



Plant Spirit Medicine Association

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Important Dates in 2013

PSMA Conference

June 28–July 1, 2013
The Blue Deer Center

Advanced Class

July 2-4—Blue Deer Center

Upcoming Clinicals

April 6-7 Alison Gayek,
Shelburne Falls, MA

Spring 2013 with Alison
Chapel Hill, NC

(7 CEU's per day)

Upcoming PSM

Healer Training Series

March 7, 2013 starting at
the Blue Deer Center
June 11, 2013 starting in the
United Kingdom

Contact

To coordinate attendance at a
clinical please contact:

[Linda Felch](#) for the BDC

[Jeff Bartlett](#) for the UK

[Clare Pearson](#) for MA

[Alison Gayek](#) for NC

CEU requirement:s

40 every 2 years

~ AN EMISSARY OF PLANT SPIRIT MEDICINE ~ BY BUFFY AAKAASH

(The following Interview has been reprinted from the Blue Deer Center News with permission.)

As well as her work with the Blue Deer Center, Safia Johnson has been a Plant Spirit Medicine Healer for over 15 years. Her skill and expertise has granted her the title of "Clinical Consultant," which means she is authorized by the Plant Spirit Medicine Seminary to offer support and guidance to other Plant Spirit Medicine Healers, who may be new to the medicine, or are at a point in their practice where further skill development is needed. She has recently begun offering a day long course at the Blue Deer Center called "Journeys with Plant Spirits: Doorways to Timeless Wisdom," which is a seasonal exploration of working with plants geared toward those who are not interested in becoming Healers. In the many years I've known her, she has blossomed as a humble teacher and a



gracious holder of this wisdom.

Buffy Aakaash: *What originally drew you to Plant Spirit Medicine?*

Safia Johnson: I was taking an herbal class with Pam Montgomery [author of *Plant Spirit Healing*]. As part of that, she took us on what was my first kind of mini-journey to a plant spirit, in an abbreviated kind of form. And of all the things I learned from her,

that was what I got most excited about. Then, I read Eliot's book, which Pam happened to have; and she and I ended up both taking his first training together in New York.

What year was that?

That was probably 1995 or 96, because I completed my training with Eliot in 1997.

So, from 1997 on you were a Plant Spirit Medicine Healer?

Yes. I started practicing as soon as I graduated. I had just a few clients to begin with. I was living in Dutchess County, New York, but I set up an office in Kingston, because it was more centrally located, and I had an office with other women healers. So, I had every intention from the very beginning of practicing. And I've never stopped.

(interview continued on page 2)

(interview continued)

There was a plant journey you did in Pam's class that you said was a particular inspiration. Can you share anything about that?

The plant was rue. And it took me on this journey... and since you know me, Buffy, you know how much I'd love this... It took me on this journey to the desert, in Arabia or someplace like that. And there was this fabulous sheik out in the desert, in a tent... [Laughter]... and I just LOVED that! And I thought, "Wow... these plant spirits... They're a lot of fun!" [Laughter.] That plant knew just how to get my attention.

And that's been your experience ever since with the plants, that they know how to get your attention?

Yes! I feel like they never fail me. They surprise me all the time. But I feel like if there's anything I can count on in this world, I can count on them showing up for me, and for my clients, and for participants in my workshops.

Do you feel there's a desire on the part of the plants to help people?

There must be... I see this so clearly when I am offering a workshop... because it's a different kind of situation... but in one day or two days, even in one day I can see how much people are touched, how deeply they get transformed and altered by just meeting one plant

spirit. And that's why I like to offer workshops, because it's an opportunity for me to really hold the space, and at the same time, get out of the way... to allow for what needs to happen with each person that I'm working with.

How did you move into teaching Plant Spirit Medicine?

It came out of a suggestion at a Plant Spirit Medicine Conference that many people who had taken Eliot's training really had never had any intention of being "Healers." They took it in order to learn a world view and to experience the joy and wisdom that you get from connecting with plant spirits. So, there was the suggestion that there be workshops provided for non-Healers. And I went to Eliot and said that really speaks to me and I would like to develop that.

And he supported you in that.

Yes. Very much so.

And what do you think makes Plant Spirit Medicine such a powerful form of healing amongst all the other healing modalities available today?

Probably the most obvious thing is that as Healers we're calling on energies that are tremendously more powerful, wiser, more loving, and have so much to offer human beings way beyond the capacity of just ourselves, our own heart

and mind. The plants give us incredible doorways for our clients to receive tremendous healing.

And you've experienced this healing force.

Oh yes! Many times.

Tell me a little bit about your new offering at the Center? Because I think a lot of people out there wonder how they can approach the spirits of plants in a good way.

Connecting with the plant spirits is the heart of the workshop. Right now I'm just doing a one-day structure, because it provides a great "first date" for people. We keep the cost very affordable. Everybody brings their own lunch, so it's a great community event. And not only do I teach people a journeying technique to connect with plant spirits, but I also provide other ways of getting ready to meet a plant spirit. Slowing down. Tuning in to the energies of the seasons that we're in, and therefore the expression of the elemental energy of which the plants are also a part of. In particular, I focus on the emotion of the season, or the element, that we're in as I do the workshop. So, there's a lot that can happen for people, not only in terms of having a blissful, joyful connection with a nature being, but also to go more deeply into their own emo-

(interview continued on page 3)



**OH MY GOD !!!
I'VE FALLEN IN LOVE
WITH MY CLIENT!!**

Dear Marge,
I have been treating someone for around 6 months and recently I have realized that I am falling in love with him. I think he feels the same. What should I do?
From Confused of Siberia.

Dear Confused,
Well that's simple. Invest in a bigger treatment table, some good curtains, and have some fun!
But of course, as you know the last thing that you need to be doing as a healer is taking this anywhere on a romantic or sexual level. By that I really do mean the

last thing. You need to be looking at every other option before even considering that this might be "the love of your life".
This situation however is not uncommon. When we enter into the relationship of healer to client, we enter a sacred relationship with many similarities to the relationship we might have with a 'beloved'. As healer we may hold knowledge of, and often witness a person at the
(continued on page 5)

("Marge" is our new PSM Agony Aunt, here to provoke and stimulate feeling, thought and discussion, we welcome your responses!)

(interview continued)
tional state and what's up for them at that time.
The workshop is called *Journeys with Plant Spirits: Doorways to Timeless Wisdom. When is the next one?*
I believe it will be April 13th. We had hoped to do a winter one, but between the schedule at the BDC and other things going on, it just seemed like it wasn't going to happen, so we're doing April 13th.
So, it will be looking into the spring energies.
Yes. Which is a great way to begin the year and a great time to be doing this kind of a workshop, so I'm very excited about that.
Then, the plan is to offer those five times a year.

That's the intention, yes. To do one every season, and to make that one of the things the Blue Deer Center offers to people year round.
Wonderful. And what does your role as a "Clinical Consultant" include?
It means that I can work with new graduates or other Plant Spirit Medicine Healers, primarily over the phone, to support them in client management, clinical skills, and building their practice.
So, you're available to speak to other Healers who are, for instance, needing some continuing education...
Yes. There are CEUs available for the work that I do, as an offering of the Semi-

nary.
Anything else to add?
I just feel very, very grateful for the blessings and support that I have received from the weather gods and the nature spirits to do the workshops that I do. It's totally scary on the one hand, and yet it's the thing I enjoy to do the most on the other, because it's such a step into the unknown and requires total presence and total surrender. So... you can't ask for a much better practice than that.
[Laughter in agreement]
That sounds great. April 13th is the next one.
Thanks, Safia.
Thank you, Buffy.

**Problem?
Just
ASK MARGE!!**



~ CEU IN SEATTLE ~
BY PETER BROWN

A couple of months ago, I was part of a group of Plant Spirit Medicine practitioners who flew Alison Gayek out to Seattle to hold a 20-hour class. Some of the participants were working towards the fulfillment of the required CEUs to retain one's professional status and some towards being inducted into the seminary as lay spiritual healers.

I have had these mixed feelings about the current CEU structure that the Seminary has created for lay spiritual healers to retain their inductee status. I truly see the value and need to support the medicine and ensure that the inducted have basic skills and abilities to properly treat their clients and represent the medicine. I have even written about this in past PSMA newsletters.

I also see the value in having a broader scope of possibilities to fulfill one's CEUs. PSM is a pretty closed system. In a sense we are all partaking in the dawn of its existence. It is unlike some of the other modalities for healing in which people have expanded upon or incorporated other ways of doing it.

It is a quandary for me.

My most recent CEU experience with Alison was excellent. Dr. Paris Preston did a wonderful job of handling

the organizing at the local end in Seattle. There was a goodly amount of participants with a variety of years under their belt. The time together was very geared towards the participant needs and flowed smoothly from one area to the next.

The class covered everything from patient in-take and treatment to emotion testing to interpreting plant journeys to pulse taking and a healthy amount of time to linger over questions that came up.

There was a wonderful fire one evening that allowed us to get out of the classroom, be by the fire and have questions and experiences with the medicine expressed from one



and all.

I would also like to note where my quandary has taken me. I am on a temporary committee that was formed within the PSMA to look at the CEU requirements. The committee is exploring if there is a way that the CEUs might be expanded or made available utilizing the resources in each person's community.

The proposal is taking into

account addressing the needs of healers who have been practicing for over 5 years, assisting people with the skills and knowledge to build their practice, making it more affordable, and looking at the possibilities for the lay spiritual healers to speak and write about Plant Spirit Medicine in their communities, and maintain a basic level of competence by the inducted healers.

I found that I gained quite a bit from one of the main manners in which we can retain our status. About a week or so later when a new client came to me, I was able to readily draw upon my time with the group to ascertain their CF and to help them.

I also know that as a practitioner of close to 15 years that there are many other ways that I have experienced or know that I could experience a learning which would help me as a lay spiritual healer either through the building of my practice, learning from other teachers who have healing modalities that support or reflect PSM or from the heightening of my listening abilities.

I hope that the membership will have an opportunity to look at the recommendations developed by the committee and see where we can grow as an organization, as a seminary and as a medicine.

(Note: CEU recommendations are reviewed by the PSMA and the Seminary prior to adoption.)

*“there are many ways
that I could experience a
learning which would
help me as a lay
spiritual healer . . .”*

(Marge continued)

depths and heights of their soul's journey. In one way we could look at it and say, how could we *not* fall in love with someone who opens themselves to us in this way? What we need to be aware of however is that our prime focus at all times must be on what is in the best interests of the client. We are not in this business to fulfill our conscious or unconscious needs and desires.



Commonly the trigger for this attraction comes from the client and unsurprisingly this can be confusing. It is a natural part of the healing process that a person's heart begins to open and this opening can often be projected onto the healer. You as healer may seem to be the person they feel has 'saved' them. The one who may have really listened to them for the first time. This makes you very attractive. The client on the other hand is like a flower beginning to blossom, as it blossoms it feels its beauty and you see its beauty. Are you going to pick that flower, or are you going to let it continue on with its unfolding process of growth?

One of the most profound healing experiences I have had illustrates this. In my late 20's I participat-

ed in a counseling weekend. I found it very intense and afterwards had huge feelings of heart opening and love towards the man who ran it. This felt totally bizarre to me and my rational mind couldn't make sense of it, I hadn't been aware before the weekend of any attraction. I had no idea what to do with the feelings so decided to talk to him about it. His response had a very strong effect on me. He said that I didn't need to give that love to him, that the love was my own and to feel it for myself. The relief and gratitude I felt was huge and the effect extremely powerful. I stopped projecting those feelings onto him and focused on myself, my heart felt

full to bursting and for a long while after. I felt full of warmth and love that needed to go no-where but warm my heart. Even now when I think about it I feel warmth and heart opening. He didn't pluck the flower but let it grow...

It can be very tricky. For many people the nature of their wounding is that they may unconsciously need to attract people as their sexuality maybe the only way that they have been able to feel and experience love. This is often the case in people who have been sexually abused. This makes it extremely important that you keep to your role even though it may seem that they are 'asking for it'. As a holder of a person's most fragile and deep wounds we also have for many a parental role. For some of our cli-

ents the relationship with us may enable new ways to relate and the possibility of experiencing the parenting that they never had. This is another reason why it can be so damaging to get drawn into an intimate relationship.

If you feel drawn to a client in this way I feel it is an opportunity to look at what is going on for you: is there a need that is not being fulfilled elsewhere in your life?

The love that I feel for my clients is often very deep. I feel it is vital to recognize, however, that in our role as healer we are not in an equal place to our client and there is a considerable power imbalance. They have shared their soul's journey with me, but I have not shared mine with them. The beauty of this is that I am able to see and hold them through deep processes in their healing journey. This is easier because I am not involved in the way I might be as a romantic partner. My job is to hold them, not to be held by them. If you can allow the feelings to be there rather than acting on them, it can be very beneficial. By staying clearly in your role as healer and allowing the process to unfold for your client it will be a huge healing journey for them and possibly also for you. It maybe the first time they have been able to really open to a new and deeper aspect of themselves.

If this is difficult for you it is likely that you are being caught in what is called 'counter-transference' which is when the client's



Simple! Invest in a bigger treatment table, some good curtains, and have some fun!

(continued on next page)

Accept Myself ~ by Dawn Rafferty

Lord above
 Could you not ask me to move mountains?
 To shovel shit
 To swim the seven seas
 Could you not ask me to feed the starving?
 To assist the weak or the old
 To scrape the barnacles off a lost fleet
 Could you please not ask me just yet?
 I'm so busy
 Can't you see the state of my kitchen, my shed?
 You don't want to peer in the attic
 And spring is here and the garden can't wait
 What about clearing space for divine nature's new growth
 And the kettle is boiled
 They say don't boil it twice
 It's bad for something or other
 You know I need a break...

The Plant Spirit Medicine Association

invites **YOU** to

The 9th Annual Conference

When: **JUNE 28 – JULY 1, 2013**

Where: The Blue Deer Center

***Exciting and engaging workshops!!!
 Stay tuned for details!!!***

Conference Co-Chairs

Jane Wollack (615) 545-7732 or

Robin Lockwood (615) 754-3577

psma-conference@plantspiritmedicine.org



“it helps to get someone else to support you in a process of untying the threads.”

(Marge continued)

story gets caught up with your story. This is why it helps to get someone else to support you in a process of untying the threads. There is healing in this for you as much as your client and just as your client has looked for help, so you need to as well. If possible find someone with whom you can have some personal (rather than clinical) supervision from, ideally someone who has some kind of experience of this kind of thing. Or talk to a trusted colleague to help unravel your needs from your role as a healer. There is a great book about this called [Sex in the Forbidden Zone](#), a very candid account of one brave psychotherapist's journey of feeling almost irresistibly drawn to a client and the struggles and gifts that came from it.

What about the possibil-

ity that you really have met your soul mate? It is too complex to go into here but if you look in the code of ethics you will find guidelines to help you, and you will definitely need help in finding the best way to proceed. Supervision in this instance is essential—you will need to be as sure as you can be that you are not unconsciously compromising your client. Apart from anything else, if they ultimately feel you have abused your position that could invite huge repercussions in the future. It is no easy thing to transfer the relationship of healer to that of partner or even friend, as the original dynamic of carer and cared for is very strong. Unraveling your healer role from any other relationship you may have is going to be essential for a long lasting partnership of equals.

Attraction to a client can

happen to anyone and may happen to all of us at some point, however happily married we are or otherwise. It is not something to be ashamed of. It is however extremely important to ask for help. These issues can touch deeply into the core of our being and in that have the power to be very destructive or have huge healing potential.

(If you feel you need help in any way with how you are relating to a client, the Ethics Committee is available as a resource. If you have any comments, thoughts, experiences to share or you want to talk something through or find out more about where you might get more help, please [contact us](#).)



~ MY HEALING PRACTICE, MYSELF ~ BY ADRILIA V. PEDERSON

It's really interesting to me how personally, how emotionally, how very close to my heart I still continue to hold my Plant Spirit Medicine practice. As this year began, I knew one of my key 2013 goals and wishes involved growing my PSM practice. I knew it was hugely important. You see, I did an exercise. I wrote a list of all the things in my life I give time and energy to, all the work I do. I then jotted down pros and cons of each one, things like:

"What I love about doing this," "how it nourishes me," "how it supports who I truly am," "how it relates to my spiritual work and path," "how it affects my sleep and my health, sense of joy, sense of fun and discovery."

And when I looked at the results, the overall winner was my PSM practice. And yes, it did surprise me! This meant I needed to take a careful look at focusing on my PSM healing work and growing my practice if I was to have the most fulfilling work year I could imagine.

One of my challenges with my healing practice is that I hold it like a precious baby whom I must protect. It is such a deep and important part of me that I am reluctant to talk about it with many people, share it with the world, or even

offer my PSM help to friends and family. In many ways my practice is a direct reflection of myself – of my tendency to keep to myself, observe and support but not be too out there.

Part of the solution for me this year involves looking at my practice not as an extension of me but as an entity (a Being) who requires nourishment, who likes and needs to be talked about, who enjoys doing good and helping people. Who gains energy (and health and vibrancy) when shared, seen, discussed, paid attention to. So instead of keeping a really low (almost invisible) profile with my PSM practice, I'm making an effort to really share it, to bring joy and openness and true generosity of spirit to this amazing gift. Actually I wonder how the plants view the almost "hidden" way in which some of us hold our medicine. Do the plants like it, or do they take it as a sign that we are not yet ready to trust them fully?

The other part of the solution for me is in discomfort. Since my practice is in fact myself, I suppose Life will require me this year to be more "out there," more ready and available for contact, exchange, attention. I am not 100% ready for it but I

know it's what I must do to begin creating the life and meaningful work I envision. And actually, I really feel these are not times for us humans to be comfortable. Comfortable can mean no growth, no challenge, no expansion.

I was not given the awesome opportunity of being a vessel for the plant spirits because I wanted to be comfortable. I worked for that. Time and again Life tested my resolve. I struggled to make the finances work, I struggled (and still do) with my trust and of course my pulses. There are many, many tearful, rich, wrenching, juicy moments of agony and ecstasy that went into that giant pot I cooked and offered up while going through the PSM class.

Earning the ability to cultivate and share this medicine was a process that made sure I was able to be and live and persevere through discomfort. Why? I think it's because only transcending that discomfort can we truly reach for the medicine, expand our hearts and our senses and truly be of help to our people. And I really, really, really want to do that. I long to do that. I have a hunch I was born for that.

(Adriia lives and works in Glen Ellyn, Illinois – adriia@adriiavpedersen.com)

"Time and again Life tested my resolve. I struggled to make the finances work, I struggled (and still do) with my trust and of course my pulses."



The mission of the Plant Spirit Medicine Association is to support, preserve and strengthen the practices of Plant Spirit Medicine as recognized by the Temple of Sacred Fire Healing

Board of Trustees

Annie Smith, Chair
 Dena Sparks, Treasurer
 Julie Ellerbeck, Secretary
 Phil Roberts

The Board encourages comments and feedback
 Contact – psma-trustees@plantspiritmedicine.org

Committees

2012 PSMA Conference

Robin Lockwood - Co-Chair
 Jane Wollack - Co-Chair

Membership

Mark Gionfriddo - Chair

Standards of Practice and Ethics

Anna Murray Preece – Co-Chair
 Annie Smith – Co-Chair

Communications

Chris Griffin - Co-Chair
 Jeff Baker - Co-Chair

Board Support

Elizabeth LaCaze - Secretary
 Melanie Dail - Assistant Treasurer

Contact any committee at psma@plantspiritmedicine.org

News from the Temple of Sacred Fire Healing

Julie Netsch, Tanya van Dorsser and Jeff Baker were inducted as Lay Spiritual Healers in January of 2013.

Congratulations!!

~ A LETTER FROM THE BOARD ~

Dear Colleagues,

...To support, preserve and strengthen the practices of Plant Spirit Medicine...

Ordinary board business for an extraordinary organization, might sum up our first five months as a Board of Trustees! Just as a new manager has to understand the strengths and opportunities in an organization, new Trustees must learn and understand the opportunities to improve, bring forward change and manage day-to-day operations.

As trustees of the PSMA, we are working to define our vision of how to improve our services to you, and support the medicine in the world. We have talked with our committee chair-people; reviewed the surveys that members completed; and recalled issues raised at recent Town Meetings. Our challenges have been most evident in running an *all volunteer* organization. We are aware of the gaps in service that have been present during the past year; and at the same time are wowed by the work that has been done to jointly establish our website with the Seminary. Soon we will complete a three-year work plan, informed by your feedback, which will identify projects to solidify ordinary operations and bring improvements in technology.

Conference planning is

well underway with themes, speakers and schedules in development. A partially automated annual renewal using the website will soon be announced by email, (when we get some stubborn page links corrected).

New programming is being completed to reconfigure the "find a healer" page. We are determining the best way to manage new healer profile pages, and edits to current pages in a timely and consistent way.



The year-end accounting is finished and taxes are ready to submit. The financial picture is solid, with adequate conference funds (\$7,326). Our operating dollars (\$18,311) will help us to improve our technology and augment our volunteer staff. We look forward to sharing our three-year work plan with you at its completion.

The work of the Association is only possible through the help of our volunteers. We are so

grateful to all our volunteers for their dedication. These are the people on our committees, but there are also those who do work behind the scenes. Our volunteers generously give their time to support the association, which in turn supports all of us as healers and in turn supports the medicine growing in the world. As a board, one thing we are aware of is the amount of work required from us to give our members ongoing support as well as continuing the support of the growth of the medicine.

For the Association and the medicine to flourish we are going to need more help. We witness those who are being of service in this way begin to develop a deeper relationship with the medicine which in turn begins to enrich their practices. We will be developing and advertising various roles that will need filling in the Association. We need your skills and your heart to flourish; so if you feel moved to participate please contact the board via [email](mailto:psma@plantspiritmedicine.org).

We offer our thanks for your continued patience and understanding as we bring change to our business practices. We are working for you and for the medicine – which is why we know it's an extraordinary organization.

Annie, Dena,
 Julie and Phil