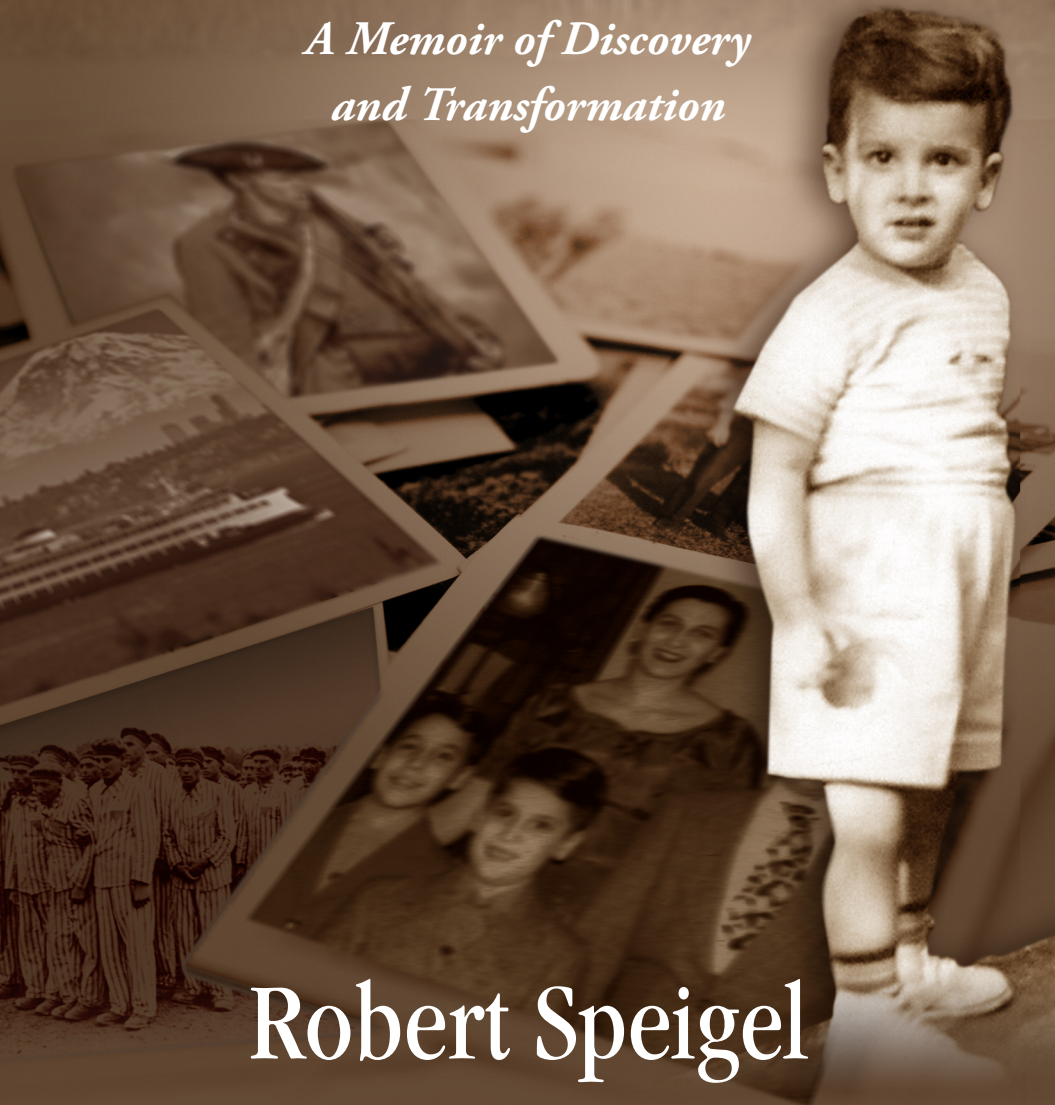


Of Endings and Beginnings

*A Memoir of Discovery
and Transformation*



Robert Spiegel

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by Robert Spiegel

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For my big brother Alan
1943-2012

May he rest in peace, and may we meet again,
and again, and yet again.

*“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures
of light, but by making the darkness conscious.”*

— C.G. Jung

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Foreword

Anxiety seems to be a Jewish disease, or at least that is how I stereotype it. When I think of the Jewish jokes that fuel the Broadway shows from a century ago up to today, the pioneer days of television sitcoms and today, the standup comedians...Woody Allen, Jerry Seinfeld and Jason Alexander, Larry David, Billy Crystal, Lenny Bruce, Adam Sandler, Lewis Black, Ben Stiller for a few...core to all of this is a world view of how anxious we are as we face our day-to-day existence. We Jews know this and feel it as part and parcel of our DNA. The Romans in the year 70 sent us into exile, and ever since it seems 2,000 years of pain and suffering has followed. We should be anxious, stressed out, obsessive-compulsive, phobic and suffer PTSD. How much persecution can one People take?

Is it a surprise that recent research is showing that anxiety and its related disorders may be passed down the generations via the family's DNA? (Dr. Kerry Kessler and Dr. Brian Dias, "Fearful Memories Passed Down to Mouse Descendants", *Scientific American*, December 2013.) The implications from the research are that Holocaust survivors passed on to their children their horrific pain via their DNA.

I know there is a problem with the Jewish anxiety stereotype. Dr. Rachel Klein, a psychiatrist at NYU Medical School, says that we do not want to think that anxiety is something we must endure, that it is part of life. (Forward, August 14, 2015, page G11.) And that is the reason why you have to read this book.

Of Endings and Beginnings: A memoir of Discovery and Transformation, by Robert B. Spiegel, is a ground breaking journey from pain to health, from places of darkness to places of light. Using his life's story...and the story of his family... Spiegel in a very personal and intimate way takes us with him as he works and grows toward a better self. The readers of this book will certainly find many, many places in Spiegel's stories for their own personal moments of ah-ha.

This is an important book for all of us who want to be healthy, functional, robust people. There is much for us to learn on our journey and Robert Spiegel is a good teacher.

The great Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, the pre-eminent Holocaust survivor, teacher and story teller, writes in his book "Gates of the Forest", this story:

A man went to a special forest, to a special spot, made a special fire, said special prayers and God saved the Jewish people. His son went to the special forest, the special spot, made the special fire but forgot the special prayers, yet God saved the people. This went on for generations with each new one forgetting a step. Finally the son of the son of the son of the son of the son does not know the special forest, nor the special spot, nor the special fire nor the special prayers; all he knew was the story...but God still saves the Jewish People.

Why? Because God loves good stories.

Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph, PhD

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Introduction

beloof: A mistaken personal belief, usually about oneself, that was created during a time of trauma, resulting in self-limiting behavior. Example: *When I was three, and my brothers made me go on a scary Ferris wheel ride, I formed a beloof that I couldn't trust those closest to me.*

Definition entered into the
Urban Dictionary, by Robert Spiegel

Several years ago, I was sitting in one of the healing circles of our Personal Transformation Intensive weekend retreats, teaching about trauma and its effects on our lives. As I was speaking, I heard a word come out of my mouth that I had never spoken or heard before. I said the word *beloof*, when I had fully intended to say *erroneous belief*.

I was trying to explain that even before we can talk, we are fully engaged in forming thoughtful concepts about our world and how we should interact with it. Back in the 1990s, research conducted by a Johns Hopkins University psychologist discovered that at 32 weeks of gestation—two months before a baby is considered fully prepared for the world, or “at term,” a fetus is behaving almost exactly as a newborn. The research showed that even a premature baby is aware, feels, responds, and adapts to its environment. Another well-known study showed that while being observed by sonogram, a developing fetus flinched and drew back when angry words were shouted at the mother.

In my teaching, I am trying to explain that when babies flinch, they are simultaneously forming non-verbal, conceptual beliefs about their world. Perhaps they decide, “I am not safe.” Perhaps they begin to believe, “My mother is not safe; perhaps she will not be able to take care of me.”

Based on these non-verbal conceptual beliefs, babies immediately form non-verbal, conceptual decisions about how they should respond to the potentially erroneous beliefs they are forming. Perhaps they decide, “I need to stay in the background to survive.” Perhaps, “I need to protect my mother and think of her needs before mine.” Perhaps, “My father is mean and dangerous—I need to be quiet.” Since these beliefs and decisions occur on a pre-verbal, conceptual level, they reside in the subconscious of our being, and are contained in the cellular experience of those desperate flinches seen in the sonogram.

These erroneous beliefs and decisions (beloofs) created during times of trauma continue to lie deep within our subconscious being and influence, perhaps even control, our daily decisions about how we behave in the world. I use the term *subconscious being* rather than *subconscious mind* purposely, since each cell of the body has recently been identified as being the repository of memory: not the abstract concept of the *mind*, which most of us believe is contained in the brain (read *The Biology of Belief* by Bruce Lipton if you’re interested in learning more about this). Hence the notion of *body memory*.

Think of how your body reacts when you are startled by an event. You get a phone call informing you that your father just had a heart attack. Perhaps you burst into tears. Maybe you punch a wall. Perhaps you become cold and numb. These are all body reactions emanating from your cells, not your mind. Your cells produce these reactions from their own

memory system based on the beliefs you have formed. They emanate from your deep subconscious being.

But let's get back to my story about sitting in the circle that day, hearing the word *beloof* come out of my mouth. I turned to my teaching partner and said, "Where the hell did that come from?" Immediately I realized I had created a new and unique word. It was not a mistake or *faux pas*; I had invented a completely new word! Pretty cool. I was tired of using "erroneous belief," and now I had *beloof*!

When you see the word *beloof* in the context of this book, remember the definition I wrote at the beginning of this introduction: "a mistaken personal belief, usually about oneself, that was created during a time of trauma, resulting in self-limiting behavior." This definition also includes the *beloofs* we bring with us into this lifetime from past lives—but more about that later.

The concept of the *beloof* is perhaps the most important concept I wish to share in telling my personal story. Because if I can discover and examine my deeply-held subconscious *beloofs*, and modify them at the cellular level, I can shed the effects of the historic traumas in my current life and the lives I've lived before, create new beliefs, and make new decisions that move me forward to experience all of my dreams and my destiny. In reading this manuscript, please excuse any overuse of open and closed quotation marks. I tend to use quotations marks around my *beloofs*. It helps me differentiate my old *beloofs* from my new beliefs.

This book is written as a memoir of my own journey of discovering and changing my most deeply-held *beloofs*. So, I write it as an instrument to further my own healing, and to tell my story to my family and friends.

The book is **not** intended to convince anyone of alternative beliefs they “should” adopt. I have come to believe that when I am conscious of my old beliefs, I am free to establish whatever new and self-empowering beliefs I wish.

Therapists use case studies to improve our skill levels. This book illustrates my own case study. I have sparingly mentioned a client or two from my very early days of practice in the context of learning my craft. I do not wish to disrespect the anonymity and privacy of the literally thousands of clients who have come to sit with me over the decades of my therapy practice.

Also, this writing is not intended to be a self-help book. Years ago I asked my wonderful wife and co-therapist, Mary Anne Balch Spiegel to just shoot me if I ever went about writing a self-help book. However, if you receive some insight, understanding, peace, or even entertainment from this volume, I will count it as one of the many blessings I’ve received during this lifetime, and take it along with me throughout time.

1

This Beginning

Sometimes to start at the beginning, we have to start before the beginning; but for now, here is my beginning.

This time around...

So here I am; time to come out. I'm floating peacefully in the womb, although it's getting cramped and a bit too hot. I'm aware that the adults outside are grieving; grieving for their personal loss, and grieving heavily for their tribe. I'm also aware of their terror.

Here in 1949, it is popular for pregnant mothers to have what is called a "twilight sleep" delivery. That's when mothers are given a combination of morphine, scopolamine (a drug made from the poison belladonna), and maybe a little ether, just for good measure. The doctors find it quite convenient. The mothers don't know what is going to happen, but when birthing starts they really like the idea, and the sedation. They can snooze through the delivery in a blissful state of narcolepsy. You've seen pictures of someone nodding off after shooting heroine, haven't you? Those doctors who were tending to my mother must have known that the drugs would go through to the baby didn't they? How could they not?

But I know. My being, my body, and my soul know. I am about to be born nodded off. This is not the way I wanted to come in.

I've been resting here comfortably in the womb for a lifetime. I'm aware that two male beings preceded me. Wisps

of their spirits are present. I've already encountered and sensed the anxiety of my mother. I already know she is that way from the last time we were together. There was no denying it then. There is no avoiding it now. Wisps of our last times together are still in us.

The doctors have drugged my mother and have gone out for lunch. She and I are thoroughly sedated, our blood supply intertwined, nodding off, mother and me. Both of us are experiencing the event of my birth in a semiconscious fog and physical sleep.

My muscles do not work. My nervous system screams, "Time to get out!" My cells are unable to respond. My right knee is pushed into my right ear. I feel excruciatingly dull pain in the midst of physical paralysis. There is no room in here for me to move. I'm stuck against hard bone. I need to push against the wall in front of me, but my muscles don't respond. I am squeezed into a ball. My right knee is stuck in my ear, and pain courses through my knee and leg. My mother is in bliss not having to feel anything. She is in a blurry haze of twilight. Her nervous system is screaming, "Get him out! Listen to me!" Her mind doesn't hear, her body is unable to respond. The doctors are off enjoying their lunch.

If not for the drugs, I would be feeling the panic attack going on in my body. I would be shaking and twisting, hitting and pushing. My voice would be screaming out the wail of a banshee. But no movement is forthcoming; no sound is emanating from my vocal cords; no air is filling in my lungs yet, only amniotic fluid. The horror remains contained in my anesthetized body.

My psyche and my spirit experience the panic and have no way to release it. My cells soak it up and hold it. It is

recorded, encoded, and memorized in my DNA along with the faulty beliefs I form about myself and my world in that instant of panic. All is added to the database I hold from the other beginnings.

I am reliving this experience, lying here on this mat, near my student guide and student observer, in a darkened guest room on the eighth floor of the Hilton Hotel on the beach in Honolulu, Hawaii.

In this chaotic moment of transformation from water creature to human being, a single beloof about me bubbles up from the depths of my subconscious to my conscious mind: *"I'm a fuck-up."* What? Other beloofs follow and tumble from the unconscious to the conscious: "I am weak, unable. I am undeserving, alone, abandoned in this frightening battle for life; I am on my own." In my battle to survive, I make desperate decisions; I give up, I disconnect, and I give in. I am resigned to this life of loneliness and struggle.

My student guide has no idea what is going on, where I am, or what to do. She is asleep just as my mother was. She has caught my panic and is frozen just like me. So is the observer student. We are all recreating my birth history. It is a perfect storm in slow motion, this replication of my beginning. I can't get out, and there is no one to help me. It is happening again.

Suddenly, the door of the room bursts open and I hear Diane's voice say with authority, "What's going on in here?" I am aware this didn't happen in my most recent beginning. This is new. I start to relax a bit. I hear the muffled talk, explaining what has been happening. I hear a student whisper to Diane, "I think he might be in the womb." Time has been interrupted, so I simply wait. Diane leans over my paralyzed

body that is lying on the mat. She softly whispers in my ear, “Breathe . . .”

Breathe? Are you insane? Don’t you know I’m encased in water? I can’t breathe. I receive my oxygen from my mother’s blood. This body has never breathed before. This paralyzed and stuck being doesn’t even know English, so how can I possibly respond to Diane’s instructions? And who is this cognitive being inside me who is having these thoughts and observations in the first place? I haven’t been born yet.

“Breathe,” Diane says softly again. I take a breath into the body that lies on the mat. Almost imperceptibly, my muscles start to relax, to soften. “Keep breathing,” she says. My body is numb and paralyzed, and I am still frozen in panic. My leg is screaming in pain.

But this is not how it went back in 1949. Back then, the doctors returned from lunch, my mother’s cervix had finally dilated, and they proceeded to pull my paralyzed body out of her body with their clinical hands and cold metal forceps. I was held by my feet, upside down, to allow the fluid in my lungs to drain out, smacked on the rump until I started breathing on my own, and then plopped on a cold metal tray where they tried to rub the drugs out of my body. Then I was swaddled in a blanket and taken away to the nursery so my mother could finish waking up. How is it possible for it to be different this time?

“Find one place in your body that has some energy,” Diane prompts. “Check your fingers and your toes. Find a place in your body that can twitch or at least move a bit,” she continues in her soft, reassuring voice. I start to scan my paralyzed six-foot-three-inch, two-hundred-sixty-pound body lying on a mat in a hotel in Hawaii for any shred of

feeling, any morsel of movement, any bit of energy. My left index finger moves almost undetectably, but I feel it. I relax a little more. I am able to begin stretching and bending my fingers.

My student guides notice. I feel them start to relax. Diane says, “Let the drugs start to release from your body.” “Drugs? What are drugs?” my baby mind says. My adult mind understands the instruction and the numbness begins to fade. Soon my hand moves, and my right knee starts to separate from my right ear. It is stretching out! Blissfully, the pain begins to subside from my leg. I am pushing the drugs from my body and feeling movement again. My feet and legs are filling with energy and beginning to push as they were meant to. I am moving myself out of this prison of numbness and into my life.

There is something up against my feet that I can push against, and hands on my shoulders holding me back. I have to get out. I push with my feet and legs until I am completely off the mat and out of the womb. My voice cries out in exultation. Tears stream down my face. My body is placed on the lap of one of the guides and I am wrapped in blankets. I relax and cry softly. My brain is quiet. My cells understand the difference. I allow new feelings to enter my body even though I don’t understand them yet. I feel relaxed and blissful and simply let myself enjoy these new feelings. As I relax, I hear Diane quietly leave the room to check on the others.

As I continue to relax into my new life, a single troubling thought remains from this unbelievable experience. Where, in the midst of the chaos of this beginning, did that totally innocent, inexperienced being acquire the belief that he was a fuck-up?