

**Title:** “Each moment is complete as it is”: A rolodex of transformation and release

**Submitted to:** Paradoxica: Journal of Nondual Psychology

**Author:** Brian Theriault, M.Ed. CCC

[Btheriault123@gmail.com](mailto:Btheriault123@gmail.com)

[www.luminousawakenings.com](http://www.luminousawakenings.com)

1007 Carter Avenue

Winnipeg, MB Canada

R3M 2C7

## Abstract

This article is an intimate exploration and description of the author's transformational journey at the moment of death of his beloved wife Nadine. It explores the transformative process of surrendering and releasing the "frozen moments" in time that can bind one's consciousness when experiencing grief and loss. Frozen moments in time are incomplete moments in one's life that continue to carry an energetic charge of fear or desire which pulls one's awareness out of the present moment and into the past or future creating endless suffering and supporting the illusion of independent self-existence. The author underwent a significant transformational process where he spontaneously encountered a series of mental images in his consciousness that pulled awareness out of the present moment and into profound states of pain and suffering. He found that any attempt to manipulate the image was met with more suffering. It was not until these images were met from a place of no-judgment, surrender and non-doing that they transformed themselves, releasing the associated frozen energy and revealing the completeness of the moment.

**About the Author:** Brian Theriault MEd., C.C.C. completed his master's degree in counselling psychology and embraces a nondual-transpersonal approach in his clinical work counselling clients. Brian was introduced to nonduality through Gary Tzu and has done personal work with him for several years. He has worked as a therapist in a number of counselling environments, including addiction and mental health agencies, and has co-facilitated nondual groups with Gary in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. He is also an associate editor for Paradoxica: The Journal of Nondual Psychology ([www.paradoxica.ca](http://www.paradoxica.ca)) and has several published articles illustrating the transforming power of nondual psychotherapy. He utilizes the work of nondual psychologists Gary Tzu and A.H. Almaas, and the profound Zen and mystical teachings of Osho and Lao Tzu.

## **Each moment is complete as it is: A rolodex of transformation and release**

*Often times it's only suffering that wakes us up.*

- P. T. Mistlberger

It has been pointed out repeatedly that the healing essence of Awakened Truth lies in our darkest experiences in life. In our most terrifying and painful moments—right at the heart of our grief and pain—exists the ultimate medicine of Nondual Being. That which can never be destroyed or changed is ever present in the midst of all human experiencing. Opening to this realization brings about a radical shift in how we experience pain and suffering, transforming our perception from self-obsession to an awakened Awareness. Whether we are lying on our deathbeds or kneeling down at the bedside of a dying loved one, existence always invites us to realize the truth of our situation and rest in the deathless and stateless state of who we are.

In September 2015, my wife and I entered what was to be the last few weeks of her life. For the previous year and a half, we climbed and descended the peaks and valleys of living with brain cancer and embracing a transformational journey. Nadine met her situation with the grace of love and surrender. She didn't want to "battle cancer," but rather she opted to cooperate with it, which facilitated ease in letting go of life and in the possibility of realizing That which never dies. Her journey reminded me of the following Zen story:

I know you are very ill. Like a good Zen student, you are facing that sickness squarely. You may not know exactly who is suffering, but question yourself: What is the essence of this mind? Think only of this. You will need no more. Covet nothing. Your end which is endless is as a snowflake dissolving in the pure air. (Osho, 1979, p. 226)

Nadine and I were mirrors for each other. Her Beingness was often ahead of her understanding, and she would frequently intuit the stateless state of awareness beyond words, prior to her body and mind, and prior to the disease that consumed it. The outside world fell away effortlessly and all of our energy was focused on letting go of attachments, fears, and desires, and fully surrendering to the dying process. Even though her body was riddled with cancer and disintegrating, Nadine's awareness and spark of life remained untouched; the absolute presence of who and what she was remained vibrant and clear. As she approached the last few days of her life, she carried no fear in her heart, and she shared with me that she was ready go.

For the entire evening before her death, I spoke to her about our life together, of the love and surrender she mirrored to me. I told her that I loved her. Nothing was left unsaid. My words felt vulnerable and clear. I knew death was

imminent, and I did not want to waste our final moments together on unnecessary words. I was highly conscious of what I said and the way I said it. I did not want to create confusion in her or cause her to grasp onto the body as she was preparing to leave. If she felt ready, I told her, it was ok to leave that evening; I told her I was ok, that she could continue her journey knowing that everything was completed here. We all loved her deeply.

I felt so exhausted. Around ten-thirty that evening, Nadine slipped into a coma, and her panting breath was rapid. I decided to give her the midnight medication early, kissed her, and told her that I loved her very much. I went to lie down in the other room, and there, I felt the coldness of death throughout my being. I was so cold. My whole body was shivering. I turned the heat up in the house, but I still felt frozen. I simply couldn't rest. I got up to check on my wife, and she had passed away.

A thundering silence filled the room. The coldness of death was her way of letting me know that she had gone. It is common for the dying to wait until their loved ones have left the room before leaving the body. I immediately went to her bedside and whispered in her ear, telling her it was ok to let go, it was ok to leave, to trust what was happening to her and cooperate with her journey as she had in this life. I encouraged her to look for any helpful presence or beings that might guide her. I told her to go with them and repeated that we all loved her.

As I sat down on the couch facing our front living-room window, a star shot across the sky lighting up the night. I smiled to myself thinking, *what a beautiful way to leave this world*. It was such a beautiful death.

It was soon after her passing that the pendulum of release and transformation swung my way like a huge wrecking ball of energy. The next morning, with the few hours that I had slept, I woke up to a profound silence and stillness throughout the house. Nadine's body had been taken away in the early hours of the morning, and the house was empty of all activity. The house looked like an empty emergency room. The energy of my routine over the last two years was still in the "on" position; I was ready to deliver medications, change bed sheets, prepare breakfast, but there was nothing that needed to be done. I sat on the couch for a few hours simply riding this accumulated energy. A charged energy ran through everything in the room. The palliative bed, the pictures, the syringes, the clothing: everything carried a frequency supported by memory, association, feeling and thought. It was intense. The residual events of the last two years were still very much active in the room and within my being. I eventually left the house and went for a walk.

For three full days I was plunged into intense feelings of vulnerability and sadness. A flood of sensations, emotions, associations, images and memories surged through my being each day. The mind was actively engaged in replaying images of our time together. The last several months had left an energetic imprint

on my being, and I knew enough to simply allow space for this act of replaying frozen moments in time. It felt like a Rolodex of images would pass through my mind with a few key images continually repeating themselves. I would surrender to their force and allow the energy to roll through me, discharging all the excess accumulated energy. Waves of sadness and grief would fill my being and seemingly release themselves. But this relief was only temporary.

The mind would cycle through itself once again, replaying familiar scenes of sadness and love from our journey together. The living room of our home, where Nadine spent her final days, held so much energy that the mere sight of the medical equipment and furniture triggered a flood of emotions. It would be more than a week before the Palliative Home Care Team would pick up the palliative bed and medical supplies. Naturally, it was difficult to spend much time in the home. I went for long walks in the community and continued to stay meditatively with each emotion and each image as it arose and moved through me. For three days, it felt like my being was going through an intense and repeated purging process.

On the third evening, I visited with Nadine's sister and her family, believing this would provide some reprieve, but I failed to realize that her home also carried a similar energetic charge. Nadine and I had spent a lot of time together visiting her family and playing with our niece. As I sat at the dinner table, my situation reached a crescendo: a massive surge of energy raced through my being, once again accompanied by the felt presence of the essence of Nadine in the room. In fact, both her sister and I could see Nadine walking across the living-room floor to the couch where she often sat. I became emotional and headed for the bathroom.

It was there, spontaneously, that the wrecking ball of release finally hit me. As I filled a cup of water, the flood of images began to race through my mind, at an increasingly greater speed than before. The Rolodex of images would rapidly flash through my mind's eye, pausing momentarily on a select few before repeating itself. Without my involvement, something had changed and revealed itself to me. When the Rolodex paused on an image, I saw, in that particular image, a fragment of my consciousness that was still actively involved. I was still actively engaged in each image, which kept it fully alive and fully charged! I was stunned. I realized that not only did I need to be with this process in a place of no judgment, but I also had to recognize that the moment itself within each image was complete. I had to see the completeness of each moment, no matter what was happening in that particular image. The image of Nadine's lifeless raw body lying on the palliative bed held the most charge.

There was sadness and grief mixed with a racing set of memories of a wonderful life lived together. The first moment we met, our jokes and shared sense of humour, moving into our home, camping trips, and our time traveling in Europe; it all manifested in my awareness. Each scene was relived the moment I

became fixated on it. In the image of me gazing at Nadine's lifeless body, I recognized, from this witnessing position, that a fragment of my consciousness was still there: making sure that everything was ok, ensuring that the body was in the proper position and being taken care of; trying to close her eyelids (which they wouldn't); and saying the correct things. Essentially, this fragment of my consciousness was stuck trying to ensure that Nadine was given the "proper goodbye." As this image left, a new one would take its place, and, again, I observed a fragment of my consciousness still actively participating in a frozen moment in time.

What happened next proved transformative. As the mind cycled back to the familiar set of images, Awareness went into each image and realized the completeness of the moment. It released itself by itself, with no effort or mental strategy, and with the recognition that each moment was complete. This was a non-verbal realization that continued with each image that presented itself. Awareness would move into the heart of the image and announce its completeness. Each image fell away and the associated charge dissipated. I was shocked! Everything was happening automatically. Awareness kept going into various images and releasing the pent up energy that was still operating in each image. I started to feel light and free. The pain and suffering vanished. The undercurrent of that which never dies felt incredibly light. The release was in seeing that there is no one that dies. There is no one that dies, fundamentally; yet, there appears to be. There is no one, no little independent self that is grieving, either, yet there is sadness. All of it, the whole experience, was a dramatic event taking place in Awareness.

It was all an act of Grace and Divine Will. Grace appears when we are not there, when we have ceased being a separate self. When we are an opening—ripe and ready to receive—grace arrives, showing us the truth of our situation. It happens without our involvement. It showed me, clearly, how thoroughly we are not in control of this Divine process. Life happens on its own accord and likewise reveals the mysteries of existence on its own accord.

I do not know how much time passed. It felt like time did not play a role in this revelation. This was an event outside of time and space. As I left the bathroom and returned to the dinner table, I looked around my sister-in-law's house and noticed the absence of the energetic charge and of the presence of Nadine. There was clarity and spaciousness in the room and within my being. My sister-in-law noticed something had happened, but I did not share the details of my experience.

When I arrived home that evening, I thought I would be overwhelmed. I entered the living room and observed the medical equipment. Nothing. *This is strange*, I thought. I even lay down on the palliative bed for a while, trying to summon the vanished images and feelings. Nothing. I felt a tremendous sense of peace and surrender. I conjured images of Nadine and felt no traumatic energy. I

could, however, feel a pervasive love throughout my being. The next day, I continued to test this realization, lying on the palliative bed and cleaning up the medical supplies. Nothing again. I fell into a trusting space with this realization and allowed it to permeate my being. This trust was a gift from Existence, and I am forever grateful.

Over the next few days, I contemplated what had happened and identified a few insights. Incomplete moments create karma and the ongoing cycles of birth and death. Whatever remains incomplete in our consciousness keeps us on the wheel of life and death. I recognized that each image I experienced seemed to hold its very own world, populated with people, places and things, and subject to the mercy of the laws of existence. Each image, each world, was held in an infinite space, and the moment I became fixated on the dynamics of one of those images, I became a self amongst other selves navigating the ups and downs of that particular moment. Not seeing the moment as complete facilitated the emergence of self/other dualism and the world of pain and suffering. Stephen Wolinsky (2011) experienced a similar realization in his own meditative practice:

I did not know why these bubble-universes appeared or disappeared in this strange and yet familiar abyss. A bubble-universe-realm would appear and then disappear and then another bubble-universe-realm appeared out of the emptiness. For example, inside one bubble was the concept of birth and death. At first I laughed because **as the emptiness** there was no such thing as birth or death. Soon however if or as I merged through this membrane-bubble and actually became this bubble-universe so it was true. (pp. 55-56)

In seeing the completeness of each moment and not identifying with pervading, transient images and thoughts, Awareness releases us from the dualistic notions of self/other and life/death. As sentient beings, we are involved in an Eternal process of constant transformation. This has always been the case. Today, there is a profound sense of peace that permeates my being; one I have never experienced before. The seriousness of life has left my consciousness, and I feel free and more and more at ease. Nadine's final gift was showing me that how one lives her life is how one will live her death. And so, with an open heart, the moment is received and met with the light of Awareness where there exists no division, no separation, and no sense of incompleteness. Just this.

## References

Osho, (1979). *Zen: The path of paradox, Volume 3*. Rajneesh Foundation, Poona: India.

Wolinsky, S. (2011). *Notes from the dream*. Retrieved from <http://stephenwolinskyphdlibrary.com/downloads/Notes%20from%20the%20Dream.pdf>