



The Feminine Fire

The divine creative force you hold within

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Finding the Fire

The other day my wacky imagination came up with an image that made me laugh out loud. Try to picture it – it was a divine feminine fire hydrant! But while I was laughing – both at the image and at myself for coming up with it – it struck me that this might be some sort of symbolic message from my subconscious. And, as is often the case, when I'm laughing at myself I'm struck by the idea that God does indeed have a sense of humor and that it is often in laughing at ourselves that important lessons come to light. Once I started to think about the two events – one positive and one negative – that had triggered this admittedly silly image, it became clear that this was indeed the case.

The first was an email I got from Barbara Harris Whitfield (coincidentally this month's inspiring woman) saying that she just wanted to introduce me to the source of divine feminine fire in her life. Attached was a picture of her 13-month old granddaughter in full-speed, face turned toward the camera, radiating love for the person behind it.

The second was a rejection that knocked my confidence for a loop and sent me into a very bleak downward spiral. This particular rejection came from the organizers of a conference that I had submitted a workshop proposal to – one that I fully expected would be accepted. This expectation wasn't any kind of big ego trip on my part; it had just seemed like a fairly reasonable assumption: The conference was on women's spirituality and empowerment and I'd just had a book published on just that topic. The workshop I proposed fit right in with the conference theme. The organizers had asked for references from sponsors of other conferences I'd spoken at – and the endorsements these individuals had given were exceedingly kind and generous. All in all it seemed like this conference and my work were a perfect fit. Well. As my teenage daughter would say: NOT!!!

In This Newsletter:

- [Finding the Fire](#)
- [News from the Muse](#)
- [Women Inspiring... Barbara Whitfield](#)
- [Do a Creativity Exercise](#)



I was devastated. Not just by the rejection itself but by what it seemed to imply to me: If I wasn't going to get asked to speak about a book entitled *The Divine Feminine Fire* at a conference on women's spirituality and empowerment, where was I ever going to get asked to speak? Nowhere! Who was ever going to buy this book? No one! And whose fault was this? Mine!

My head ached and my gut cramped with those dreaded words "if only" – if only I had made more progress on my spiritual path; if only I had overcome more of my outrageous character flaws; if only I'd been able to think more positively....if only.... then the book would meet with all the success it deserved.

My emotions around all this were magnified by the fact that I am someone – like many of you I'm sure – who feels they have found their purpose in life and feels passionately about it being a "job" that needs to be done well. I understand that the words that come through me when I write books and give workshops on the divine feminine are a gift. I don't have a bunch of fake humility around this – I know I show up to do the work and deserve at least a little credit for it! But I also know that the words aren't mine; they really do come from this divine feminine source of inspiration within and that they are given to me with the understanding that I will manage to get them out into the world. This is my job. And I was failing at it. Miserably.

About the time I had wallowed myself right down to the bottom of this muddy pit of self-pity and self-loathing, the phone rang. It was my friend Dale Pond (whose story is told in

The Fiery Muse). The moment I'd finished dumping on her, she said, "You little rascal! Aren't you the one who's always telling everyone that they are the embodiment of the divine feminine fire?! Doesn't that mean that *you* are the embodiment of the divine feminine fire?! You are! You have the fire within you. You are filled with Shakti, Sophia, Shekinah! You've got the fire, baby! All you have to do is let her out! Isn't that what you are always telling everyone else?!"

Well, yes, I admitted, that is exactly what I am always telling everyone else....

After hanging up I spent a good bit of time mulling over that old practice-what-you-preach adage and thinking about the importance of the divine feminine fire flowing out of each one of us and onto a world that so sadly lacks it. And at that moment the image of Barbara's divine feminine fire "source" popped into my mind. Her short little body, the radiant energy pouring out of her – and my whacky mind went: "She's a little Divine Feminine Fire-hydrant! That's just what we all need to be; that what we all are! And suddenly I couldn't help but laugh out loud.

Having this passion and letting it out is, as Dale so passionately reminded me, all we need. In spite of my faults, in spite of all the work I still need to do on my self and all the progress I still need to make on my spiritual journey, I am filled with divine feminine fire. And all this goes for each and every one of us.

We all have faults, we all have to work on ourselves on the spiritual journey but our faults won't keep us from fulfilling our goals – doing our "jobs" – as long as we recognize that the divine feminine is within and that our first job is to let the fire, the passion, the exuberance that she is flow out onto the world that so badly needs her love.

News from the Muse

The Divine Feminine Fire is now out, available on amazon.ca and amazon.com, and in some bookstores in the U.S. and Canada. (Virtually any bookstore should be able to order it for you from NBN

The Feminine Fire Newsletter © Teri Degler

Distributors.) If you'd like an autographed copy, the [order information](#) is below.

Here's Jungian analyst Marion Woodman's comment from the back cover:

"In Dancing in the Flames I make the point that embodying the divine feminine is one of the most important tasks of our time. This excellent book [The Divine Feminine Fire] shows you can accomplish this by getting to know your body, bringing your body and your dreams together, and uniting body and soul."

And here's some comments from readers:
"Last evening I went to bed early with your glorious book.... (I) had a real body experience of renewed recognition and joyful tears that continued in my morning yoga practice. The tears opened my body to the messages of memory and joy of surrender to the Divine Feminine within every cell of my body and breath....thank you thank you thank you for the timing of your message and the reminders we need to keep moving forward on our spiritual creative paths....."

ES

"I don't know about others, but it's already changed my life, or at least the way I relate with my creative / feminine self. I had no idea when I picked it up how powerful and profound

*and empowering and *brilliant* it would be.... I'd been feeling increasingly called toward exploring the Divine Feminine over the past year or so, and increasingly feeling the importance of embodying this. I innocently ordered your book because of the title, but didn't expect it to be much more than a workbook for women's creativity. I had no idea it would prove to be such a rich and nuanced work of theology, nor such an intelligent investigation of a topic that I feel is still so lacking language. Now that I know a bit more of your background I'm not surprised, but really – as a work of scholarship alone the book is groundbreaking. So thank you. Again. I've already recommended it (with glowing praise) to others and will continue to do so.*

SVD

Women Inspiring... Barbara Harris Whitfield

It was 1975 and Barbara Harris Whitfield was “a shut-down, numb atheist” when, quite without warning, she was ejected out of her despondency and dropped right in the middle of a very rocky spiritual path. The unexpected trigger for this was – as it has been for so many others – a near-death experience.

The difference for Barbara was that she was one of the earliest to go public with her experience. This did not happen right away, however, for her first attempts to tell her story were silenced by hospital staff’s comments that she was “hallucinating” or, worse, “delusional”. Regardless, Barbara

knew her experience was real and that her life would never be the same. One reason for this was that Barbara’s NDE included a “life review” in which her life really did, in a sense, flash before her eyes. [Barbara's life review](#) was a profound learning experience because she saw that all of her actions -- and those of everyone else in her life -- were enveloped in an utterly immense sensation of divine love, forgiveness, and understanding.

After this experience Barbara’s desire to make her life more meaningful led her to go back to school and train as a Respiratory Therapist. Soon she was working with critical care patients in hospitals’ Intensive Care units and emergency rooms. But while she was efficiently going about her job something in her manner – sometimes something as simple as a touch – quietly comforted patients who were dying and allowed those who’d recently experienced NDEs to open up and tell her their stories. Tuned into these patients on a new level, she became increasingly aware that, while critical care patients’ physical needs were

being met, their emotional needs were being ignored. In an attempt to wake up the medical community without actually mentioning NDEs in so many words, she wrote a journal article entitled *The View from the Circle Bed* on her own hospital

experience – being strapped in a Stryker frame circle bed for a month and then in a body cast for six months. Before long she was being asked to speak on the topic of her article – which she called “The Emotional Needs of Critical Care Patients”. Ironically, when she was invited to speak at hospital-sponsored seminars she was often pointedly asked to avoid mentioning anything that smacked of spirituality. One hospital went so far as to schedule her to

speak but to strictly forbid her to use the words *love*, *spirit*, and *spiritual*.

In 1982 Barbara met renowned NDE researcher and University of Connecticut psychology professor, Dr. Kenneth Ring, who convinced her to tell her story at a conference. Because of the ridicule her first and only attempts to describe her NDE had received Barbara was shaking when she faced the audience: “There were about 80 people in the room, and I just knew everyone thought I was an idiot. I was dripping in sweat. But when I was done I suddenly realized they were all looking at me with admiration. Then they started clapping...”

From that point onward Barbara was destined to “go public” with her NDE no matter what she had to face. Kenneth Ring detailed her experience in his ground breaking book *Heading Toward Omega* – and she suddenly found herself in a storm of controversy. Her intriguing story caught the attention of the national media, and she was invited to tell it on major talk shows like *Donahue* and *Larry King Live*. Once on the



air, however, she was challenged by other guests on the show who were “debunkers” – highly qualified psychiatrists and other professionals – who denigrated her and refuted her story.

But Barbara was undaunted, she was determined to continue to meet the debunkers head-on – especially once she realized that her public exposure was helping an ever-increasing number of once-silent people to share their near-death-experiences. Soon Barbara began to collect stories and wrote her first book *Full Circle: The Near-Death Experience and Beyond*.

Fuelled by her desire to gather more evidence that would validate NDEs, Barbara was hired to work on a study at the University of Connecticut headed by renowned NDE researcher, Bruce Greyson, MD. Among the ground-breaking information brought to light by the study was corroboration of Kenneth Ring’s observations about the striking similarities between NDEs and [kundalini experiences](#).

Beyond this, however, Barbara noticed that 58% of near-death experiencers in the study also reported having suffered severe repeated childhood trauma – often sexual abuse.

Fascinated by the implications of this startling data, Barbara became determined to explore it further. But it was outside the scope of the study at the University of Connecticut and she couldn’t find anyone else willing to take it on. About the same time Barbara – who had been a single parent for several years – opened herself spiritually to the possibility of finding a new relationship. Within a matter of days she met with Charles Whitfield, the medical doctor famed for his work with survivors of childhood abuse and his book *Healing the Child Within*. Since marrying in 1994, the two have gone on to do ground-breaking research on childhood abuse, lecture around the world, build a distinguished therapeutic practice, and co-author *The Power of Humility: Choosing Peace Over Conflict in Relationships*.

When told what an inspiring woman she is and praised for the courage she has shown in the face of controversy, Barbara replies, “I don’t feel I’ve been courageous at all! I’ve just been guided by divine love.” As an example she points to her providential

meeting with Charles Whitfield almost immediately after becoming determined to do work on childhood abuse and being truly open to a relationship. A more everyday example occurred when the hospital mentioned above told her she couldn’t use the words spirit, spiritual, or love. “I said, ‘Well, then, I can’t speak!’ But within an hour someone else from the hospital called me back and offered a meeting room just off the hospital site where I could give my talk and say anything I wanted.”

This guiding light is the same divine force that enveloped her in love and unutterable cosmic compassion during her life review. She says, “This guidance is a gentle, gentle tugging. It is not a hard push. It is guiding us into the next level that we are going to learn about and give back to the world.” Her new book, *The Natural Soul*, describes this in detail and offers hope both for humanity and the world.

In addition to *Full Circle* and *The Natural Soul*, Barbara has written two other books, *Spiritual Awakenings: Insights into the Near Death Experience and Other Doorways to our Soul*, and *Final Passage: Sharing the Journey as this Life Ends*. For others looking for creative inspiration, she says, “What worked for me was to say a prayer: ‘God, Holy Mother, please may I be an instrument of your wisdom, love, and healing energy. Help me get my ego out of the way, so you can come through.’ Beyond this you just have to believe! For me, this took getting so tired of hearing my mother’s voice in my head saying, ‘Who the hell do you think you are?’ that I got rid of it. I realized that if we can get our egos out of the way, then we can truly write from the heart of God.”

www.barbarawhitfield.com

Creativity Exercise Creating an Invocation

When Barbara spontaneously created the prayer she uses before she begins to write, she was spontaneously using an invocation – a technique that has been used by inspired creators that range from Milton and Brahms to the contemporary composer John

Tavener. *The Fiery Muse* has more on how these geniuses and others have used invocations and *The Divine Feminine Fire* has more on using them to fully open yourself to the cosmic source of inspiration. Having an invocation and using it every time I begin to write has been the most powerful aid I have had in all my years of writing.

In addition to whatever else you would like to have in it, your invocation needs to:

- Clearly address the Divine
- Ask for the Divine's assistance in the work you are about to do
- Assume you will receive the assistance you need
- Ask for your work to be of value and of benefit

With that in mind here's our new exercise:

1. Settle yourself in the place you are going to do your creative work – at best, a space you have set aside especially for this purpose. Have writing materials ready.
2. Create the mental space you need by filling yourself with white light. ([see exercise 1 in TFF Spring '08](#))
3. Focus for a moment on the idea that you are about to create an invocation, then bring your awareness back to the radiant light.
4. Allow the light to flow upward, and outward into your pen and paper. Write out the ideas that come to you for your invocation.

Later, if needed, edit it down to a few simple sentences that can be repeated each time you begin your creative work.

Book Teri for a Workshop

You can book Teri for one of her talks or workshops on creativity and creative inspiration and have it tailored to meet your group's interests and needs.

The experiential workshops can be designed to focus solely on creative writing or to include playing with art materials and other types of creative expression. The length of the presentation – from a keynote address to an evening workshop or full weekend retreat – can also be adapted for your group.

Teri is widely known as a warm, funny, and passionate workshop leader who creates the type of supportive atmosphere that encourages self-expression and leads to the feeling of security needed to explore new levels of creativity. teridegler.com/workshops

Here's what a few workshop participants have to say:

What a gift! Since I decided to become a full time artist, my art had become hesitant and weak. My fears overtook me. I've done two paintings since your workshop three days ago. My style has changed. It expresses my passion and humanness. It is bold, rough, exciting, and full of light. My wish is that when other women see it, they become emboldened, too. I am painting from my heart now thanks to you...

An artist

I am still filled with gratitude for the experience of this past weekend. I can't wait to read your book so I can continue to feed the now stimulated appetite for your words and for a renewed and deepened connection to the divine feminine... I loved the creative exercises - now that my children are grown up I don't play as much, and I realize how much I miss it - but the aspect of getting centered first, and letting the spirit of creativity flow through us is something I will continue to do as I strive to find more room for creative expression in my life...

An occupational therapist

More About Teri at teridegler.com

To order an autographed copy of *The Divine Feminine Fire*, and save over 10% send \$16 US or \$20 CAN plus \$7 for shipping and handling to:

Teri Degler
747 Don Mills Road
PO Box 45602
Toronto, ON, Canada M3C 1S0

It is also available on amazon.ca and amazon.com, and in some bookstores in the U.S. and Canada. (Virtually any bookstore should be able to order it for you from NBN Distributors.)

email: teri@teridegler.com to sign up for the newsletter. Your email address will be protected!