing deeper layers to emerge into awareness.

If you have any trouble reaching pure awareness, start your journey inward with the mindset of a loving mother or father who is ready to embrace whatever arises into your consciousness, or be the open mind of a great detective, who looks dispassionately at every emerging state as a clue, a stepping stone, to deeper truths.

Emotions are like surface water, turbulent yes, but as we travel into greater depths of our being, listening carefully, feeling deeply, we en-

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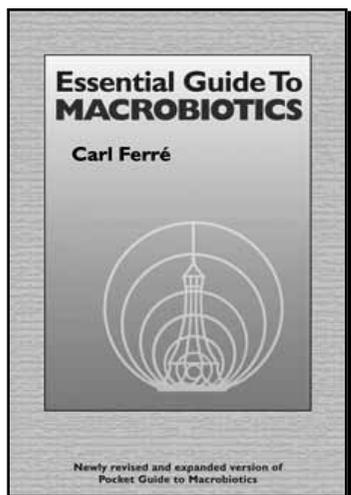
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ter other realms where rich personal truths emerge, free of the emotional dissonance that often surrounds them. As we penetrate our fear, we discover what we are truly afraid of. As we look deeply into our anger, we find the details of why we feel unsupported, unappreciated, or unloved. As we continue to listen, the aperture of our awareness opens even wider, allowing even more tender, undefended truths to emerge, which lead to the pure experience of suffering and the existential state that we all share, which is feeling alone.

At this depth, a remarkable transformation occurs: We are met by an unmistakable and unexpected Love. The heart opens. Tears of pain, gratitude, hope, and love flow into the body and our consciousness. Compassion streams into those regions of being that have long been deprived of love and understanding. There is healing and renewal.

Inevitably, a gentle impulse is felt in the body that brings with it a mild but unmistakable enthusiasm. We are suddenly inspired with a sudden realization; we see clearly what action must be taken, which path must be traveled. Somehow, we feel more courageous and ready to take on challenges that previously caused us to withdraw in fear. We have been blessed with the guidance from a Deeper Knowing, and with virtues that were always present within us, but were buried too deep to call upon. Indeed, we have encountered Divine Intelligence, though only in hindsight might we recognize it as such.

Many spiritual practices clear dissonance, including meditation, prayer, chanting, yoga, and reading spiritual literature. But perhaps all of these approaches are more effective when we eat whole, unprocessed, organically grown plant foods, which

restore order and balance to our biochemistry, and thus facilitate the flow of Healing Intelligence as no other practice can. Eating well is at the foundation for a spiritual approach to life.

Clearing dissonance is the first step. The second is to listen deeply and compassionately to our own interior lives, and in the process reconciling our own inner conflicts.

Our times are marked by cacophony of many voices, all of them claiming to have the answers to our many dilemmas. Meanwhile, a still small voice within us all speaks in whispers, offering healing solutions that all of us seek.

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*Tom Monte has written or coauthored more than thirty-five books on health, healing, and personal transformation. In addition to Unexpected Recoveries, his works include the best-sellers, Recalled By Life and Living Well Naturally (both with Dr. Anthony Sattilaro). He is the coauthor (with Elliot Tiber) of Taking Woodstock, which was made into a feature film by famed director, Ang Lee. He also wrote World Medicine: The East West Guide to Healing Your Body, and The Complete Guide to Natural Healing, which provides natural healing methods for more than 120 illnesses and disorders. For more, see [www.TomMonte.com](http://www.TomMonte.com).*

