

## **Therapist, Hero, Friend**

### **Laura Clein**

Laura Clein was a psychotherapy client of Ralph Metzner. Along with her husband; she is a legal, licensed, regenerative cannabis famer in Mendocino County, CA.

Laura Clein was in therapy with Ralph Metzner for ten years. She was, in fact, his final client who had a scheduled appointment the week he passed away. He sent her a care package of books, cds, dvds earlier that week at the time the appointment was canceled; and it got lost in the mail and arrived the day after he died. To her, keeping with the themes he loved so much surrounding universal mysteries, symbolic that this was not the end of the relationship.

Laura grew up in Miami, Florida and originally moved to California in the mid1990's for graduate school. She unfortunately deals with a long list of complex chronic diagnoses and is basically disabled by them, at this point, for more than 20 years. She found her way to Ralph after a series of miscarriages led her to existential crisis and a quest for meaning. A friend suggested his name and the fact that they both lived in Sonoma Valley, CA. when she was desperately looking for help with her physical and mental health. She wrote a letter to Oprah and sent a similar one to Ralph, she never heard back from the TV personality but Ralph replied immediately and arrived at her house the next day for their 1<sup>st</sup> session. They met weekly, then monthly, from that point forward... including her therapy, and participation in various groups, classes, webinars, even friendly outings, he also

made many referrals and connections. Laura's story of their interactions continues in her own words.

“When the student is ready, the teacher appears. When the student is truly ready, the teacher disappears.” (Zen Proverb) Ralph came into my life at a time when I was not sure I would survive, and helped me learn how to thrive. Ralph was my therapist, and to be honest, I did not feel truly ready when our therapeutic relationship ended upon Ralph's death. On my own now, I have had to step up, disentangle thought forms, decipher dreams, manage my health, navigate my emotions, integrate journeys, explore states of existence, and shine light into the shadows.

My life is no less difficult now but I can confidently say that thanks to our work together, I have more tools and coping skills that are an integral part of my present existence. Most often our sessions happened in my home and consisted of talk therapy, each one ending with a mediation where Ralph expertly helped me tie it all together. He always found a way to implant the healing needed with deeper meaning. When I moved to Mendocino, we continued to meet regularly via Skype, which worked well for both of us. There was also several intensive sessions, including a couple's therapy session and a group experience in which my husband and I participated. During the deeper encounters were explorations via entheogens for psychedelic psychotherapy and consciousness expansion.

My daily meditation practice is my own version of Ralph's process. I start in the heart and emanate circles of light outward from there. I was an experienced meditator when I met Ralph, but I had shunned my practice for approximately a decade due the anguish of a tough family loss that scared me and shook me to my

core. After that, I carried enormous guilt and sadness around the power of accessing other realms. Ralph taught me to go into those scary situations in my mediation and use universal light energy to dissolve my fears and traumatic experiences, or at least to find the perspective and compassion needed for myself.

I strongly believe in the connection of mind and body. I know it to be powerful, even as, so far, I cannot fully regain my health with only mind over matter exercises. Knowing about my chronic pain and other health issues, early in our relationship, Ralph recommended, “The Trigger Point Therapy Workbook.” The idea and the practice of seeking out the pain and leaning into it in order to heal it, was a complete reversal in my up-until- then doing all I could to numb and avoid the relentless physical and emotional pain. It was an invaluable lesson, and I have found it works on both body and mind.

When we, people in general, mindfully quiet ourselves and work with a mediation practice, it doesn't take very long to realize that what regularly bubbles to the surface are the things that are troubling us. Scanning my body with light is always an early step in my mediation. It includes sending light to those troubling thoughts and feelings as well, and either noticing and moving on for the moment, or getting more clarity about that subject from the wisdom portal I create within the meditation practice. I connect to my guides with compassion and often many questions. Some of those energies of my soul council are my ancestors, while others, as I see them, the soul lights of the angel babies I lost. I still reach out Ralph, now especially during meditation, and just as when we would communicate in life, the answers I receive often surprise me. Yet, not so surprisingly, they are just the guidance I need at that moment. Our connection is not broken.

Ralph championed our work with sacred plants. He and I would once in while trade our sessions for our homegrown medicine. I still have the Shaman's Toffee recipe he and his peers used. As certified caregivers, we held his medical cannabis paperwork. And in his final days, I was able to make infused edibles for him to help ease his discomfort. Cannabis is what convinced us to make California our home, in order to find another way to treat my dis-ease when it was still the only state in the US that even had laws for medical use. It is a blessing to have access to it and to be able to share it with others. It is a miracle to see how much cannabis and psychedelics have moved toward mainstream acceptance recently. I am sure he & his pioneering cohort would be thrilled!

Ralph would also often bring me a book or video or a story about some new theory, workshop or teacher he had just experienced. Like him, I am a reader, writer, lifelong learner and experiential learning is my most favorite way. When I first read *The Unfolding Self*, I thought it was so wonderful to have found a teacher who had already contemplated, researched and wrote about so many of the questions I had my entire life. I am thankful he left a vast library of information for us to continue to gain access to wisdom, from *The Psychedelic Experience* to *Evolution of Consciousness*, so many books, and audio and video recordings filled with valuable insights, interviews, and research, and more.

Forever and always, I will have the deepest gratitude to my beloved teacher, mentor, therapist, hero, and friend. I have been transcribing the tapes of our psychedelic psychotherapy sessions and I am working on a special project to share with others the gifts he shared with me. My present rituals, especially meditation, my confidence in my relationship to cannabis, and my ability to deal with the difficult things life brings, as well as so many shifts in my thoughts, feelings and

behaviors, are all directly related to my work with Ralph, One of the biggest lessons I gained through our time together was that, at least for me, and I believe in one way or another for all humans, healing is not a goal, healing IS my practice. When our heroes die, we must carry on, and I am realizing we must ourselves become heroes.