


[HOME](#)
[ABOUT](#)
[NEWS](#)
[PROJECTS](#)
[INSPIRATION](#)
[ARTIST SUPPORT](#)

Read past issues:
[AHN News Archive](#)

[AHN Bulletin Board](#)
 Post and read messages!

[Join our Mailing List](#)

AHN NEWS: September 2005

This month's news is a special edition on the healing power of WRITING & JOURNALING. We open the issue with an article on "[The Art of Journaling](#)" by award-winning author and cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien. This month we also highlight six of the many wonderful books recently published about writing and healing, each offering a unique angle. *Journalution* is a fun, spirited guide to journaling as a tool for healing and realizing your dreams. *A Healing Journey: Writing Together Through Breast Cancer* describes the author's profound experience of leading a breast cancer group in writing practice. *The Writing Cure* is a very thorough and theoretical look at expressive writing and its ability to promote health and well being. *Write Your Self Well* and *Writing to Heal* are two interactive guides that include blank pages for you to get started right away. Lastly, *The I Ching for Writers* is a wonderful tool to spark creativity and overcome writer's block. We hope this issue will inspire you to pick up your pen and put words to paper in whatever form best suits you.

FEATURED ARTICLE:

"The Art of Journaling"

By Angeles Arrien, award-winning author and cultural anthropologist



Angeles Arrien

The art of journaling has been well documented as a practice that reduces stress, strengthens the immune system, and provides a crucible for the expression of emotional integrity. It is an active tool that eventually develops the objective, fair witnessing mind and the ability to track one's experience. Tracking is an essential component of any spiritual practice or journaling discipline. In tracking, we focus attention, maintaining curiosity, and equanimity as we look at whatever is surfacing in our minds and heart in the moment. If we can track our experience, we can integrate it.

Many traditional societies track the Four Rivers of Life on a daily basis so that they will not succumb to "walking the procession of the living dead". These four rivers

of life are named -- inspiration, challenge, surprise, and love. At the beginning or end of each day, it is important to track these four rivers of life within ourselves, within our relationships, within our families, within our organizations and communities to make sure that we are still alive, refusing to walk the procession of the living dead.

The River of Inspiration

The river of inspiration reveals where we are in touch with our creative fire and our life dream. Any time that we experience expansion or hope, or feel uplifted, we are in the presence of creativity. Who or what is inspiring me in my life at this time? As long as we can still be inspired, we know we are alive, refusing to join the procession of the living dead.

The River of Challenge

The River of Challenge calls us to stretch and grow beyond what is knowable or familiar. We notice who or what is asking us to leave our comfort zones and explore uncharted creative areas or interests. This river always asks us to move past any fixed notion of what we can do. If we are willing to be challenged, to be explorers again, our allegiance shifts from our pattern of staying within our "comfort zones," to growing, learning, and discovering that which we have not explored before.

The River of Surprise

The river of surprise keeps us fluid and flexible, and requires us to open to options and possibilities that we may not have considered. The Inuit have a saying about it: "There are two plans for every day—my plan and the Mystery's plan." This river reveals where we have become rigid or controlling rather than curious, flexible, and ready to trust what emerges for our consideration. The River of Surprise shows us where our attachments repress the natural flow of creativity and generativity.

The River of Love

The river of love shows us where we are touched and moved by life's experience. What are you learning about love at this point in your journey? What do you know about love, and what do you want to pass on to your children or loved ones about love? If we are no longer touched or moved by life's experience, our heart has begun to close. Humor, joy, laughter, and love are considered medicines for the heart by some indigenous peoples. This river also indicates that work and service that has heart and meaning is also an expression of love. Kahlil Gibran reminds us of the value of service: "Work is love made visible." What is the work in service that you are currently involved in that has total heart and meaning for you?

1) How will you use your generative energies and stay connected to The Four Rivers of Life?

2) Which of The Four Rivers of Life are you most comfortable or least comfortable with: the river of inspiration, the river of challenge, the river of surprise, or the river of love?

By tracking these four rivers daily in your journal, you will begin to wean yourself away from any temptation or seduction to walk the procession of the living dead and continue to grow in proactive and generative ways within your life.

--This article is an excerpt from Angeles Arrien's book, *The Second Half of Life: Opening the Eight Gates of Wisdom*.

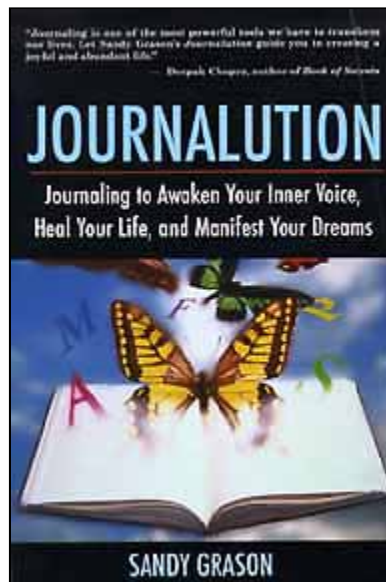
Angeles Arrien is a cultural anthropologist, award-winning author, educator, and consultant to many organizations and businesses. She lectures and conducts workshops worldwide, bridging cultural anthropology, psychology, and comparative religions. Her books include *The Four Fold Way: Walking the Paths of the Warrior, Teacher, Healer, and Visionary*, *The Nine Muses: A Mythological Path to Creativity*, and most recently, *The Second Half of Life: Opening the Eight Gates of Wisdom*. To learn more about her outstanding work, please visit her web site at www.angelesarrien.com



FEATURED BOOK:

Journalution: Journaling to Awaken Your Inner Voice, Heal Your Life, and Manifest Your Dreams

By Sandy Grason



"Journ-nal-u-tion 1. the act of revealing inner wisdom through writing. 2. the act of cleansing emotional blocks through writing. 3. journal writing to produce or further radical change from within. 4. a process for becoming free from confusion or doubt. 5. a process for discovering or shining in one's passion and purpose. 6. a journey from one place to another (i.e. from where you are now to the life of your dreams)." -Sandy Grason

Inspired by a dream, Sandy Grason began exploring the concept of "journalution." As Grason explains, "The word journalution sums up the exact feeling I get from journaling. It's so much more than just writing down what's going on in your life. Journalution is a revolution of your soul. It's the inspiration that comes when you release your doubts

and fears onto the blank pages of your journal and your inner wisdom comes shining through." This fun-spirited book offers exercises and advice for guiding you deeply

into yourself and toward your calling in life. She begins with the logistics of where, when, why and how often one would journal and moves on to offer many prompts and exercises that help you cleanse and celebrate your past, be more deeply aware of your true self, and clarify your hopes, dreams, and visions. This is a wonderful book for anyone interested in using a journal for self-discovery and healing.

This 200-page paperback was published by New World Library in 2005. [Please click here](#) to order through Amazon.com.

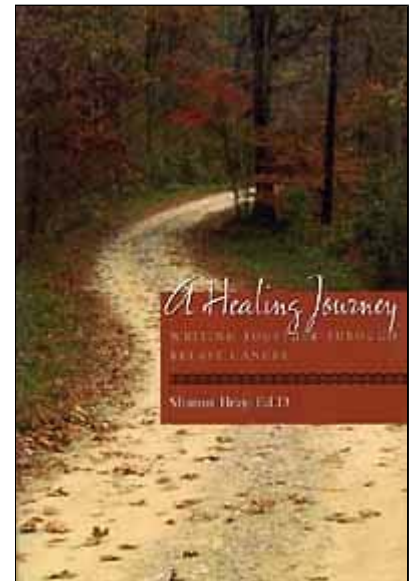
FEATURED BOOK:

A Healing Journey: Writing Together Through Breast Cancer

By Sharon Bray

"Healing, in the context of cancer, takes many forms. Writing does not cure cancer, but it helps heal the wounded spirit. It helps us come to terms with our illness and our lives. It helps us to find community and support with each other." -Sharon Bray

This book recounts Sharon Bray's story of becoming a writing group leader for women living with cancer. It is a very moving account, grounded in practical information. Bray begins by outlining ways to create safety and the basic principles for a healthy workshop. She dedicates a chapter to summarizing the data on the healing power of writing. Then she shares her own journey from cancer to writing and leading workshops, as well as the stories of the women in her writing group. Interspersed throughout the book are poems and short pieces by women from her writing group - each very raw and powerful. Practical information such as the writing exercises in the appendix and the extensive bibliography make this book useful for anyone wishing to lead a group in writing practice. Overall, this book is a testament to how the healing power of writing is enhanced by a group context where words can be witnessed, and support and inspiration from each other are plenty.



This 148-page paperback was published by Amherst Writers & Artists Press in 2004. [Please click here](#) to order this book through Amazon.com.

FEATURED BOOK:

The Writing Cure: How Expressive Writing Promotes Health and Emotional Well-Being

Edited by Stephen J. Lepore and Joshua M. Smyth