



The Enchanted Self, A Positive Therapy

Readers Share their Reading Experience

Professional Reviews

"... A book I couldn't resist ... Written in an easy, graceful style that makes it easily accessible ... As I read Holstein's book, I thought about how her ideas are related to our need to tell our stories, and especially our stories of joyful discovery, self-realization, achievements and fulfillment--our gifts, graces and glories." To read the full review click [here](#).

-- Susan Albert, *The Story Circle Journal*

"... A warm and wise book whose positive message is one we cannot fail to notice. [Holstein's] therapeutic approach to human growth is compelling because her own personal story is at its core"

-- Claudia Bepko, MSW, Center for Training, Family Institute of Maine; co-author of 'Singing at the Top of Our Lungs'

"*The Enchanted Self* is a mystical journey to a new inner exploration of the lost or forgotten positive aspects of ourselves. The book describes a shared rich partnership between therapist and client toward empowering ourselves to make real changes in our lives."

-- Ellen McGrath, *American Psychological Task Force on Women and Depression*

"By providing a "safe holding environment for the client that contains a respectful, reciprocal relationship", therapy can proceed more effectively and rapidly.

"... In summary, this book offers a fresh approach to helping our clients heal by retrieving and reintegrating positive aspects of themselves. As therapists we can also help to take better care of ourselves and each of us can learn to sing our unique Song of the Soul. By reading Dr. Holstein's book, or experiencing one of her workshops, we too, might begin to believe in the magic of *The Enchanted Self*."

-- Lucinda Seares, *Psy. D.*

"It is a truism in psychotherapy that most people are unhappy because of past and present traumas and problems. The result is that treatment is usually about dysfunction, exclusively. Psychotherapist Barbara Becker Holstein's new book, *The Enchanted Self*, is a revelation because it recognizes the absolute need for us to recall the functioning aspects, the joys, of our lives, too!

"The anecdotes from a variety of case studies ring true and familiar to this reviewer ... and the exercises at the end of each chapter really do facilitate this positive therapy. And that is to reframe the hurts by understanding our traumas in the light of our strengths. The end result is the awareness of positive self regard which leads to the recognition of our enchanted self.

"*The Enchanted Self* is an insightful exploration and journey to wholeness and happiness ... a positive therapy."

-- Richard Fuller, *Senior Editor, Metaphysical Reviews*

Reader Reviews

"I've finally got to reading your book ... I am enjoying the book, especially your focus of helping people identify, recover and use their strong points. Thanks for writing a fine book on how to do this."

-- G. P.

" I just finished *The Enchanted Self*. Bravo. I wish those concepts had been around in the early 70's when I saw my first psychiatrist, he to be but one of many therapists. I had walked into his office hoping for help in what I felt blocked in doing, that at enormous emotional cost, and walked out labeled as to what was wrong with me ..."



" What I liked best in your book were the building blocks of self-esteem, having needs met and recognizing and exercising strengths."

" ... the book created affirmations rather than regrets. The Song of the Soul certainly could mean for all of us that "positive therapy" exists. And for me, it came at the right time."

-- W. J.

[More Online Reviews ...](#)

[Recipes for Enchantment: The Secret Ingredient is You by Barbara Becker Holstein, Ed.D./Reviewed by Lucinda M. Seares-Monica, Psy.D. as featured in *The Independent Practitioner*, Fall 2001](#)

Books for the Journey as featured in *The Story Circle Journal*, Volume 1, Number 2

The Enchanted Self, A Positive Therapy (Harwood Academic Publishers, ISBN 90-5702-503-5) is a book I couldn't resist. It was written by Dr. Barbara Becker Holstein, a therapist in Ocean, New Jersey, who believes that many people are unhappy not just because of past hurts and present disappointments, but because they simply cannot remember being happy. While *The Enchanted Self* is primarily for mental health professionals, it is written in an easy, graceful style that makes it easily accessible, as Holstein shares her own story and clients' stories, and uses them to illustrate her theory of the enchanted self.

What is "the enchanted self"? According to Holstein, it is the "capacity to reclaim, reintegrate, or adapt positive states of being from previous times in our lives into present-day workable, pleasurable, growth-promoting, joyful states of being." It involves experiencing "enchanted moments"--a uniquely joyful feeling that combines older happy memories with present experience in a positive and meaningful way. Holstein explains: "Enchanted memories are different from everyday memories because they have a rich layered quality, derived from a variety of positive memories, sensory images, and present-day attitudes about the experiences themselves." In other words, enchanted moments are those times when we are in touch with a self that is whole, happy, and creative--the enchanted self.

But reclaiming the enchanted self is not an easy, and certainly not a painless, task. Holstein's enchanted self emerged through a long therapeutic process, unpeeling as an onion is unpeeled," she says, "layer by layer," as she began to discover more and more of her own past and present happiness, buried beneath past hurts and feelings of violation. Having learned for herself some ways to get in touch with that core of happy contentment, she began sharing her insights with clients, asking them to tell her about the times when they had felt most whole, centered, balanced, joyful--to tell her their happiest stories, in other words. Retrieving those moments, reliving them, she says, is a first step toward reclaiming wholeness and balance in the present life.

As I read Holstein's book, I thought about how her ideas are related to our need to tell our stories, and especially our stories of joyful discovery, self-realization, achievement and fulfillment--our gifts, graces, and glories. Recalling past positive moments and putting them into writing (or translating them into your favorite medium--painting, textiles, dance, song, etc.) can be a way of accessing more present joy. This doesn't mean that we bury or deny our past hurts; but it does suggest that it is helpful to *reframe* them (to use Holstein's term) by seeing our traumas in the light of our strengths. I am reminded of a friend's long, sad story about her husband's death from cancer, which she summarized in one glorious sentence: "It was a terrible time--but oh, how much I grew from it! I thought I was too weak to live without him. Now I know just how strong I am!"

I also thought of some of my favorite women's memoirs, most of which involve the pain of disappointment and the anguish of loss--translated into the compelling joy of self-discovery. I

thought of Mary Karr's *Liar's Club*, for instance. Karr's is a wild story of violence, alcoholism, and childhood rape, but in all the craziness she finds an unsentimental joy, and emerges whole (but not unscathed) from her turbulent past. In the end, her demons are (mostly) exercised by her telling, and she has created some enchanted moments. I thought of Lucy Grealey's *Autobiography of a Face*, which tells the story of her childhood disfigurement by cancer, and the self-understanding she ultimately achieves. I thought of Gretel Erlich's chronicle, *A Match to the Heart*, of a woman struck by lightning. Enchanted selves, discovered in a dark mirror? Yes, yes.

In her newsletter, *The Enchanted Self*, Holstein offers two exercises that are also story-telling exercises (reprinted with her permission). Try them, and see if they help you come closer to that part of you that is your enchanted self.

Exercise 1. This exercise involves making positive deposits into your memory bank. Over the next few days, stay alert to when you are in a good mood. Try to use all of your senses to experience the present more fully, especially when you become aware of a "potential deposit." When the moment is right, ask yourself the following questions. What is going on? Does it remind you of other good times in your life? Can you list several of these earlier events? What were the best parts of these earlier experiences? Take the time to describe them, perhaps writing them down or dictating them into a tape recorder. Now gradually refocus your mind on the present. What are you seeing? What are the smells? What are the sounds? How do these sensations make you feel? Try to be aware of the details, taking the time to savor them as you deposit them into your memory bank. If writing or dictating a narrative does not come easily to you, try drawing a picture, writing a poem, or composing a tune. Just do something to capture the moment in a way that is most meaningful to you. Your abilities as an artist, writer, or composer are less important than your desire to relish life.

Exercise 2. This exercise is about withdrawing positive memories from your memory bank. No matter how dysfunctional one's life is, each of us has experienced moments that were good and possibly inspirational. To fully appreciate these memories, we sometimes need the courage to let go of their dysfunctional aspects, revising them to emphasize positive elements. Scan your memory bank for a memory. Let go of any negative feelings around it, focusing on its inherent beauty and the good things that may have come about afterwards. Relish the part of the memory that has some enchantment. Use your senses. How did your body feel? What were the sounds and smells? What did you see? Remember that the pain is a part of the distant past. Enjoy what's best about this memory before you let it go.