

This section contains excerpts from the [Preface](#) and [Chapter 1](#) of *The Enchanted Self, A Positive Therapy*.

### [Excerpt from the Preface](#)

In my years as a psychologist, I have come to believe that most people seeking psychotherapy are unhappy not only because of earlier hurts and traumas, as well as present frustrations and problems, but because they cannot access earlier happy moments often enough, resulting in not being able to experience enough positive states of well-being. Much contemporary psychotherapy, no matter how well intended and deliberate, often minimizes the re-accessing of earlier states of well-being and the joys associated with them. After all, we are trained as therapists to look for dysfunction rather than function. This training can result in our not sufficiently recognizing talents, potentials and capacities for joy within our clients. This book is intended to help you as a mental health professional, including those of you at the para professional levels of training, as well as allied professionals such as educators and nurses, learn how to help your patients, clients or students access those earlier states of well-being unique to each individual. It is also intended to help you, whether you are a clinician or other interested party, perhaps the woman or man who may have been in therapy, yet still wonders why you do not feel whole, learn how to better access your positive states of well-being so that you too may experience more joy and fulfillment in your own life. It is these unique states of well-being that I have come to label *The Enchanted Self*.

As we move into *The Enchanted Self* together, I want you to know firsthand of my journey of Enchantment, both as a professional and private person. I hope my self revelations will encourage you to undertake your journey of personal Enchantment as you learn more about *The Enchanted Self*, whether your ultimate goal is to provide better mental health care or whether you are looking for a path that will permit you to continue your own self-repair and growth.

### [Excerpt from Chapter One](#)

**Beginning the Journey.** Seven years ago, after many years in private practice, combined with a lifetime experiencing the complicated role of being female in our society, I decided that I wanted to know more about women's development, via a case study approach. I wanted a first hand sense of what women would tell me about how they perceived girlhood messages. I wished to hear for myself how these messages had impacted on the ordinary woman's sense of self and her development. How do these messages that girls receive, about what they should become, interface with a woman's sense of selfhood?

When I began to analyze the transcripts from my interviews, I was shocked to discover that all of the women expressed to me an enhanced sense of well being, frequently available to them. They had true capacities for joy, as well as abilities to self replenish. All could reclaim, reintegrate and/or adapt positive states of being from their childhood into workable, pleasurable and often joyful adult states. It is these positive capacities that I have labeled *The Enchanted Self*.

These enhanced adult states of being were not repetitions of clearly identifiable ego states from childhood or adolescence, but were new integrations of elements of earlier positive conditions. They were a rebirth of a sense of well being in adult form. "Why *The Enchanted Self*?"

We have known that, in any state of enchantment, there is some degree of magic and the unknown: the Enchanted Forest looms dark and mysterious in fairy tales throughout the ages; princesses enchanted in fairy tales were touched by magic, whether for good or for evil. How could a kiss turn a toad into an enchanted prince? All of us who as children enjoyed fairy tales,

certainly believed a kiss could create a prince or awaken a princess who had been asleep for a hundred years. We could accept the idea of enchantment. Many scientists of human behavior recognize that we do not yet, and perhaps never can, fully understand human nature. I have become more and more convinced that we do not. For example, what interests me is that we do not fully understand some people, who have apparently fortunate lives but experience little joy, while others, apparently less fortunate, experience great joy. Perhaps we have tried too hard to understand pathology in our science of psychology while we have not tried hard enough to recognize and understand what I call enhanced ego-states, or happiness.

When I first began to analyze data from the women I interviewed, I kept trying to understand how their enhanced adult lives evolved from the childhoods they talked about. I found that although there seemed to be some clear connections, many others were not clear at all. This mystery further influenced my choice of the *The Enchanted Self* as a term to express these positive ego-states. The capacities of these women to re-claim positive aspects of their childhood, while discarding the dysfunction that was often also present, was astounding to me. It seemed as if a magic wand had been tapped on the women's heads in their adult lives.

For example, when Edith talked about her childhood, she at first remembered only its dysfunctional aspects: the fighting between her parents and their constant criticality. I suggested that we go back and look again at her childhood to identify times when, in spite of the pain of family life, she felt excited about her own life and about herself. With that encouragement, she could separate out positive memories of herself from dysfunctional family experiences and she remembered some wonderful times: delightful family picnics, fishing with her grandfather and shelling peas with her grandmother on the porch.

The magic was that the adult Edith could integrate the overly functional, meticulous child she once was into an enormously competent professional woman who gained positive self-esteem and gratification from her abilities. She even found the time to develop her talent for dancing. Thus Edith's enchanted self in adulthood was really the successful integration of the compulsive traits created by negative childhood experiences, with old pleasures and new talents. How can we label such a variety of positive ego-states coming from such different reservoirs of human histories as anything but enchanted?

**Turning my gaze into the treatment room.** The women I interviewed caused me to look at my clients in new ways. As Proust states, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." I discovered many aspects of enchantment in my clients as I began to look anew at them. I began to recognize, within my treatment room, extraordinary human beings. Yes, they often had difficult life situations, dysfunctional backgrounds, poorly functioning and damaging marriages, problem children and other disappointments, but they were still able to achieve many moments that worked well for them. Here were people who felt passion and excitement about many aspects of their lives.

**My new assignment as a Therapist.** Now it has become my job, and my privilege, to help sift through the layers of dysfunction and disturbance to help my clients to recognize, name, validate and integrate, as parts of themselves, these wellness capacities. This becomes the exciting, sleuthing job of the therapist. I search for and acknowledge what is already working for the client, or what did work in the past. Finding the good news about my client helps to rebalance the whole person.