

## Oriah's Newsletter- Fall 2010: Trail Markers

How do we make our choices? When there is more than one option before us how do we discern what is the best choice, what is the next step? After some major changes in my life, I find myself needing to decide what is next. Lately, an image that came to me over a year ago during one of my meditations keeps coming to mind:

*I am standing in the middle of a dark wood (yes, just like Dante whose Divine Comedy I am currently studying at the University of Toronto.) The trees are primarily evergreen- tall, dark and growing close together. A bit of sunlight filters through the branches to the forest floor where I can see fallen branches, tree roots and rocks. The ground beneath me is soft, layer upon layer of pine needles. The air is cool, moist and fragrant. There is no path.*

*I grew up in Northern Ontario where there are literally hundreds of miles of trackless wilderness. I was taught at a very young age that the first thing to do if you find yourself lost in the bush is- stand still. So, even in the unexpected forest of my imagination, I stand still for a few moments before I slowly turn, looking carefully at the area I can see in my mind's. I notice something glistening a short distance away on the dark forest floor: a small stone, so white that it seems to glow in the pale sunlight. I pick up the stone and hold it in my hand, and look around again. And there, a little way off, I see another glimmer in the dim light: another small white stone.*

This image has become a guiding one for moving forward in my life. I've stopped looking for The Ten Year Plan and started looking for and noticing the small round stones, beckoning markers that whisper, "This way. Over here."

A few months ago, a couple of people emailed me asking for one-on-one counselling sessions. Now, I started with this kind of work (after training in social work at Ryerson here in Toronto) over thirty years ago, and continued to see individuals during the decades of teaching in Toronto, although I had not been doing it over the last few years. So, somewhat cautiously, I made a few appointments and did a few sessions both over the phone and in person. Then, I briefly mentioned that I was doing some individual counselling during a Facebook conversation. Three more people found me, and we started to work together regularly.

Somewhat to my surprise I discovered that, at this point in my life, working one-on-one fits, the way a small smooth stone fits in the palm of your hand. The sessions feed me at both a material level and, just as importantly, at a soul level. I find my energy undiminished and often increased by this work (an important consideration and good sign for someone with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.) Even when someone is dealing with something very difficult and painful, the sessions bring me the kind of joy that comes from the privilege of accompanying another on their journey.

Recently someone asked me how I would describe my counselling work. She asked whether it was spiritual or psychological, solution-oriented or focused on the inner life, cognitive or heart-centred. I replied, "Yes."

The sessions are shaped by the person with whom I am working. Although I occasionally do a single session with someone, generally I work within a framework of six sessions over twelve weeks, finding that this offers a container for the work together. What happens is always, in some sense a sorting of what is really being asked at the deepest level of a person's life. Sometimes people begin by saying they want to develop or deepen their spiritual practise, only to discover that they want help with a particular decision regarding work or relationship. Other times someone comes with a specific concern that unfolds into more general and fundamental questions about how they really want to live. Sometimes I share shamanic, meditative or writing practises; sometimes I make suggestions for the time between sessions; sometimes we work with dreams. Whatever brings someone to the sessions, my role is to bring all of my heart's attention and any wisdom and skills I have gleaned from living, teaching and counselling to the time we share. My role is to listen carefully for the burning questions beneath the obvious concerns, to watch for the small round stones dropped by the person's soul.

Helping others unearth their own deep knowing and wisdom renews my faith in who and what we are as human beings – every single time. What a gift- this small white stone dropped in my own inner forest by psyche, the soul.

So, in faithfulness to my own soul, I am opening my practise up to include a few more people, although I will still keep the numbers limited so that I can continue to write. If you are interested, the details are outlined below.

May you find the small white stones your soul has dropped for you, those markers that guide each of us deeply into our own lives, our own joy and full engagement with the world. Many blessings, Oriah

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### **Personal Counselling and Spiritual Guidance with Oriah**

Oriah offers one-on-one counselling for those wanting guidance on developing and deepening their spiritual life or seeking help with personal issues. She has often worked with people who are dealing with major life changes, chronic illness and the challenges of working in any of the healing professions (healer, teacher, therapist, shaman, counsellor, workshop facilitator etc.)

Single sessions can be arranged, although generally Oriah works with people for six sessions over a twelve week period, with the commitment to five more sessions made after the initial appointment. Each session is ninety minutes long.

Appointments may be done in person or on the phone. If you are in North America Oriah can make calls to you at no additional costs. If you are outside North America you must place and pay for the calls.

Start times are flexible although appointment times for blocks of six sessions over twelve weeks most commonly begin in early September, January and April.

Within the context of the six session commitment the cost of each ninety minute session is \$155.00 (plus 13% sales tax of \$20.15) to be paid at least forty-eight hours before the session via Paypal. Single sessions (and the first session of six if the commitment for five more is not deemed appropriate) cost \$225.00 (plus 13% tax of \$29.25.)

For more information or to find out what appointment times are available please contact Oriah by email at [mail@oriah.org](mailto:mail@oriah.org)

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