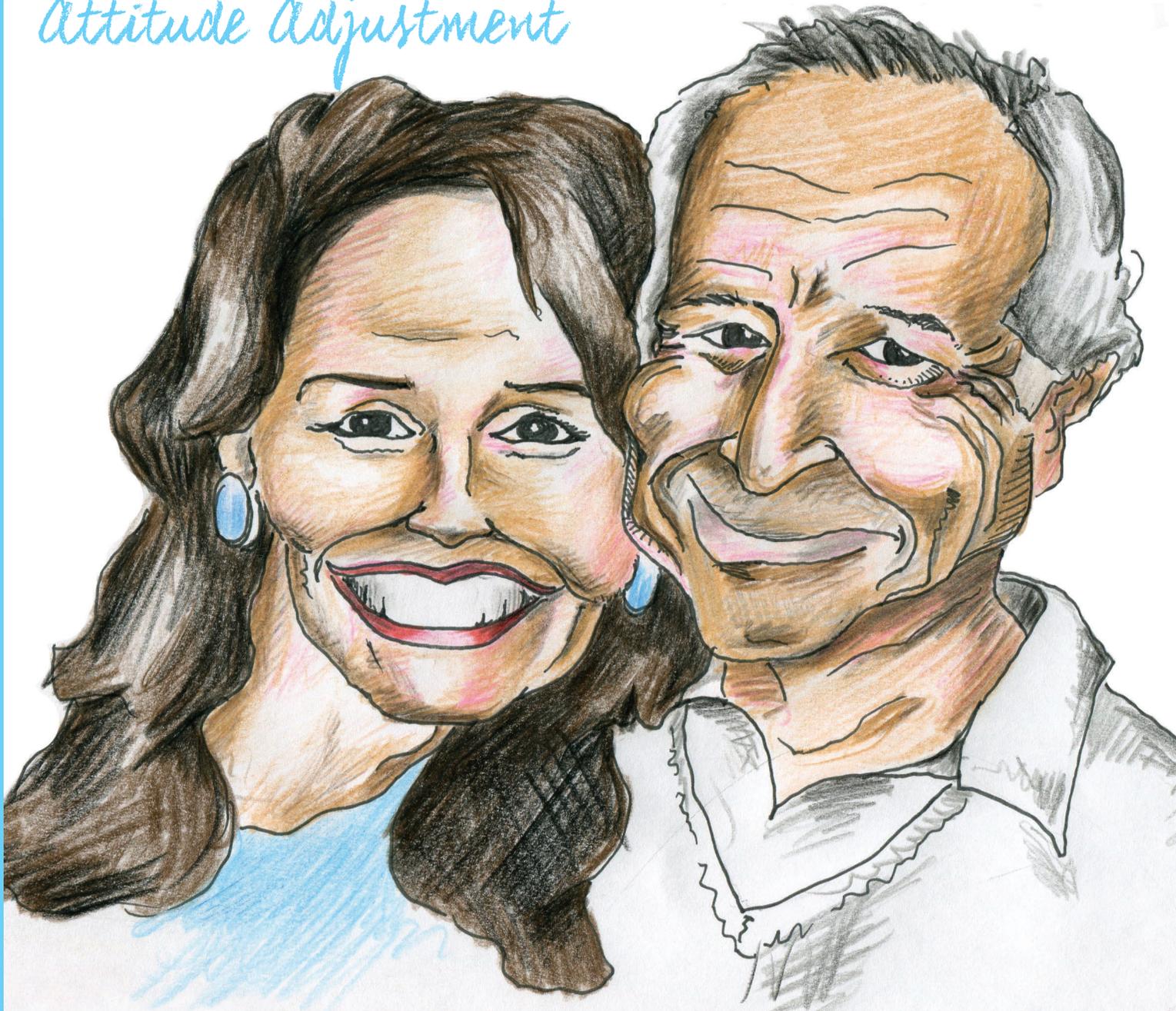




unity[®] Magazine

Gerald Jampolsky, M.D., and Diane Cirincione-Jampolsky, Ph.D.: *Attitude Adjustment*



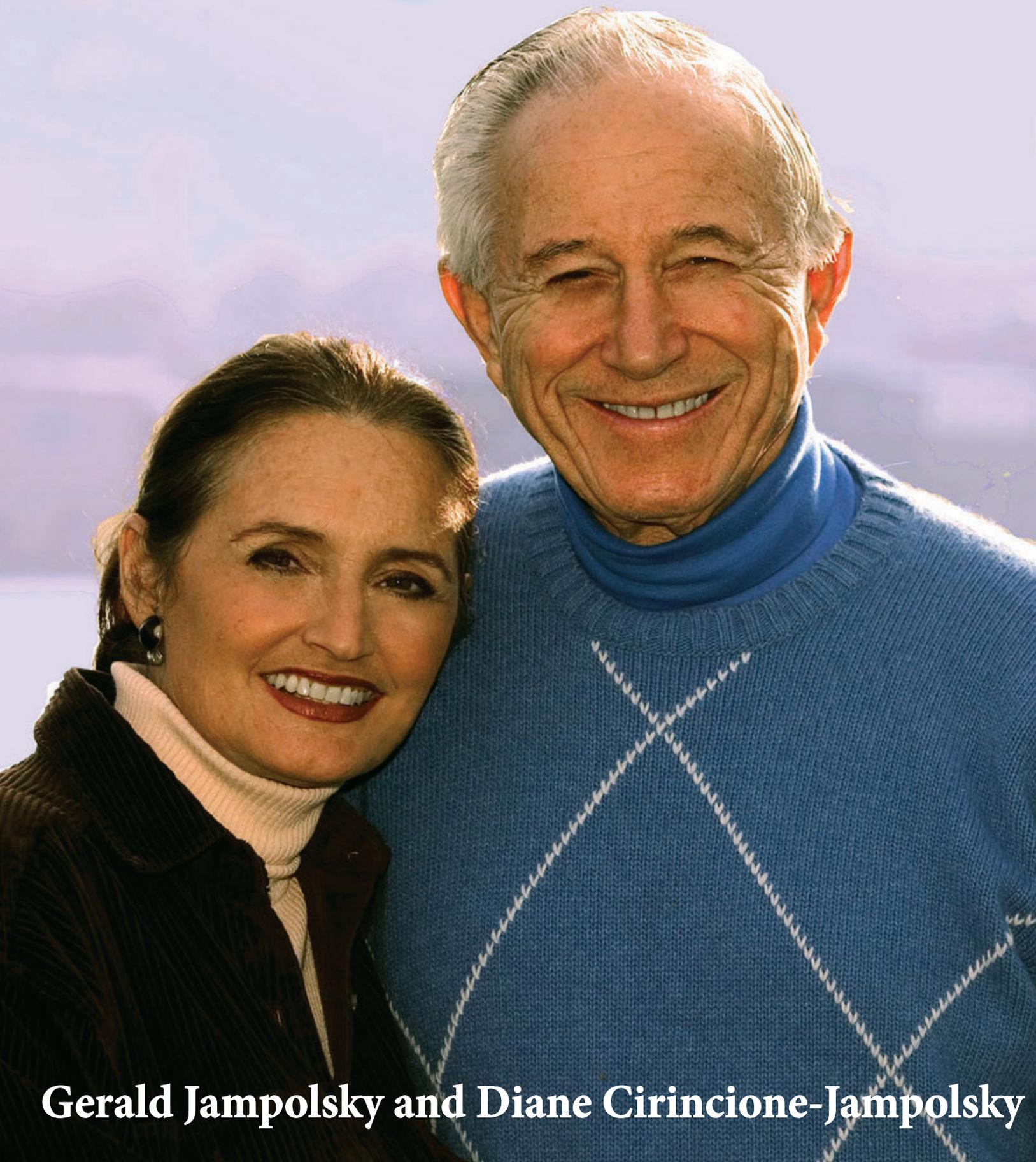
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MARCH/APRIL 2015

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE \$4.50

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Listening in With ...



Gerald Jampolsky and Diane Cirincione-Jampolsky

Giving Your Attitude Plenty of Latitude

Psychiatrist **Gerald Jampolsky, M.D.**, founded the original Center for Attitudinal Healing in 1975 to help children with life-threatening illness achieve inner peace. When his best-selling *Love Is Letting Go of Fear* came out soon thereafter, Attitudinal Healing took off and expanded its scope to help people of all ages in diverse circumstances. In 2009, Jampolsky and his wife, psychologist **Diane Cirincione-Jampolsky, Ph.D.**, cofounded Attitudinal Healing International, a network of centers now in 200 cities within 27 countries. Attitudinal Healing asserts that only our own thoughts—not what others say or do—can cause us pain and that we always have the power to choose our attitude. Below, the couple talks with *Unity Magazine* editor **Katy Koontz** about the transformative power of learning to see things differently.

Katy Koontz: I see Attitude Healing as a combination of spiritual principles and psychological techniques that help people shift their focus from what's wrong with themselves and the world to what's right. Would you agree?

Gerald Jampolsky: The real emphasis is having peace of mind as your only goal and forgiveness as your only function. Attitudinal Healing is about letting go of the blocks we put in the way of experiencing the love we are born with; the love God created us as. We're not just physical bodies—we're really spiritual beings. We're here to choose peace rather than conflict and love rather than fear, to be love-givers rather than love-seekers and love-finders rather than faultfinders.

KK: And as you've often said, as spiritual beings, happiness is our natural state. So why is it so hard for us to hold on to that?

GJ: Because we're attached to what the ego believes in: judgments, conflict, and suffering. We tend to find an unfortunate comfort zone in the ego—we go there often because suffering becomes a familiar "friend" rather than something we want to let go of.

KK: Some friend!

Diane Cirincione-Jampolsky: Many traditions teach that the really saintly people have suffered, and the ego has translated that into the idea that you *need* to suffer to be a good person. In suffering, one can grow tremendously, but we don't need to unconsciously create suffering to grow. The ego also believes in interpreting everybody's behavior—finding out who's right and wrong, who you can and can't trust—which society sees as intelligent and discerning. Yet, the ego's interpretations and judgments keep us from experiencing our higher spiritual selves in our everyday lives.

GJ: Attitudinal Healing is not about changing other people or giving them advice or trying to fix them. It's about healing our own attitudes. That's why we say your attitude is everything. When I get rid of my judgments about myself, other people, and my self-imposed limitations, I start to see the world differently. Then, nothing is impossible. In that, I find freedom. And that freedom is surrendering to love, to a higher power. It's surrendering to God.

KK: Even if we understand intellectually that we can decide to look at something

differently, how do we get around our initial emotional gut reaction?

DC-J: We do have physical responses, like the fight-or-flight response, and natural reactions. We're not robots. What's more important is what we do about it. You want to honor someone's pain or their anger, for example, but do you want to enshrine it?

KK: It may seem at first that Attitudinal Healing involves denying or forgetting the past, but it's actually exactly the opposite, isn't it?

DC-J: Yes, there's no denial in Attitudinal Healing. It's looking directly at whatever's happening and finding ways to see it differently. Instead of seeing someone as attacking you, for example, you could see them as being fearful or giving a call for help, which lets you have a completely different, less defensive response.

KK: Another hurdle people often have is confusing forgiveness with approval.

DC-J: Forgiveness has nothing to do with being permissive of other people's behavior. People will often ask the question: "Is it not spiritual to sue somebody?" Whether you

sue or not isn't really the issue. It's the consciousness you have when you take any action that counts. We first need to take responsibility for our own actions and thoughts. If I'm suing someone because I want to destroy that person, then it breeds destructive energy. But if I clarify the situation in my own heart and take responsibility, and then ask my guidance, "What do I need to think and say and do about the situation?" then I can follow my guidance.

KK: Victim consciousness seems rampant now, and many people don't even realize they're in it. That's a challenge because you have to recognize that before you can get out of it, wouldn't you agree?

DC-J: We often ask people, "At a core level, do you really believe you deserve the right to be happy?" And we ask them to give us a percentage representing how much happiness they think they deserve. How people answer this question is how they create their reality, and you'd be amazed at how few people will say 100 percent. God gave us the ability to cocreate, so we are responsible for what we experience. We only want to believe we cocreate the good things, not the bad things. If you believe you are a victim, then your ego structure is going to encourage making decisions supporting that belief system.

GJ: According to the ego, if something's going wrong, you need to find someone to blame or blame yourself. But in our work, no one's to blame. The ego wants us to act as though we could control other people, and it tells us that somehow we'll be successful at that. The only things we can really control are the thoughts we put into our own minds.

For example, many people get divorced because they find they can't control their spouses. We have a friend who is familiar with Attitudinal Healing who called to say she was getting a divorce. I suggested she put off her appointment with the lawyer and commit herself for one week to making

no judgments about her husband and no interpretations about all the things he did. And she had quite a list! "Just be a love-finder for a whole week," I suggested, "and then call me back and tell me what you feel."

One week later, she called and said, "Jerry, you have *no idea* how much my husband changed this last week. I know it wasn't really him—it was *me*. I changed my attitude."



DC-J: Most people believe (both consciously and unconsciously) their belief system is true. But belief systems are just made up of thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. We create thoughts and we concretize them, thinking they're valid and true. And then we have experiences validating them for us. So the more spiritually evolved we are, the more we open up those belief systems to the "what ifs?" You can't experience your true spiritual nature if you are entrenched in believing your way is the only right way.

Some people were shocked and dismayed when they heard Mother Teresa was questioning her faith around the time she died. We knew Mother quite well, and I was so glad that information came out, because it showed she was a spiritually evolving being. Unless you question what holds you to where you are, you will never get to the next level. In order to get

where you want to go, you first have to leave where you're at. It takes courage.

KK: What is the connection between Attitudinal Healing and *A Course in Miracles*?

GJ: *A Course in Miracles* is my heartbeat. We study the *Course* each day. But Attitudinal Healing doesn't use religious words like Holy Spirit, or God. It uses the word *love*.

DC-J: We do that to be inclusive to everyone, even atheists. The original concepts are all inspired by Jerry's experiences with the *Course*, and so a lot of people come to Attitudinal Healing from the *Course*. But most people who use Attitude Healing are not students of the *Course*, and some have never even heard of it.

We've worked with so many different faiths—including Unity—from all around the world because Attitudinal Healing complements each one of them without being theological. We've been invited to work in 61 countries on six continents—Outer Mongolia, South Africa, Cameroon, China, Tonga, and even the Islamic Republic of Iran (where we happened to be the only Americans in the country at the time). We never cease to be amazed at how universal these principles are.

KK: Forgiveness is a cornerstone of your work. One of the big hurdles people have with forgiveness is feeling that their anger is justified. How can we let go of self-righteousness?

GJ: By starting to ask the question, *Does my justified anger and hate bring me peace of mind?* If not, then maybe you might want to let go of it and find out what *would* bring you peace of mind. Remember, forgiveness doesn't mean agreeing with another person's behavior.

People always think it's the *other* person who needs to start forgiving.

When we were in Cuba, we created these little inserts that fit into your shoe that said, “May every step you take be one of forgiveness.” Whenever I took off my shoes, people would see the insert and say, “That’s very interesting. Do you have an extra one of those? I don’t need it, but boy, does my wife need it!” It’s always the other guy!

DC-J: We always tell people the bad news is they’re not going to be able to heal someone else’s attitude. But the good news is they can heal their own.

KK: I see willingness as a bridge to shifting your attitude when that shift feels almost impossible.

GJ: You just hit bingo! It’s all about the *willingness* to see things differently, the *willingness* to let go of the past and let go of form. I think we need to be vigorously involved in that willingness and not get caught in the old habits of being defensive and pessimistic and thinking the past is going to repeat itself.

DC-J: Intention also plays a part. In one of our conversations with Mother Teresa, we asked her how she could be so spiritual all the time. She said, “*Nobody* is that way all the time! You just have to have the intention of going in that direction. That’s what counts.” She freed us up tremendously with that one statement.

That attitude allows us to have wonder at our mistakes and our pitfalls and say, “Wow, look what I did! I must have been really frightened! Okay, I’m choosing differently now!” instead of judging, shaming, and blaming ourselves. It also allows us to laugh at

ourselves and our ego structures. Jerry and I have learned to do that a lot. We’ve been together for 34 years and we laugh 10 times more now than we did when we first met.

KK: What has most surprised you about teaching this work?

DC-J: When Jerry founded the first center, he never intended it to go beyond a little center for children in Tiburon, California. But now it’s in so many other places and people are using it in ways that go way beyond the original simple support group model. Our 11-week curriculum for schools is really quite profound. The prison work people have been doing is extraordinary. Government agencies have been using Attitudinal Healing, as have hospitals, juvenile detention centers, community organizations, and even large businesses.

For example, the Oakland, California, center is deeply involved in the community and the education system, including youth, teachers, and parents. Every person who receives funding for housing in Oakland is required to take a four-hour class on Attitudinal Healing, and then they’re given the option of doing a 12-week course. It’s amazing how people’s lives are changing because they have other ways of looking at the world. They become aware of more and more choices.

KK: Have the teachings changed at all over time?

DC-J: Attitudinal Healing itself has not changed, but the model of how the centers work has. The original model was a single

center where everyone came. A second model is a center plus additional groups within the community. In the Netherlands, they don’t have a central place but they have groups in 60 cities. China has a center in three major cities plus 22 additional minor cities. Then there’s a Skype model too.

KK: You started working with children in the beginning. Do you think kids have an easier time changing their attitude than adults do?

GJ: Just watch a 4-year-old kid when someone takes his toy. The kid gets angry, but three minutes later he’s back to playing with the child who took his toy. If something similar were to happen to an adult, that person might not speak to the other person for years, even if it’s their brother or sister or good friend.

Children are much more able to forgive and live in the present. Little kids demonstrate spirituality in spades. They don’t know how to tell time. They don’t know the difference between yesterday and tomorrow. They don’t care what color a person’s skin is or if they’re fat or skinny. They don’t make judgments in the way adults do.

DC-J: The main reason children don’t hold on to grievances is they don’t see any value in it. It’s as if subconsciously they’re thinking, *I’m going to have to play by myself if I don’t make up with this kid*. The reason we do anything—from murdering someone to marrying someone—is because we see value in it. If you no longer see value in something, then you’re willing to give it up. That’s the bottom line. 

In one of our conversations with Mother Teresa, we asked her how she could be so spiritual all the time. She said, “*Nobody* is that way all the time!”