

Cottonwood

Tucson's



# InnerPath ...footnotes

Fall 2010

## Happy Fall! - Jana's Corner

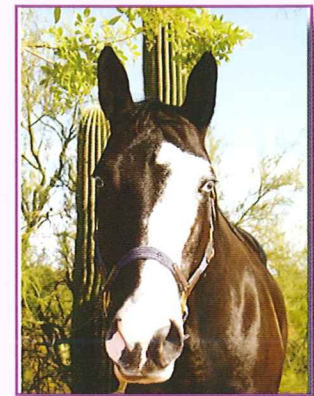
Hope you enjoyed your summer. It's time to get ready for fall! This is a great time for personal reflection. Are you where you'd like to be right now? What's working for you in your life? What isn't? Might be time to review your personal action plan, journal, yearly collage, or whatever tools you use for manifesting and tracking your growth and transformation. Let us know if you need any help in this area. Maybe you'd like to come back for another InnerPath program. Or you might need a therapist referral or some local resources. We'd love to hear from you no matter where you are on your journey.

I want to tell you about Cottonwood's **Developing Healthy Families** workshop. This is a great

opportunity for you to do some therapeutic work with your significant other and/or children. Families come to us that have been impacted by addictions, depression and anxiety, anger and rage, behavioral/emotional problems, trauma, and communication issues. We guide families through healing resentments as well as setting up a plan for the future with boundaries and goals. This is an amazing program for families to get help. You've been here for yourself and/or your primary relationship. Maybe it's time to bring your family to Cottonwood.

Rokelle Lerner explores infidelity and the hard work necessary to sustain our intimate relationships in her article, "Affairs of the Heart". Many of you report having your InnerPath "breakthrough" during our equine

session. We have some beautiful horse pictures contributed by Carington Singmaster, equine specialist that might bring you back. And, Jackie H, InnerPath alumna, wrote a beautiful piece about her experience with Divo. Enjoy and be well.



## Affairs of the Heart by Rokelle Lerner

A woman in her forties came to InnerPath feeling depressed and hopeless. She'd been married twice and in both her relationships she reported feeling restless and bored, had several affairs and was caught. One session I curiously asked her if she'd



ever really fallen in love. She looked up at me with tears in her eyes and said, "You know, Rokelle, I've never really fallen in love. I think I've only stepped in it a few times."

This woman's statement was amazingly on target! The truth is that we really don't fall in love; we grow into love. In our relationships, we don't really give ourselves the chance to benefit from the opportunities that loving provides. In other words, all of us desire the excitement and the pleasure of the grand overture, but few of us are willing to stick around for the second act.

Those that are willing to stay and do the work required of relationship, reap the joy, passion and intimacy that enhance their lives and nurture their spirits. Those who are not willing to delve into this work either endure an empty existence with their partners or create crisis out of unconscious desperation, abandonment fears and sometimes, conscious entitlement.

When the news broke about Sandra Bullock's betrayal by Jesse James we were shocked. How could anyone treat America's sweetheart like that? We couldn't wait to read

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## Affairs of the Heart *(continued)*

about this debacle and became fixated on the details. Some felt appalled but some actually felt validated by this: "if it can happen to a beauty like Sandra Bullock, then perhaps I'm not such a loser after all." Others became threatened with the opposite reasoning: "if it can happen to Sandra, it could certainly happen to me." Then we heard from Jesse that he had affairs because he was traumatized as a child. I'm reminded of a comedian in the sixties named Flip Wilson who, when he made mistakes used to say, "the devil made me do it." Whatever happened to taking responsibility for one's behavior?

Certainly if this man has a sexual addiction that has its roots in trauma, then help is available. But has sexual addiction become an excuse for bad behavior? This is by no means to make light of those who

suffer from this addiction and are going through the painful work of recovery. But you have to wonder if this diagnosis is about convenience or about sincerity?

We all look for heroes. The problem is that we tend to hold couples as models of perfection and when they disappoint us it triggers our outrage, fascination and insecurity. We tend to judge harshly when in actuality, we have no idea of the exact circumstances or the other partner's behavior. For all we know Sandra Bullock may have some clinically interesting behavior of her own!

In an age where the various media influence our judgment, it's easy to be confused about the two very different experiences of falling in love and of sustaining a long-term relationship. It's crucial that we broaden our view of relationships to reach far beyond

the initial romantic phase. We need a new vision of sustained relating that brings us into the quality of healing that only the power of love can manifest

All of us deserve the kind of intimacy that provides us with vitality, closeness, passion and wellbeing—the kind of life-giving relationships we've all longed for. Like anything else in life that is worthwhile, this work takes practice, persistence, commitment and courage. I wish for you the strength to sustain your work, even when the going gets tough. I invite you to borrow hopefulness from others who have walked through that darkness of despair and confusion, and out the other side. The many gifts that will manifest through your efforts will be beyond your wildest imagination!

## **Divo** by InnerPath Alumna Jackie H.

Christmas night of 2009 was my bottom, my complete lowest point. After months and years of struggle in my one-sided marriage, I just wanted to be gone. I lost track of how much I drank that day and night, but still nothing was numbing the feelings I so desperately wanted to be rid of. Anger. Fear. Shame. Sadness. Loneliness. And on... and on... I sat in the bathroom trying to hide from the world on the other side of the door: him, his family, even my kids. I just wanted to be gone. People noticed. I didn't care. I knew my kids were safe and that they were being watched. They didn't need me. I woke the next morning to the sound of voices downstairs. Mom, Alan, the kids were all having breakfast. "I can't get up," I thought. I was empty and could go no further. I rolled over and went back to sleep

for a bit longer, but to my dismay, I woke again. I had prayed to not wake up! Why didn't He hear me? I stayed there when I couldn't sleep any longer, listening to my heart beating. "STOP!" I thought. "Stop beating. Please, just stop beating." No such luck.

Over the next few days I was in touch with my therapist. At first I think she thought I was exaggerating, but after a couple of conversations she really heard me and came up with some suggestions. One of them was for me to consider a behavioral health facility (yes...just what it sounds like) in Tucson called Cottonwood de Tucson. Though I was "walking the walk" of my everyday life, I still wished to be gone. I felt completely broken. Though it remained questionable whether I needed inpatient treatment for my depression, it was clear that something drastic needed to be done.

The answer was a week-long retreat called Inner Path, where I would spend my days with five other women, all with various challenges, trying to find a way to want to live again. During the week we spent time in group therapy sessions primarily, but also shared experiences including a ropes challenge course, a dream workshop, a tai chi class, trauma reprocessing and equine therapy. The therapy sessions were intense and one by one we each had the opportunity to reprocess events from our lives that had impacted us greatly. We tore open old scars, relived painful experiences...but let the toxic memories out and began to let them go.

Wednesday afternoon was reserved for the equine therapy experience. By that point we were as

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## Divo (continued)

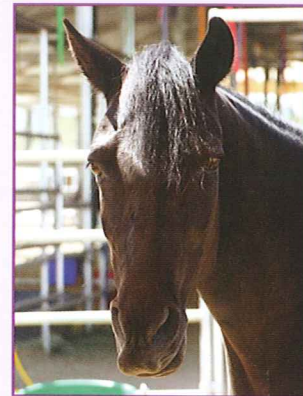
tunity to share our stories with one another and support each other as we worked toward healing. Among us were women who ranged from being eager to work with the horses, to being a little apprehensive, to being downright terrified. None of us knew what to expect and we all assumed we would be riding the horses. Instead, we were simply there to learn from the horses. After an introduction, we were told to go meet the horses. We were allowed to reach out to pet them if they came to the fence, but we were not allowed to get in the pens with them. There were six women and six horses. We were to go find out which horse we felt a connection to. I recall one particular horse who was quite a flirt, eagerly inviting us to pet him. There were a couple that seemed timid at first, but would eventually come interact. At the back of one of the big pens was a stocky black horse who seemed not to notice any of us. He stood at a bucket of hay and slowly ate, seeming irritated to have to be a part of this silly activity. He appeared sour and stood with his back to us. There was something about him that held me though. I stayed and waited and eventually he shifted around, and as he continued to chew, he looked me in the eyes. He never made even the slightest move toward me, but we held that gaze until I was called back to the group. Each of us was asked to tell which horse we picked and we were given a little background on the horse. I was the only one who chose the solitary black horse. Three ladies chose the flirty quarterhorse.

My horse was named Divo. He was the newest horse to the group. He was also the only horse in the group who was not a quarterhorse. He was a gaited horse, as explained by Laura, our leader. He was still working on trying to form friendships with the other horses in

the group, but she said he clearly still felt like an outsider. He also felt "different" from the rest of the horses because he was a gaited horse. He looked different, he walked differently. He didn't fit. "Great," I thought. "He's mad. He's going to fight. What was I thinking...I want to change horses." I didn't change though. I had to follow through with what I started.

I watched as the first 4 ladies had their chance with their chosen horse. To all of our surprise, the goal was not to ride the horses. Actually, none of the horses COULD be ridden. They had all been through experiences in their own lives that made them unable to hold riders. We were instructed to enter the corral with our horse, alone. As we approached the horse, we were to speak to him, saying, "You are the teacher. I am the student. What is the lesson?" From there, we were given our choice of what to do with our horse. We could put a halter on and walk them, lead them with a rope, brush them, talk to them, pet them... whatever we felt like doing, and whatever felt right. I watched as the women before me walked their horses around the pen. Some horses cooperated willingly, some resisted. When their time together came to an end, each woman shared with the group what their lesson had been. One learned to listen to her gut. One learned to stand tall and be proud. For each, it was different and personal. It was amazing to watch the interactions.

My turn came. I felt fear in my chest. What if he continued to ignore me? What if he tried to force me to leave him alone? I didn't really have much of a choice, so I took a deep breath, opened the gate and went in with him. Suddenly, there was no one in the world but Divo and me. I heard nothing but the sound of my breathing, and as I took a few steps toward him, the sound of his breathing. He watched me without moving. I stopped, found



my voice and said to him, "I am the student...sigh...you are the teacher. What is the lesson?" Why was I so afraid? Divo began to step toward me, and I wanted to back up but my feet were frozen in place. My heart was pounding. I was amazed to see that he continued to walk toward me, until he was just a couple feet from me. Looking into his eyes, I felt him saying, "it's okay." We each took a step and met each other, and what he did literally took my breath away. He lowered his head and rested his cheek on my chest. After all the fear I felt, he was hugging me! I knew he felt my brokenness, as I felt his, and we understood one another. I wonder how long he and I had stood there in this hug? For a moment I returned to the world and noticed the ladies watching from outside the fence with tears in their eyes. I wanted to comfort him, bring him some joy, so with his head still rested on my chest, I reached my hand under his neck and hugged him back. He was so still and calm...not a flinch as I touched him. I considered trying to put the halter on him and trying to walk him, but I somehow felt we both just needed to remain in contact. I put both of my hands on him, running them over his head and down his sides. His mane was so rough, but beautiful. For us, just being together was enough; any more would have been too much.

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**Divo** (continued)

He nuzzled up against me again, leaving something slimy on my sweatshirt. My friends laughed and so did I. "Did you just wipe your nose on me?" I asked him, and he nodded his big head yes. More giggles. Laura asked me what Divo had taught me. Though I wanted to come up with something grandiose, my answer was simple. "I am good enough." He'd

had no reason to love me, but he did. For some reason, unconditionally, he did. I was good enough.

The week continued on and our group wrapped up. So much work we had done together, so much learning, so much growth. On the final day we all spoke of this week we'd spent together, pointing out the most difficult, the happiest, the most touching

moments we had shared. I was humbled to hear that without a doubt, my minutes with Divo were considered the most beautiful of the week. The bubble of love that I felt around me and him was seen by the rest of the group. They felt it, and they were taking that warm memory back to their own world.

I am good enough.



**Women's Retreat**

10/11-10/15/10

**Beginnings & Beyond**

9/20-9/24/10

10/18-10/22/10

11/15-11/19/10

12/6-12/10/10

**Developing Healthy**

**Relationships**

12/2-12/5/10

**Developing Healthy**

**Families**

Contact us to schedule

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