

sense of abundance, and that it would all come about in a more satisfying way.

I was motivated not only by my yearning to find greater fulfillment in my own life, but by a strong desire to make a contribution toward positive change in the world and in other people's healing and happiness.

I moved to the San Francisco Bay area, which I recognized as the forefront of the so-called "human potential movement," and plunged into the earnest pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, healing, and transformation. I took classes and workshops, avidly read new books, meditated, and talked constantly to others involved in the same process. After reading *Handbook to Higher Consciousness* by Ken Keyes, I went to live at his center in Berkeley where we worked on our growth intensely, day and night, for a year. After that, I continued to live communally for several years with others who were involved in an intensive personal development process. During this time, I did whatever I could to make enough money to live on — housework, office work, odds and ends — while I focused on my real work.

Since that time, over twenty-five years ago, my life has been dedicated to my growth and evolution as a conscious being. I gradually came to understand that becoming more conscious meant becoming more aware of all that was taking place within me and around me, how my inner world affected my outer world and vice versa. I realized that the more *awareness* I have, the more *choice* I have in how I create or respond to the circumstances of my life. When we are relatively unconscious, we simply do what we've

always done, not realizing there is any other way. As we gradually become more aware, we begin to recognize that other options exist and we can make other choices in how we live.

At first, I imagined that this process involved a straight line from A to B, A being the darkness of ignorance, and B being full “enlightenment.” The goal was to move from A to B as directly as possible. If we were dedicated and fortunate enough to achieve enlightenment, we would have completed the process; we would be radiant beings, always filled with light, love, and wisdom.

Eventually, I understood that consciousness is an ever-unfolding, deepening, and expanding process with no end point. We are infinite and complex beings, and our human journey involves not just a spiritual awakening, but the development of *all* levels of our being — spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical — and the integration of all these aspects into a healthy and balanced daily life.

I’m getting ahead of myself, however, so back to my story.

## My Name

People often ask me about my name so I thought I’d pause here and tell you about it.

While in India, I became very fascinated with the Hindu religion and began to study it. I had not been raised as a Christian, and that religion had never held much interest for me. I liked some of the ideas in Buddhism a lot, but it seemed a bit intellectual to me. The myths, symbols, and deities in the Hindu religion touched

me in a deeper place in my soul. It is a very complex religion and I don't even pretend to understand it, but I grasped a few things.

In the Hindu religion there is a trinity of three main deities that symbolize three aspects of life. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the preserver, and Shiva is the destroyer. Shiva represents the constant changing of the universe, the fact that everything must constantly be destroyed in order to be reborn. He reminds us that we must constantly let go of everything we hold on to, in order to flow with the motion of life. Many of his fervent devotees give up home and possessions and wander freely, abandoning themselves to following and trusting the energy of the universe. Shiva is also known as Nataraj — the Lord of the Dance (literally, the Lord of Rhythm). They say that it is his dance that keeps the universe in motion. He is depicted as a very beautiful and powerful man with long flowing hair. (It is said that out of his hair flows the holy Ganges river.) I felt irresistibly drawn to him.

Shakti is the feminine aspect of Shiva. The word “shakti” means “energy” — the energy that everything in the universe is made of. It is the energy of life — the life force running through our bodies. It also means “female energy.” In the Hindu practice of Tantra, there are techniques for enlightenment through channeling one's sexual energy. In this practice, the man is referred to as Shiva and the woman as Shakti.

When I returned from India I met, and for several years lived with, my friend Marc Allen. He didn't think my previous name fit me and, knowing of my “love affair” with Shiva, he began calling me Shakti. I liked it and began using it. At the time, I don't think

I realized how powerful the name was, but I certainly realize it now. I feel that the vibration of the name has helped me to emerge into my power.

Gawain is the last name I was born with. It is the same name as Sir Gawain in the King Arthur legends. According to one dictionary definition, it means “battle hawk,” which I think is a wonderful image. To me, Shakti represents my feminine aspect, and Gawain, my masculine aspect.

## **Creative Visualization**

One of the earliest workshops I took was the Silva Mind Control Course. At that time, I was still rather skeptical about this sort of thing and probably would never have gone to it except that my mother had taken the course and highly recommended it to me. I will never forget her description of a technique in which you can imagine what you want to have happen and it will very often come about. My mind felt doubtful about this but my heart made a leap and I remember thinking, “Ever since I was a child, I always *knew* that there was magic — that somehow, somewhere, magic really exists. This sounds like the closest thing to it that I have ever heard of.”

I took the course and I was amazed! We started slowly and easily with simple techniques that anyone could accept and do, and gradually, we worked our way into more unexplainable, but very powerful, processes. After five days, I had a strong psychic experience in which, for a period of several hours, I was able to consistently pick

up specific information that I had no way of knowing except through my intuition. That experience began to dissolve some of my former limits on what I thought was possible.

The most important technique I learned in that course was the basic technique of creative visualization — relaxing deeply and then picturing a desired goal in your mind exactly the way you want it to be. I started to practice this technique and found that it was amazingly effective. Quite often the things I pictured came true quickly and in unexpected ways. I became fascinated with the possibilities and took some other classes and workshops on similar subjects. I began to use creative visualization techniques in my life regularly and to teach them to my friends. I read *The Nature of Personal Reality* by Jane Roberts and was powerfully affected by the idea that we all create our own reality. Soon, I began to lead workshops and do private counseling, and eventually wrote *Creative Visualization*.

When I got the idea to write the book, I just wanted to gather all the ideas and techniques I had learned from various sources and put them down on paper in a comprehensive way. I thought I would write a little booklet I could give to friends and perhaps sell to my clients and a few interested people. As I wrote it, I was filled with self-doubt: “Who am I to be writing a book like this? I’m no expert.” Some force inside of me kept pushing me to do it, however, so I did. I used creative visualization techniques to help create the book. I got an artist friend to design the cover. Then, I hung the cover up on my wall and kept imagining and affirming that the book was already finished. I found writing it was fairly effortless (except for my nagging doubts) and before I knew it, it had turned

into a real book that some friends and I published together.

What I didn't fully realize at the time was that the book was coming from a higher creative source within me. On a personality level, I had doubts and fears, but because of my inner commitment to myself, I was willing to go ahead and follow the creative energy anyhow. Because I had a natural ability to think and write clearly, was really interested in these ideas, had a good background in the subject, and was willing to take some risks, the universe could use me as a creative channel.

The publishing process was similar. My friends, Marc Allen and Jon Bernoff, and I knew very little about business or publishing, and had no money at all, but we had a desire to write and publish our own books. By trusting our feelings and being willing to risk acting on them, we found that we were led, step by step, in what we needed to do. We made many mistakes in the process (mostly when we *didn't* follow our inner guidance) and some of them were painful and extremely expensive, but, eventually, we created a successful publishing company, originally named Whatever Publishing, Inc., now called New World Library.

*Creative Visualization* has been successful far beyond any wild fantasy I might have had at the time I wrote it. Although it was never marketed or publicized in any significant way, other than through word of mouth, at the time of this writing it has sold nearly three million copies and has been translated into over twenty-five foreign languages. Twenty years after its original publication in 1978, the revised edition is still selling steadily. Through the years, I have received countless letters and calls from people all over

the world saying it has helped them transform their lives. Of course, this has been quite gratifying to me, especially because I can see that it is the higher power of the universe at work. I have felt like a proud mother, watching my child out there in the world, doing its work and making its fortune, knowing that it is mine and yet not mine. It came through me and I helped to form it, and yet it is a being, an entity of its own, with its own destiny and its own connection to the creative source.

## Listening to Inner Guidance

When I first discovered the techniques of creative visualization and found that they worked, I was excited because I felt that through using them I could create whatever I wanted in my life. I was elated by the feeling that I could have everything I desired!

This was an important step for me as it took me out of the essentially powerless attitude that I had had previously — the attitude that life is something that happens to you and that all you can do is make the best of it. It was in some ways a victim position — giving power to people and things outside of myself. Using creative visualization, I began to realize that the power rested in me, that I could choose to create my life the way I wanted it to be. It was very empowering and very freeing.

As I explored the process of creating my own reality, I gradually began to realize that the creative power I was feeling was coming from a source other than just my personality. For one thing, some of the things I *thought* I wanted didn't manifest; and,

in retrospect, I could see that it was for my highest good that they didn't happen. Other things occurred so miraculously that it was as if some unseen force was putting everything in place. Sometimes I would have flashes of insight and awareness, or future visions, that were highly accurate and seemed to come from a source deep within myself. I became more and more interested in discovering what this creative force was all about and how it worked. I began to realize that "it" (my soul, or higher self) seemed to know more than "I" (my personality self) did about a lot of things. I saw that it would probably be smart to try to find out what that inner guidance was telling me, and follow it. Every time I did that, it seemed to work.

Eventually, I lost interest in trying to control my life, to make things happen in a way that I thought I wanted them to happen. I began to practice surrendering to the higher power of the universe within me and finding out what "it" wanted me to do. I discovered that, in the long run, it really wasn't that different. The universe always seems to want me to have everything I truly want, and it seems to know how to guide me in creating it more effectively than I would know how to create it myself. The emphasis is different, though. Instead of figuring out what I wanted, setting goals, and trying to control what happened to me, I began to practice tuning in receptively to my intuition and acting on what it told me without always understanding why I was doing what I was doing. It was a feeling of letting go of control, surrendering, and allowing the higher power to be in charge.

About this time, I met a woman named Shirley Luthman who



became a very important teacher to me. She led a group each week and I began to go to it faithfully and continued to do so for five years. She taught me a great deal about how to trust and follow my own intuitive sense. Many of the ideas in *Living in the Light*, including the concept of male and female in the way I use it, were inspired by Shirley, and I am deeply grateful for what she taught me.

## Trusting Myself

After several years with Shirley, I had to confront the fact that there were things that were happening in the group that didn't feel right to me, and that I couldn't find a way to give my input that was received. I found myself confronting the age-old problem of how to let go of the "guru." I respected Shirley so much, and what I had received from her had been so valuable, that it was very difficult to face the time when I knew that I could not look to her for answers anymore. In a sense, Shirley was the metaphysical mother who had given me the support and security I needed until I was ready to trust myself.

Eventually, my inner guidance told me I had to stop relying on her. The time had come for me to trust the power of my own inner guidance. It was both terrifying and liberating to realize that I had my own path and there was no one ahead of me who had all the answers.

## Living in the Light

Once *Creative Visualization* became popular, many people began

asking me to write another book. About two years after *Creative Visualization* was published, I began to have strong feelings that I would do so. One day as I was walking in the woods, I was thinking about my new book and I wondered idly what I should call it. Suddenly, my attention was drawn to a patch of woods near the path where a ray of sunlight was filtering brightly through the trees and shining on the green leaves. It was a beautiful sight and as I gazed, the words “*living in the light*” came to me. I knew immediately that it was the title of my next book and I remember the feeling that I hadn’t really thought of it myself but that I had “received” it. I even had the impression that I didn’t have much choice about it . . . that I was being directed to use that name!

I felt very inspired, began to make some notes, and told people that I was working on my new book. My publishing company had a cover designed and began to do some preliminary promotion. But after a while, I noticed that I hadn’t actually written anything! I kept thinking it was going to happen, but it didn’t. The truth was, I was not feeling the energy to actually sit down and write, and no amount of thinking that I “should” do it was making it happen. By this time in my life, I was quite committed to the philosophy that life doesn’t have to be a struggle. I felt that when it was ready to happen, it would happen naturally. I wasn’t willing to do it if it felt like too much of a push; I sensed that the moment would come when the energy would be so strong that I wouldn’t be able *not* to write.

Several years went by, and I became involved in many other things. People continued to ask for my new book and I kept reassuring them that it would be along eventually. Privately, I sometimes

had my doubts, and I had to accept the fact that it was possible that it wouldn't happen. Still, I felt that it would.

Writing this book was a little like being pregnant. I could feel something forming and growing inside of me and I knew that I was creating even though nothing seemed to be happening externally. The baby would emerge when it was fully formed and ready.

Finally, seven years after the publication of *Creative Visualization*, the time had come to write *Living in the Light*. At this point in my life, I was extremely busy and had little time to devote to writing. Still, this book would not be stopped!

Laurel King, a friend who had been working for me for a few years, helped me get my notes and ideas gathered together and down on paper, and contributed her own creative ideas and exercises. I found a few days or a few hours here and there to write. I was spending a lot of time flying all over the world to lead workshops, so much of *Living in the Light* was written on airplanes.

As in writing my first book, I had to deal with fears and doubts that occasionally besieged me. This time, instead of worrying whether I had the right or credibility to share my knowledge, I had the opposite problem. With *Creative Visualization* proving to be wildly successful, I wondered whether my second book would live up to that standard, or would perhaps be a total flop! I now understood one aspect of the difficulties that can accompany fame, and the pressure that all successful creative people face to keep producing successful work.

In spite of the obstacles, the book seemed to flow from that deep creative source within me. It was published in 1986, by our

company, New World Library. By this time, we knew a lot more about publishing! Still, we didn't do a great deal of publicity or marketing. This book, however, seemed to have a life and a destiny of its own. Like *Creative Visualization*, it sold mainly through word of mouth. Along with *Creative Visualization*, it has become known as a classic in the field of personal growth.

Naturally, I am very pleased by the fact that *Living in the Light* has reached so many people and encouraged them in their personal growth process. Some of my most precious moments have been when someone approaches me at a workshop and tells me, with tears in their eyes, that this book has been like a good friend to them, helping them through a particularly dark or challenging time in their life. I feel so grateful that the universe has guided me on a path where by sharing my own learning process, I have been able to make a contribution to other people's lives.

## **My Journey Continues**

Meanwhile, the success of my second book had made me busier than ever. I was spending most of my time leading workshops. I had found that passing along to others what I was learning was a very important and challenging part of my own growth process. My workshops continued to evolve and change as I did, since I was always teaching what I was learning. I love working with people on deep levels of change, growth, and transformation, and I devoted myself to my work.

Eventually, I found that I had become a workaholic, and my

work was consuming my life. Much as I loved my career, I began to feel an increasing sense of imbalance in my life. I was great at giving to the world, but had a hard time creating enough space for receiving, so I began to burn out. I longed for more quiet time, time for myself and my own personal needs. Yet, I had a hard time saying “no” to all the exciting work opportunities that came my way.

For quite some time, I had been longing to find the right man to be my partner in life. I had been visualizing him ever since I learned that technique, but somehow he hadn’t shown up! I was almost always in a relationship; they were all deep learning/healing experiences for me, and all were wonderful in certain ways. For one reason or another, however, they weren’t quite right for a long-term commitment. I couldn’t understand why I felt so ready for a committed relationship and yet it wasn’t happening for me.

It took me a long time to realize that I wasn’t really ready at all. In fact, I had deep conflict and ambivalence about commitment, and a lot of emotional healing to do in the area of relationships, going back to my parents’ divorce, and even before that, to old family patterns. I went through a period where I devoted myself to my emotional healing process, including deep work in therapy.

At this time, some wonderful teachers came into my life — a couple named Dr. Hal and Dr. Sidra Stone. They had both been therapists for many years and had developed a body of work called the Psychology of Selves, and a very powerful technique called Voice Dialogue. From the Stones’ teachings, I began to understand more clearly that we all have many different energies, or selves, within us. Voice Dialogue provides an amazing way

to get directly in touch with these different selves, become more conscious of them, and bring them into greater balance. Through this work, I discovered many fascinating things about myself and became much more aware of what was going on inside of me. This brought me tremendous healing and growth.

The Stones have a very developed understanding of the dynamics of human relationship and how our relationships mirror our consciousness. Using their work enabled me to resolve many aspects of my own relationship issues. Hal and Sidra Stone have become good friends and I consider them my mentors. I highly recommend their books, tapes, and workshops (which are listed in the Recommended Resources section of this book) and I have integrated their work into my own writing and workshops.

After doing a great deal of deep work, I began to feel a major shift taking place within me. I was more aware than ever of the different parts of myself and I felt increasingly comfortable with all of them. I was aware of my power and independence, but also of my vulnerability and need. I felt more able to love all aspects of who I am, and more able to be *with* myself in a whole new way.

At this point, I had a *knowingness* that I was ready for a committed partnership (I was still unable to use the “m” word — marriage — however!). This felt very different than the experience I had had for so long of *thinking* I was ready. Now I sensed that my partner would be coming along soon.

Less than a month later, I connected with Jim Burns, a bright, handsome, and loving man whom I had met a couple of years before but hadn't seen in the interim. Actually, I had met him

because of this book! He had read *Living in the Light* while living in Minnesota, and came out to California to one of my workshops. To make a long and romantic story short, we fell in love and were married within a year.

Being in a committed relationship has been a powerful experience of growth for me. I truly understand now that deep relationship is the clearest mirror we have, and therefore, the greatest path to consciousness. This, however, is a topic for another book.

I now divide my time between our home and office in California, our beautiful home on the island of Kauai, and traveling to lead workshops around the world. I am most excited about the in-depth work that takes place in the intensive programs I conduct in Hawaii and California, and my two-year mentoring program.

The primary focus of my work now is on becoming conscious of the many different aspects of who we are, and learning to develop and express the infinite energies within us. This involves a great deal of what is often called “shadow” work — becoming aware of the parts of ourselves that we have denied or repressed because we feel they are unacceptable, and learning to value them and make them part of our lives. This healing work brings us into a greater and greater sense of balance and wholeness.

I understand, better than ever now, that “living in the light” involves traveling into the darker places within ourselves, and shining the light of our consciousness into them so that we can truly love and express all that we are.

On this amazing human journey of ours, the strongest guiding force we have is right within us. We gain access to it through our

intuitive sense, our “gut feelings” about what is right and true for us. The development of our relationship with our inner guidance is what this book is all about. May it serve you well. . . .

With love,  
Shakti Gawain





# PART ONE

## *The Principles*



# Chapter One

## A New Way of Life



We are living in a very exciting and powerful time. On the deepest level of consciousness, a radical transformation is taking place. As the evolution of human consciousness gains greater and greater momentum, we are being challenged, on a planetary level, to let go of our present way of life and create a new one. In a sense, our “old world” is dying, and a new world is coming into being.

For many of us, the old world was based on an external focus — having lost our fundamental spiritual connection, we have believed that the material world is the only reality. Thus, feeling essentially lost, empty, and alone, we have continually attempted to

find happiness and fulfillment through external “things” — money, material possessions, relationships, work, fame, food, drugs, and so on.

The new world is being built as we open to the higher power of the universe within us and consciously allow that creative energy to move through us. As each of us connects with our inner spiritual awareness, we learn that the creative power of the universe is inside of us. We also learn that we can create our own experience of reality and take responsibility for doing so. The change begins within each individual, but as more and more individuals are transformed, the mass consciousness is increasingly affected.

My observation that a profound transformation of consciousness is taking place in our world at this time is based on the changes I see within myself, those around me, and in our society. It is affirmed by feedback I receive from thousands of people I work with all over the world.

*Living in the Light* is about this transformation of consciousness, within each individual and in the world. My use of the terms “old world” and “new world” throughout the book refer to the old way of living that we are relinquishing, and the new one that we are creating.

For many people, this time may be distressing, because the world situation and/or our personal lives may seem to be going from bad to worse. It's as if many things are falling apart and will continue to do so with even greater intensity, but on the deepest level, I do not feel this is negative. It is upsetting to us to the degree that we are emotionally attached to our old way of living

and steadfastly follow old patterns, rather than trying to open our eyes to the profound changes that are occurring.

Paradoxical as it may seem, these changes are the greatest blessing that any of us could possibly imagine. The truth is that the way of life that we have been following for centuries no longer works. While appropriate for its time, it cannot take us where we need and desire to go. The focus on materialism and the external world was necessary in a time when our primary challenge was physical survival. Our patriarchal values and the traditional roles of men and women may have been necessary in order to ensure the protection of our families for a certain period of time in our evolutionary process.

At this time, many human beings (and other species as well) on the earth are still struggling for physical survival. Yet there are an increasing number of us who no longer have to be preoccupied primarily with sheer survival. We have the opportunity, and thus the responsibility, to begin looking for deeper fulfillment on spiritual, mental, and emotional levels. We are searching for greater meaning and purpose in our lives, and for ways to live more responsibly and harmoniously on our planet.

While some people throughout history have led relatively meaningful and satisfying lives, I'm afraid that most of us have never found the fulfillment that we have yearned for. Our cultural conditioning has not given us the tools to develop a healthy connection with our inner realms of soul, intuition, and feeling, and to integrate them with our external world.

In a way, it's as if we've been in school for our entire lives,