

To Be Or Not to Be Transpersonal: Can Hakomi Embrace the Whole without Embracing the Soul?

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Editor's Note: In this article Rhonda Mattern accepts the invitation offered in the last issue of the *Hakomi Forum* to comment on Keating Coffey's article that asked whether Hakomi should or should not become more explicitly transpersonal in its self-description and teaching. This is an open discussion that continues to invite more responses.

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ABSTRACT: Keeping Maslow's original vision for transpersonal psychology in mind, this article contributes to recent dialogue about whether or not Hakomi should become "more transpersonal." Through an examination of Hakomi's practice of loving presence, its unity principle, and consumer research, the author finds compelling evidence for Hakomi explicitly acknowledging and engaging the soul (Self-Atman-Buddha nature-higher nature).

Introduction

Sometimes I wonder what Abe Maslow would think to see us endlessly discussing a term that he himself wasn't sure was a good fit for the revolutionary new psychology he envisioned: helping people to self-actualize by accessing their higher nature. Although Maslow was among the first to consider the word *transpersonal* to describe this new discipline, he didn't appear attached to the term. In his groundbreaking book, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, he launched an even more radical proposition: perhaps one day a psychology that embraces man's higher nature will be so commonplace that we'll simply call it *psychology* (Maslow, 1968, p.189).

Only a visionary the likes of Maslow could propose something so unthinkable yet so obvious, so simple yet so challenging to achieve. A psychology that helps people to access their higher intelligence might seem like a "no-brainer," but half a century later, few transpersonal psychologies have come anywhere close to achieving it. The Summer 2008 *Hakomi Forum* indicated that Ron Kurtz is considering taking a step closer to Maslow's vision:

Central to all wisdom traditions is a relying on and leaning into a sense of greater intelligence in the universe, whether this is called void, God, Self, Krishna, or by some other name... Wisdom traditions tell us that within us and around us there is consciousness of a spiritual and wise quality which supports the unfolding of our unique and human potential... Ron's refined version of [Hakomi] is moving toward an explicit inclusion of this as a

foundational principle of the method (Myullerup-Brookhuis, 2008, p.71).

Should Hakomi explicitly articulate the soul-Self-higher nature in its principles? And if it does, should it also expand its aims to include helping people to self-actualize by accessing their higher nature? This article will examine these questions through three lenses that make a compelling case for doing so: Hakomi's practice of loving presence, its unity principle, and consumer research, a topic with rich insights for any organization considering a significant evolutionary shift.

The Lens of Loving Presence

How might the practice of loving presence influence whether or not Hakomi should offer its clients a healing method that embraces body, mind, emotions *and* soul or Self? As a potential Hakomi consumer who spent years looking for a holistic healing method, my personal journey might shed some light on this topic.

Armed with years of transcendent experiences of my higher nature, and deep psychological wounds, I spent over two decades looking for an experiential, spiritually-oriented approach to psychological healing. In the early 1990's, someone mentioned "a type of bodywork" called Hakomi, so I passed it by. Years later, I ran into a book (Kurtz, 1990) describing Hakomi as "body-centered;" that didn't sound holistic, so I didn't even crack the cover. Last year when a colleague explained that Hakomi was in fact "consciousness-centered," I began devouring Hakomi books

Rhonda Mattern

and articles. This left me delighted and inspired—and also disappointed and confused.

In a now-legendary hamburger commercial, three little old ladies gaze upon a huge, fluffy bun at a fast-food restaurant, and one of them suddenly asks: “Where’s the beef?” As a spiritual practitioner, that’s how I felt when I read my first Hakomi book; after scanning the states of consciousness Hakomi works with (ordinary, riding the rapids, child, mindfulness) (Kurtz, 1990, p.84), I thought, “Where’s the soul?”

Traces of the soul wafted through Ron Kurtz’ introductory book on Hakomi (1990) like a rare perfume. Reading it, I thought: *This is the real deal. Kurtz is clearly working from the soul state of consciousness.* But when I realized the soul or Self wasn’t an explicit part of Hakomi’s method, I almost overlooked it for a third time, until I stumbled upon something Kurtz wrote in 2007:

Fourteen years ago, I introduced the idea that loving presence is the appropriate state for the practitioner. It is our first and most important task. That one change made a huge difference in the effectiveness of the method. (Kurtz, 2007, p.1)

Bingo. Now I knew that Hakomi practitioners embraced at least one attribute of the soul as a therapeutic resource. This piqued my interest, because I had experienced those therapeutic benefits firsthand. Leela Therapy, the method that finally ended my suffering, (Jaxon-Bear, 2003) not only helped me to break free of the conditioning veiling my higher nature, but it also leveraged some of the Self’s unique attributes as therapeutic tools. This life-changing experience helped me to realize that the soul is one of the most wildly effective—and most woefully underutilized—resources for healing and transformation that the world has ever known.

The Therapeutic Resources of the Soul

Why did the addition of loving presence make such a “huge difference in the effectiveness of the method (Kurtz, 2007, p.1)?” From my perspective, it’s because Hakomi started helping therapists and clients to experience at least one of the many therapeutic capacities of the soul-Self-higher nature. Here’s a small sampling of those capabilities:

The soul sees things differently.

The soul sees the beauty and wonder in everything, and has a deep reverence, respect and love for all that is. Therapists in this state don’t see clients as broken, wounded or in need of fixing; they see everyone and everything in wholeness. “The unencumbered heart sees differently (Kurtz, 1990, p.32).” This seeing alone is innately transformational; as quantum physicists have long observed, the very act of seeing changes what is observed.

The soul is unconditionally present.

Krishnamurti once said: “Do you want to know what my secret is?...I don’t mind what happens.” (Dreaver, 2005) Because our higher nature sees the wisdom and purpose behind everything, it has no need to change *anything*. And this deep understanding tends to be contagious: when therapists embody it, clients begin to as well. Suddenly, instead of trying to change or get rid of certain experiences, clients begin to gently lean into whatever arises in the present moment to absorb its hidden wisdom. Like the poet Rumi, clients begin realizing that even “the dark thought, the shame, the malice” are “guides from beyond (Barks, 1997, p.109).”

The soul does no harm.

Rather than feeling detached, like mindfulness sometimes does, the soul or Buddha nature feels connected, participative, and alive. It isn’t passive at all, and yet it moves with such grace, simplicity and ease that it seems to make no movement at all. No matter what it does, it does no harm. As the Buddhists say, it leaves no tracks (Page and Yamamoto, 1999).

The soul is wildly, originally, and spontaneously creative and insightful.

The soul reveals shocking and wonderful things that my mind could *never* have cooked up. Suddenly I *just know* things—things beyond what my intellect knows. When clients shift into this state, their cup runneth over with astonishingly original and penetrating insights. In this state, I routinely learn things from my clients, and I’m continually humbled and awed by their wisdom. As they connect more deeply to their own soul wisdom, I connect more deeply to my own, and our meeting becomes a gift of reciprocal healing and generosity.

The soul perceives by being, not thinking.

Another unique perceptual capacity of the soul is the ability to *become one with* whatever it’s observing. Hakomi therapists have undoubtedly discovered this distinct capability, which mirror neurons appear to facilitate. Thanks to those amazing little mini-mirrors, my “mini-me” sometimes completely disappears: on good days, I merge so completely with clients that I can name with absolute accuracy what they’re feeling, thinking, and experiencing before they’ve spoken a word.

The soul capacities above represent a higher order of intelligence that Maslow believed could help humankind realize its highest potential. His studies of peak experiences and performers led him to believe that psychologists should “bring out and encourage” this inner nature because “if it is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy (Maslow, 1968, p.4).” Maslow called for research to test his theories (Maslow, 1968, pp.215-219), and recent progress in that direction might encourage more

psychologists to explicitly embrace the intelligence-beyond-intellect of the soul.

The Science behind the Experience

Many wisdom traditions refer to the heart as the seat of the soul, and neuroscience appears to be edging closer to proving that. Research gathered by the Institute of HeartMath reveals that the heart has its own independent nervous system sometimes referred to as the “brain in the heart.” This “heart brain” boasts at least 40,000 neurons, rivaling various sub-cortical centers in size. As if this weren’t surprising enough, scientists have also discovered that the brain in the head doesn’t always wear the pants in the family of human consciousness. When the brain in the head sends orders to the brain in the heart, the heart doesn’t automatically say yes. Instead, it responds as if it has its own powers of discrimination, and in fact, sends messages back to the brain that the brain not only understands but *obeys* (Childre and Martin, 1999, p.10).

Some researchers believe that the heart brain might be the link to the higher intelligence that Maslow referred to as our higher nature (p.xvii). While lower brain centers can block access to this higher intelligence in the name of survival (Pearce, 2003, p.72), when the heart does takes the lead, it helps both brain and body to function at peak capacity (Childre and Martin, p.17).

Anyone who’s ever struggled to live from the heart instead of the head is likely to appreciate HeartMath’s research on heart-brain collaboration and entrainment. In the 17th century, a Dutch inventor found that when clocks were put together in the same room, their pendulums eventually began swinging in synchronized unity. He never figured out why, but scientists later discovered that the largest pendulum—the one with the strongest oscillations—pulled the other pendulums into sync with it, a phenomenon known as *entrainment* (p.38).

Not only pendulums entrain: so do bodies, states of consciousness, and energy fields. A simple example of entrainment is how female roommates’ menstrual cycles begin showing up at the same time. Similarly, HeartMath researchers have found that the heart—which boasts a magnetic field roughly *five thousand times* stronger than the brain (Childre and Martin, 1999, p.33)—can pull the rest of the body into entrainment with it, a state they call *coherence* (p.50):

When your body is in entrainment, its major systems work in harmony. Your biological systems operate at higher efficiency because of that harmony, and as a result you think and feel better. Because the heart is the strongest biological oscillator in the human system, the rest of the body’s systems can be pulled into entrainment with the heart’s rhythms. As an example, when we’re in a state of deep love or appreciation, the brain synchronizes—comes into harmony—with the

heart’s harmonious rhythms. . . . When brain waves entrain with heart rhythms at 0.1 Hz, subjects in our studies report heightened intuitive clarity and a greater sense of well-being (Childre and Martin, 1999, p.38).

According to our studies, at those elusive moments when we transcend our ordinary performance and feel in harmony with *something else*—whether it’s a glorious sunset, inspiring music, or another human being—what we’re really coming into sync with is *ourselves*. Not only do we feel more relaxed and at peace at such moments, but the entrained state increases our ability to perform well and offers numerous health benefits. In entrainment, we’re at our optimal functioning capacity. . . . (p.39) Moving beyond what we’ve been able to prove through science, our theory is that the heart links us to a higher intelligence through an intuitive domain where spirit and humanness merge (p.xvii).

In line with Gardner’s work on multiple intelligences (1993), HeartMath considers the loving wisdom the “heart brain” links us to as a separate intelligence with its own unique capacities (Childre and Martin, 1999, pp.102-131). And guess what those capacities are? The same qualities that Maslow attributed to our higher nature (1968, p.83) and that Jesus, Buddha, and other sages have attributed to the soul or Buddha nature: wisdom, love, spontaneity, compassion, clarity, grace, acceptance, and openness, among others.

Childhood development expert Joseph Chilton Pearce states that with the right modeling, experiences and training, we can foster the neural development required to access and sustain this higher intelligence (Pearce, 2003). Maslow fleetingly considered the word “trans-human” to describe the new psychology (Boorstein, 1996, p.2), but accessing our heart intelligence is a distinctly human capacity, and so is heart-mind collaboration. The word *human* itself points to this essential collaboration: *hu* means God or spirit (Khan, 1992, p.172) and *manas* is Sanskrit for mind.

Hakomi works the mind-body interface, but with the addition of loving presence, it appears to have started accessing mind-heart (i.e., mind-soul, mind-spirit) interface as well. By adding loving presence to its practices, Hakomi has already begun to leverage some of the soul’s therapeutic capabilities to good effect, making a strong case for explicitly articulating and engaging the soul-Self-higher nature in its model.

I appreciate the sensitivities of a non-religious discipline embracing a state of consciousness that has traditionally been the realm of spiritual teachings, let alone the challenge of finding a universal, inclusive name for it. And I suspect that many psychologists have been tiptoeing around explicitly naming the soul or Self for a long time in the name of religious and cultural respect and inclusiveness. But how is it respecting religions to ignore a central focus of their teachings? And hasn’t Hakomi been explicitly,

universally, inclusively, and non-religiously *spiritual* from the get go?

And so to Ron Kurtz as he moves toward an explicit inclusion of the soul-Self-higher nature as a foundational principle of the method, I say: Godspeed, my friend.

The Lens of Consumer Research

How might the discipline of consumer research influence whether or not Hakomi should embrace the soul and help people to access its loving wisdom? If a high-performing organization (one that achieves exceptional results by living true to its mission and principles) were considering a change in its service offerings, it wouldn't launch debates in journals—it would launch consumer focus groups! Now, I'm not suggesting that Hakomi therapists do that, but I suspect that many of you have already conducted mountains of informal consumer research. Like me, you've probably spent decades listening to the stories of frustrated spiritual seekers in sessions, classes, and workshops. One thing that continually surprises me about these stories is how similar they are to my own.

At the age of fifteen, an out-of-body-experience gave me my first taste of my higher nature. As I floated above my body, my usual teenage angst completely disappeared, and I could suddenly see the beauty and possibility in everything. Not only was I filled with compassion, wisdom, and insight beyond imagining, but from one moment to the next, I knew all sorts of things without knowing how. One of the most shocking things I knew was that this loving awareness was *who I am*; my body below was just the vehicle for it.

When I asked my minister to help me make sense of this experience, he told me it was the work of the devil. When I consulted a local philosophy professor, he insisted that the detailed descriptions of the wisdom of the soul in Plato's *Phaedo* was metaphorical, not literal (Warmington and Rouse, 1956, pp.460-521). When I turned to spiritual teachings, I was lucky enough to find one that actually taught me how to consciously experience my higher nature (Twitchell, 1969). But after hundreds of often ecstatic experiences of this expansive state of awareness, I continued to suffer from depression, abusive and unfulfilling relationships, and a judge and jury screaming "bad girl" 24/7 inside my head.

I spent decades looking for a method to help me heal and integrate the whole of my consciousness: body, mind, emotions and soul. Like many potential Hakomi consumers, I hunted and pecked my way through heaps of healing methods. I did body work, breath work, and yoga. I tried visualization, affirmation, and contemplation. I beat pillows and screamed. I sipped flower essences like a love-starved hummingbird. I let go and let God. And still I suffered.

Gallup and National Opinion Survey polls in the 1960's and 1970's indicated that twenty to forty million Americans are likely to have had mystical experiences similar to mine (Boorstein, 1996, pp.144-5). And in tele-classes, private sessions, and workshops, I've met thousands of people from among these millions who recount the same story: they've experienced their higher nature, only to find that they're still suffering. And now they're feeling even more lost and confused, because believe me, once you taste this transcendent state and can't get back to it, *you suffer*.

Most of these people aren't as lucky as I was. They have no idea that presence-centered approaches like Hakomi, Leela Therapy, and Internal Family Systems Therapy exist. (I call experiential, holistic, psycho-spiritual methods "presence-centered" because they help people to become more present to—and more centered in—the vast transformational capabilities of their own consciousness.) Unfortunately, most people would have a hard time recognizing these "more spiritual" approaches if they found them, because they were named for psychologists, not consumers. For example, my relatively uneducated working class sister in Pennsylvania, who died recently of lifelong addictions for want of a spiritually-oriented therapist, would have never known that something named Internal Family Systems Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Pesso Boyden System Psychomotor, Diamond Heart, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Leela Therapy, Hakomi, or even "transpersonal psychology" might be spiritually-oriented approaches to psychological healing.

A recent edition of *Hakomi Forum* mentioned one argument against Hakomi helping people to access their higher nature that goes something like this: we're a psychology, that's why. Leave realizing one's higher nature to spiritual communities (Coffey, 2008, p. 91). But one thing I hear over and over from people is that their spiritual communities often don't possess effective methods to help them consistently and reliably experience their higher nature, let alone *live* from it. Presence-centered practitioners could do a great service to such communities by finding ways to help them gain new psycho-spiritual skills.

And while applied spiritual practices like meditation, chanting, and centering prayer often do a good job of helping people to *experience* their higher nature, conditioned responses keep pulling them out of it. When this happens, people don't know where to turn. They quickly discover that the skills needed to *experience* your higher nature aren't the same as those required to *embody* it. To make matters worse, most psychologists and spiritual teachers lack the latter skill set, which requires integrated, experiential psycho-spiritual training. So what's a suffering, spiritually-savvy consumer to do?

The Third Shift

I often refer to spiritual practice and psychology as a dysfunctional couple that's created even more suffering in the world than our dysfunctional parents. Since Maslow's call for a new discipline that embraces man's higher nature, spirituality and psychology have certainly been dating, but like other dysfunctional couples, they seem to have commitment issues; the lack of a widespread, fully-integrated psycho-spiritual approach to healing, transformation, and self-actualization is proof of that.

It took me over two decades of exhausting "hunt and peck" to find a truly holistic approach to healing. Leela Therapy, founded by Eli-Jaxon Bear, was a brilliant integration of spiritual practice and psychology. Like Hakomi, it was still evolving, and it wasn't fully baked, but *it worked*. It not only helped me break free of limiting beliefs, but it skillfully supported me to more consistently experience and express the Self beyond my beliefs. It embraced all of Hakomi's principles and many of its methods. It was experiential, it was non-dual (at least on good days!), and it offered concrete methods to help people break free of the conditioning veiling their higher nature (Jaxon-Bear, 2003).

Rumi once said that when love brings two things together, a third thing is created that's completely unique. Parents can certainly attest to that. Leela Therapy brought together two wonderful parents—spiritual teachings and psychology—to create a love child *completely different* from mom and pop. In Maslow's words, this new psychology was "thrilling" and "full of wonderful possibilities" (Maslow, 1968, p.3)—a completely new discipline with completely new methods (bringing the consciousness of the Self to subconscious patterns), completely new therapeutic resources (the vast attributes and perceptual capacities of the Self), a completely new theoretical model (freeing oneself of the conditioning obscuring one's higher nature), and completely new possibilities (not just healing, but self-actualization via self-realization).

Ron Kurtz described two significant shifts in psychotherapy in the past few decades. Frankly, I think we're on the cusp of a third shift (Mattern, 2009)—one with the potential to make Maslow's vision a reality. Leela Therapy, Hakomi, IFS, Diamond Approach, non-dual psychotherapy, Buddhist psychology, and other presence-centered approaches show telltale signs that this shift is upon us. Below is Ron Kurtz' map of the first two shifts in psychotherapy (Kurtz, 1990, p.10), with the shift I've observed tagged on below:

- Start point:** Talking about our experience (e.g., psychoanalysis)
- Shift #1:** Experiencing our experience (e.g., Gestalt therapy)
- Shift #2:** Studying the structure of our experience (e.g., NLP)
- Shift #3:** Bringing higher consciousness to less conscious parts of our experience (e.g., Hakomi, IFS, Leela Therapy, and other presence-centered practices)

Look how simply and elegantly this third shift synthesizes spirituality and psychology:

Discipline	Method of healing and transformation:
<i>Spiritual practice</i>	Experience your spiritual nature (higher consciousness)
<i>Psychology</i>	See subconscious patterns and choose new behavior
<i>Presence-centered practices</i>	Bring higher consciousness to subconscious patterns/parts in skillful ways that support them to heal and evolve

Here's a simple analogy to help you grasp the evolutionary significance of presence-centered healing methods: Picture your higher nature as a beautiful castle. Now see limiting subconscious patterns as alligators in the castle moat. It's not enough to learn how to enter the castle, because alligators keep pulling you back into the moat. It's not enough to study your alligators, because that doesn't get you back into the castle.

Spiritual teachings show you how to get into the castle. Psychology teaches you how alligators pull you into the moat. Presence-centered practices have the potential to help us take the next step: learning to bring the consciousness of our higher nature to limiting patterns or parts in skillful ways that help them to heal and evolve.

As presence-centered approaches continue to evolve, "We're a psychology, that's why" will continue to lose steam as a rationale for psychologists not embracing the soul. As Ron Kurtz has already observed, including loving presence has already made a huge difference in Hakomi's effectiveness. I have no doubt that helping people to access more of the soul's therapeutic capacities will deeply support this encouraging trend.

And so to Ron Kurtz as he moves toward an explicit inclusion of the soul-Self-higher nature as a foundational principle of Hakomi, I say: Thank you for your willingness to continually evolve an already groundbreaking method.

You're about to make twenty to forty million potential Hakomi consumers very happy campers.

Slouching Towards Bethlehem

The Lens of Hakomi's Unity Principle

Before closing, let's quickly examine how Hakomi's unity principle might inform the decision about whether to include the soul as an explicit part of its method. Kurtz indicates that we embrace this principle "when our goal is to bring together all aspects of the person." He has faith "that if you can get those parts communicating again, they may resolve their differences and come to harmony." He further explains that "this drive to unite is the healing force. This process of communication organizes parts into wholes. That's the healing (1990, p.33)."

I found Kurtz' writings on the unity principle uncommonly brilliant, clear, and deep, except for one confounding disconnect: If the drive to unite is the healing force, what's driving Hakomi to exclude the soul from its map of the states of consciousness it works to unite? Why does it inadvertently imply that mindfulness is the pinnacle of human awareness by leaving the state mindfulness leads to (Buddha nature) unstated? Isn't that a little like calling the United States the thirty-five states of America, when everyone agrees there are fifty? The existence of our higher nature is one of the few things billions of spiritual practitioners *already agree on*; why treat it like a fair-haired step-child: a state of consciousness we talk about, but don't help people to access?

And so I leave the Hakomi community with no answers, but a few pregnant questions:

- Can a discipline that promotes self-study as a means to end suffering afford to ignore the Self, the highest source of intelligence within us?
- Can a discipline that claims to be holistic leave such an important part of the whole unstated, un-experienced, unexplored, and largely unexploited?
- Can a therapy that aims to get all the parts communicating afford to leave our higher nature out of the conversation?

In short, how is not explicitly engaging the soul-Self-Atman-Buddha nature-higher nature "working within the principles"?

I won't answer that question. If my understanding of the Hakomi principles is sufficiently well-grounded, I believe it will answer itself. That's the beauty of working within the principles.

For years I've felt frustrated because Maslow's vision of the new psychology was taking so long to manifest. To quote the poet Yeats, I used to feel that we were all "slouching towards Bethlehem" (Finneran, 1996, p. 187) at a painfully slow and laborious pace. I used to gripe that the true third force seemed less likely to appear than the second coming because we had left out its central player—the soul itself.

My schizophrenic brother recently helped me to heal some of the deeper wounds fueling these frustrations. Recently an encounter with my brother's social worker triggered me into a tirade about the lack of presence-centered methods in psychiatric care. After a few minutes of complaining, I realized I had shifted out of loving presence. Using techniques I first learned in Leela Therapy, I let the sweet silence of my higher nature wash over the part of me that felt frustrated and fearful. As the gates of my heart-intelligence swung open, an important insight arose: *I'm the one who's slouching towards Bethlehem. I'm the one keeping Maslow's vision from manifesting. I'm almost always anchored in unconditional presence when working with clients, but I rarely embody this state consistently with family and friends.*

Graced with this realization, during a recent visit to my brother, I actually managed to consciously shift into loving presence as he launched into his usual topics of conversation: Greek Gods, secret bank accounts Jimmy Carter bequeathed to him, and curing Alzheimer's using dolphin fin and milk of magnesia. In the past these topics dominated 95% of our conversations, and so had my knee-jerk responses: subtly manipulating my brother to change the subject or mechanically repeating the behaviors that might earn him a discharge from the psychiatric hospitals where he's been involuntarily committed for over thirty years.

But this time something miraculous happened. Instead of subtly manipulating my brother to change, I fell into the loving presence of my higher nature so deeply that I actually *became* my brother. This opened up a completely new channel of information to me. Suddenly I intimately understood his illness. Suddenly I directly experienced his inner reality. And for the first time in my life, I actually became curious about his Greek Gods, secret bank accounts, and dolphin fin miracle cures.

As I remained in the space of loving presence while my brother babbled on (which was a little like staying on a bucking bronco), suddenly he did something he hadn't done in over three decades: he began to cry, recounting traumatic events from our childhood that had carved deep scars into his psyche. We repeated this cycle six or seven times that day. He'd say a few rambling things about Greek Gods and such, I'd anchor in loving presence and sincerely inquire into his reality, and then he'd start to cry, recalling yet

Rhonda Mattern

another painful childhood story. After each round of tears, he hugged me and showered me with uncustomary gratitude, tenderness and affection.

I soaked up his love like a dry sponge, and I could feel him doing the same. To my family's great surprise, he remained completely non-delusional for the next twenty-four hours. On the long ride back to the psychiatric hospital, we did something we hadn't done since he was fifteen: we had a heart-to-heart conversation. We shared our pain over my sister's recent death. We marveled at the beauty of the flowering dogwoods. We sang old Motown hits at the top of our lungs. And for the first time in thirty-five years, I had my brother back.

Regardless of what lies ahead for me and my brother, suddenly a person that I once saw as beyond hope has got me feeling quite hopeful for us all. Who knows what might be possible as more of us learn to shift into this state of loving presence—not just with our clients, but with everyone, everywhere, to the very best of our ability? Who knows what might be possible—both personally and therapeutically—as Hakomi and other presence-centered practitioners manifest Maslow's revolutionary vision: helping people to self-actualize by learning to consistently and reliably access their higher nature?

I can't wait to find out.

A Postscript—and a Call to Action

I've long believed that presence-centered approaches like Hakomi, Leela, IFS, Diamond Approach, ACT, DBT, nondual and Buddhist psychotherapy, and others won't reach their full potential until they do for themselves what they do for clients: bring isolated parts (in this case, presence-centered practices) together to communicate in ways that deeply support the whole. With this in mind, I've launched a soon-to-be non-profit organization encouraging cross-disciplinary dialogue and collaboration to help presence-centered practices to continue to increase their effectiveness and reach more people.

The *Hakomi Forum* recently encouraged more dialogue about where Hakomi stands on the line between personal and transpersonal. To support this goal, I'd like to offer a facilitated conference call for those interested in exploring the topics laid out in this article in an open, informal setting. To participate, please send your name and email address to hakomidialogue@the1thing.net, and I'll coordinate a date and time for a tele-conference. I'll be thrilled if even just

one of you shows up, because as organizational behavior theorist Meg Wheatley once said (2002, p.13), every significant social revolution begins—or in this case, *continues*—with a conversation.

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Rhonda Mattern