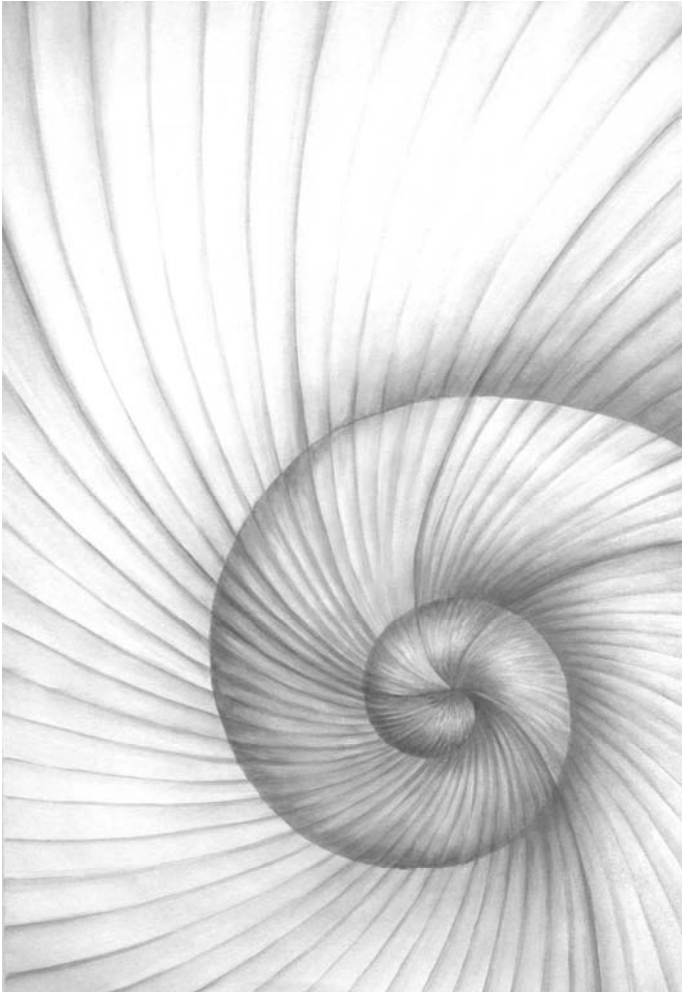


The Cycle of Life



*Creating Smooth Passages
In Every Life Season*

By Pamela Levin



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1. Health. 2. Adulthood. 3. Maturation. 4. Parenting. 5. Interpersonal Relations. 6. Recovery. 7. Self-help.

What People Are Saying

“Now that I know I’m not **supposed** to outgrow what I needed as a child, I can finally feel normal!”

Graphics Designer, California

“I didn’t realize there were stages in parenting as well as in the children being raised, and especially that they are the same stages! Fantastic! My parenting skills have now improved and I’m also much more relaxed. Thank you.”

Parent, Seattle, Washington

“I found your words very inspiring, and although new concepts to me, very familiar. What I’d been feeling inside was put into words. Thank you.”

Twenty—year—old first—time mother, eight months pregnant

“I had trouble getting your books at the school library because, apparently they are always checked out...”

Student, Marin California

“Your book was the perfect healing tool following my divorce. I only wish I’d known before.”

Reader, Illinois

“I want to use this information in a class I’m teaching for codependents and adult children of dysfunctional families, and later in a class for nurses, and also on health, healing and wholeness.”

RN, Kansas City, Missouri

“Pam Levin’s leading—edge work is the foundation for *Homecoming*’ Inner Child material and provides the most advanced, effective and compassionate structure available for Inner Child healing.”

John Bradshaw, author of *Homecoming*

"To know how you are, read how you were... A beautifully clear exposition of the developmental phases of living."

Alvyn Freed, PhD, author of *TA for Tots, Kids and Teens*

"A useful guide to our stuck points and how to fix them...described in the everyday language of development."

Stephen B. Karpman, MD, author of “Karpman Drama Triangle,”CTM., ITAA

“...adds a new dimension, showing the developmental process of life in T.A. terms."

Dr. L. Jim Anthis, Editor—at—Large, “The Disciple” (Journal of the Christian Church)

"We recommend this book to all our trainees."

Robert Goulding, MD and Mary McClure Goulding, MSW

"We routinely give this book to all new clients to identify developmental issues, to give them a menu for what they might need, and to show them what they might expect in therapy with us."

Jon Weiss, PhD, CTM, ITAA, Empowerment Systems, Littleton, Colorado

"... a valuable must on your reading list. Pam Levin is a pioneer in both theory and practice of Transactional Analysis and is particularly qualified to

share her ideas on how parents' own psychology affects the development of their child. Pam has given us a book which is easy to read and understand but is loaded with solid scientific insights."

Jack Dusay, MD, Past President of International Transactional Analysis Association, author of *Egograms*

"This is a fine summary of how we develop scripts and how we can go beyond them, written from a Transactional Analysis point of view."

Claude Steiner, author of *Scripts People Live* and *Games Alcoholics Play*

"I like Pam and the way she thinks and writes. Both she and her words are clear, direct and encouraging. It's a winning combination."

Muriel James, coauthor of *Born to Win*, Lafayette, California

"This work on development takes Eric Berne's theory and grounds it in health rather than in pathology, thus continuing his tradition of conveying scientific information through a universal language—that of childhood”.

Patricia Crossman, LCSW Winner of Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award

"I use this book in my personal life and I strongly recommend it."

Jean Clarke, author of *Self Esteem: A Family Affair*

“When *Becoming the Way We Are first* came out I used it as a handbook for the therapy I did with clients. Both my clients and I valued it as a resource. Since then, I have only two wellguarded copies remaining which I share with clients in the office. I do not lend them out. This is invaluable core information to healing in psychotherapy.”

Jan Elliott LCSW, Ashland, Oregon

Dedication

To Our Ever—Evolving Inner Self

At every age

In every stage

Contents

Preface.....	1
Part One: NATURE’S GIFT: THE WOMB OF CREATION.....	9
Part Two: TENDING OUR SEASONS	27
Stage One.....	29
Being: The Ground of Our Existence	
Stage Two.....	39
Doing: The World of Senses and Action	
Stage Three.....	51
Thinking: The Conceptual Realm	
Stage Four.....	61
Identity: Our Ever—Evolving Self	
Stage Five.....	73
Skillfulness: The “How—To’s” of Our Lives	
Stage Six.....	85
Regeneration: Creation and Procreation	
Stage Seven.....	95
Recycling: Manifesting the Promise of Life	

Part Three: CREATING SMOOTH PASSAGES	107
1. Beginning	111
2. Wisely Meeting Our Need for Recognition	119
3. Playing it Straight	125
4. Authoring Our Own Life Story	135
5. Transformation	143
6. Identifying Self—Sabotage	153
7. Protection	167
8. Reclaiming Our Essential Selves	177
Conclusion: In the End is Our Beginning	183
Resources	189
Glossary	193
About the Author	197
Acknowledgments	199
Notes	202



*...turning is...a dance in concert with the galaxies,
the molecules and the spiraling form that is
the source and essence of the cosmos.*

Coleman Barks

Preface

These pages are about discovering how we are made, who we really are and how we can work within to transform stress and self—sabotage to support and strength. In short, they are about embracing our own inner life.

When we turn our attention from our outer lives to our inner ones, our condition may be like that of young children who have no way of making sense of what they encounter. Where do we begin? How can we organize? How can we make things work?

That was close to my condition when I met Eric Berne, psychiatrist and founder of Transactional Analysis (TA), at his San Francisco seminars. I sensed that if answers were to be found, this was the place to find them.

Prior to developing TA, Berne's teacher and mentor had been Erik Erickson, a psychiatrist who outlined developmental stages that occur sequentially throughout our lives. At the time I met him, Eric Berne was turning his attention to how we develop what he called "scripts," the unconscious life plans we make in childhood and carry out in adulthood. He was interested in the interactions people have with one another—the transactions—that further the scripts they had chosen for

THE CYCLE OF LIFE

themselves when they were young children. In Transactional Analysis, Berne developed a framework not only for explaining his insights but also for putting those insights at the disposal of laypeople as well as psychiatrists. TA gave people the tools to free themselves from the scripts that held them prisoner. The language of TA was colloquial, and the aim was not long—term adjustment to one’s condition but a relatively immediate self—understanding and the consequent choice to change our scripts.

Eric Berne theorized that we make our life’s script decisions while we’re five and under. I could see the value in studying scripts, but I told him I thought that we had to understand more about how people develop in general to provide the framework for understanding how people develop scripts in particular. Eric, now my teacher and mentor, supported me in following this vein of inquiry, and as I pursued it, I entered into the ongoing conversation about human development, joining Eric Berne, Erik Erickson and Anna Freud, who greatly influenced Erickson, especially in emphasizing that children’s emotional symptoms were often related to developmental stages.

Working as a counselor in my own transactional analysis groups in the growth movement of the early 1970s, I noticed that people of the same age shared certain themes and patterns. The 26—year olds were concerned about their connections to others, wanting to join with them, to bond. They were concerned about who they could trust. Meanwhile the 28—year—olds, so close in age to the 26—year—olds, were very different. They related in a contrary, challenging, oppositional

PREFACE

way. They wanted “mine” apart from “yours.” So striking was this difference between people so close in age, that it piqued my curiosity. I wondered, why should people of the same age but different life circumstances and histories have the same themes and issues in common? Why was this so? I sensed I was seeing one small section of a basic truth which had yet to be revealed.

About this time I moved from the city to a small rural community, where I began to see people’s lives within the recurring patterns of nature’s rhythms and seasons: nature repeats herself cyclically; why should we be any different? I wondered if the people who shared similar themes were at similar stages of a cycle. With nature as my new teacher and mentor, I began to see the larger pattern I had only glimpsed in my earlier practice. I saw that our lives encompass recurring seasons, each with its own tasks and skills, and that it is our natural design to repeat throughout adulthood the stages we began in childhood.

Returning to the city once again, I shared this knowledge in individual consultations, groups, seminars and workshops. The effect was dramatic. People shed some unnamed inner stress. They calmed down and settled into themselves. They felt better about themselves. They became more friendly and understanding of others. They were coming home to their essential nature.

They wanted to hear this “story of ourselves” again and again. They wanted to explore how it applied to their own lives. Working with people individually and in groups, workshops and seminars, I

THE CYCLE OF LIFE

came to understand that our lives evolve in a cycle; that the cycle is composed of stages; that in each stage there are activities—developmental tasks we need to do to evolve successfully; and that the cycle itself offers us guidance for dealing with problem areas and personal pain.

As we worked to discover the origins of the emotional conflicts and personal issues that people brought to these sessions, we found these issues could be deeply rooted, even going back before birth, which is how we discovered that the template for the cycle is actually encoded in the watery world of the womb, before we ever draw our first breath of air.¹

The implications of these discoveries are far—reaching, affecting every aspect of our lives. The cycle of our lives shapes our sense of self, our internal security and self—confidence, our ability to learn, our friendships, employment, partnering and work life. As we come home to our own cyclic nature and develop effective responses to its challenges, we are able to connect with others in ways that are mutually satisfying and beneficial. We transform our communities as well as ourselves.

It turned out that people far beyond my own groups and workshops were hungry for this information as well. I'd published my discoveries in a slim volume entitled *Becoming the Way We Are*. The first printing sold out in a weekend. The second printing, of 10,000 copies, also sold swiftly. Requests for translations followed, as did subsequent edi-

PREFACE

tions and new publishers. *Becoming* was becoming people's personal primer.

Each successive printing brought more letters describing the ways people were using this book in their lives. They were applying it in classrooms, boardrooms and bedrooms. They were using it to aid addiction recovery, to assist the mentally or physically challenged, to help seniors complete end—of—life issues. They were parents and grandparents, teachers of preschool, grade school, and high school. College instructors made it an assigned text in child development, psychology and family life courses. Therapists, pastoral counselors and organizational consultants made it a central reference in their work. Graduate students made it the foundation for their theses. *Becoming* dovetailed with neurological repatterning work being carried out with people experiencing brain dysfunctions. It spawned a children's book in the Flemish language,² was used to develop a parenting system,³ inspired a company making products using the material,⁴ and provided the foundation for the developmental and Inner Child material in the New York Times bestseller *Homecoming*.⁵ From the University of Quebec in Canada came a request to translate this material into French, saying Amerindian students were demanding a French edition, as they recognized the cycle and its stages as their Medicine Wheel.⁶

This was indeed a phenomenal reception. Why did it strike such a chord?

Certainly, having one's private, often unnamed, inner life outlined on paper as common to all can be a powerful experience.

THE CYCLE OF LIFE

But to discover a quality of our essential nature, and to recognize that this very nature invites us ceaselessly and cyclically to become more fully ourselves, is to discover a map for navigating our inner lives. It is to realize that we all have emotional brains that do not work according to the same principles as those of our logical or thinking brains. Having this fact laid bare in black and white is an enormous comfort when we had thought there was something wrong with us because our lives are not unfolding in a logical and linear way.

This information also strikes a resonant chord in us because it is about the story of ourselves collectively. As each of us individually comes home to the cyclic unfolding of our own personal, *inner* lives, we reveal the common patterns we each share with every other. This is very different from the stories of ourselves we are used to hearing, ones derived from studying *outer* manifestations of our lives, that is, those behaviors, qualities or achievements that can be measured, quantified or observed.

The critical role of our emotional brains and our hunger to know more about them was recently demonstrated by the success of Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* and *Social Intelligence*. Like the themes in *Becoming the Way We Are*, these books underscored that we have inner lives in the first place, that our inner lives have everything to do with actual physical brain and body structures and are not a function of our imagination or our pathology, and that these inner processes which produce our EQ are far more significant determinants of our successes or failures in life than our IQ. The enthusiastic reception

PREFACE

and immediate application of these messages demonstrated how hungry we are to know how we are made and how we can manage these aspects of our lives. Indeed, it is through our inner developmental process that we learn “people” skills—those “soft” facilities that are the key to having relationships that work, that are satisfying and mutually beneficial. We develop based on our inner nature, but *what* we learn—even *whether* we learn is a result of the interactions that take place between ourselves and others. Our lives follow an inborn code as they unfold, and as they do, we engage in an interactional learning process.

Probably nowhere are the resources we have developed more called upon or more exposed than in the process of rearing children. When we parents come home to our own inner design, we discover that we repeat the same stages our children are growing through. When we apply what we are learning about the stages and tasks of our own inner cycle to our children, we improve our parenting skills and our own lives at the same time. We find that that our children learn to respect themselves as they are actually made, and also to respect others as they are actually made, for their needs and others’ are the same. This prevents a great deal of risky behavior, without stifling children’s independence. In fact, the extent to which a culture is healthy is the extent to which it supports this fundamental and universal pattern in all of its members in all of their ages.

The message is clear from the explorers of the inner world whose experiences, when shared, reveal the pattern described in these pages:

THE CYCLE OF LIFE

The more we become free of the constraints of trying to make ourselves be other than the way we are made, the more we live in our basic nature, free to grow and evolve as the process takes us, stage by stage, through this progression of life. It is at once a message not only of hope but of success, of growth and of healing, speaking as it does to our essential human nature, so hungry to be validated in this modern world which often casts it aside.

This book, which includes material from the original publication of *Becoming the Way We Are*, is dedicated to that process. Part One describes this cyclic blueprint and its stages, mapping the life journey that we each travel individually; yet share with every other human being.

Part Two presents individually each life season within the cycle, including its childhood beginnings, its manifestations in our adult lives, and what we need to do to complete a successful passage in each.

Part Three outlines the process of embracing the teachings offered by the cycle. It introduces some ways to move from resisting inner discoveries to accepting them as invitations to become more conscious and free.

Together they provide an introduction to and an overview of the process of turning our usual, outward focus to an inward one of coming back home. Still, it is a map of the route, not the route itself. We who read the symbols must understand that words can only represent and not replace the spirit, which is what we each provide.