

# Cellular Wisdom

## *A Conversation with* **JOAN KING**

LINDA POTTER

**I**t was during a holiday in France in 1996 that the then chair of the Department of Anatomy and Cellular Biology at Tufts University School of Medicine did something she never thought possible. Perhaps she was inspired by the beauty of the French countryside or the glistening waters of Lake Annecy; perhaps she simply wanted to try something exciting and new. Whatever the reason, Joan King decided that day to go parasailing. Terrified of heights and unable to swim, this spur-of-the-moment decision made no logical sense. And yet it somehow made more sense than anything she'd ever done in her life. And, so, with eyes wide open, she jumped off a very high mountain. And, with that



leap off Le Col de la Forclaz, Joan King learned what it meant to fly, untethered, for the very first time.

With a resume that includes eleven years as a Dominican nun and more than twenty years as a medical school professor and researcher, Joan King's life journey has been one leap of faith after another. But the most recent one landed her exactly where she feels she was meant to be—writing, speaking, and teaching about the divine connection between body and soul.

Her book, *Cellular Wisdom: Decoding the Body's Secret Language*, integrates the fields of science and spirituality into an understanding of ourselves as whole, complete beings . . . perfectly engineered. Instead of attempting to explain how the body works, King shifts the focus to what the body can tell us about how to live and how to thrive; how to allow the fullness of the life force to enter our complete being at all levels. Because the cells naturally do just that, she finds them to be the perfect teachers. King sees our bodies as providing the blueprints for expanding our consciousness and the process of decoding the body's secret language as the key to unlocking the door to the soul.

King explains, "I'm using the body as a teacher because our cells resonate fully with the life force. If

we leave them alone, if our beliefs don't limit what the energy field is, our cells thrive. Their default state is to thrive. What I did was I looked at the ways in which cells act that are fundamental to the function of the cell. And I asked if that could be a template for how to live exuberantly. Could the cells teach us how to live? Yes, they can."

And one key lesson from how the body functions is that everything flows from a central core. In *Cellular Wisdom*, she writes:

Take, for example, the principle that information flows from the interior of a cell to its outer reaches. The same pattern is repeated in the way instructions pass from the interior of a population of cells to cells on the periphery. Moreover, the principle underlying this pattern—that guidance originates from the center—can be seen everywhere in the body.

Information emanating from our core is where it all begins and ends. It was this disconnect with her center, with her core essence, that motivated King to leave academia and pursue something grander.

"I thought I was going to dry up and die inside—it was the same reason I left the convent many years earlier and the same feeling. In both instances it was because I

could only bring a part of myself in. In the convent I felt restricted because of all the rules and regulations; in medicine I felt I couldn't bring my spiritual side. So, in both cases it was as though only part of me could exist in that environment. And I couldn't sustain it."

King's search for that something that would allow her to integrate both her spiritual and scientific backgrounds, to synthesize her knowledge of biology and her spiritual longings lead her to cellular wisdom. But it wasn't an immediate match up.

"No, I didn't discover the cellular wisdom connection until I actually left academia and shut up! I left and I took a six-month sabbatical. In that time I did nothing but read and meditate. I did not talk to people and that was important for me." King credits her years at the convent with teaching her about the value of silence, of turning within in times of uncertainty and transition.

"Every night (at the convent) we had the grand silence; after evening recreation we did not speak until after breakfast the next day. Then there was also a ten-day retreat every year where we did not speak. When you weren't teaching or engaged in an activity, you weren't speaking. When you worked, when you scrubbed floors, when you did anything—you did so in silence. I

think that the longer I've been away from the convent, the more I realize the impact it had on me. I know that in my life I have to have the balance of silence."

And so for six months she created that balance. "During that time, the only question I asked was 'Who am I? Underneath all of this stuff, who's the energy?' Then I asked, 'What am I going to do?'" It was in the silence that she first heard the voice of cellular wisdom. And once identified, it all became very clear. What exactly did she hear? King responds quietly, "it was the hum of the soul."

*Science of Mind: We hear a lot about cellular memory. Is cellular wisdom related to it?*

**King:** No, in fact, cellular memory is not mentioned anywhere in my book. It is very different from cellular wisdom and I'll explain how. Underneath, deeper than the energy of the molecules or the subatomic particles, is an energy field. That energy field, which is the life force, comes into every cell. When we hold the traumatic or the significant memory of an event, yes, it is held in the brain and specific regions of the brain, but more specifically it infuses the whole energy field that's underneath all the subatomic particles, all the molecules, and informs how that

energy enters our bodies, our spirits. And, because it's not local—energy is not local—it is as though we are resonating with an energy that's in the universe. And when we resonate like a tuning fork at that specific frequency we keep it alive. In fact, it can be kept alive forever.

The problem is that that's only one frequency or set of frequencies. What I think is meant by "all that is" is the complexity of all frequencies, so it balances any of those that appear to be negative. Just like when light enters a dark room, the room is no longer dark. But, as long as the light is not on, it looks like the room is dark. When we have a cellular memory that's negative, it can be balanced by another frequency. But when we're only resonating with the frequency associated with the trauma or the significant event, we would have to become more expansive to balance that—like turning the light on in the room. Cellular wisdom shows us how to do that. It looks for the

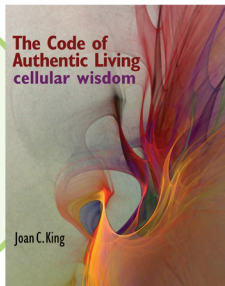
teachings that are encoded in us as to how the body operates normally in the state of well-being.

*In your book, you identify our "portals to power" as stem cells, indicating that their lesson is one of unlimited potential.*

What is significant is that stem cells are found in the fetus. Yes, stem cells are in the adult brain, but they don't have the same range of potential. Even the placenta doesn't have the same range as the developing embryo. In the developing embryo we call the cells multi-, pluri-potential. That means those cells can become anything—heart, brain, hair, eyes—anything. To the degree that we move away from that primitive state we restrict what the cells can become. They still have some potential, but not at all like those in the embryo. It's almost like those early cells are just emerging out of the energy field. They're still in total contact with this whole continuum of potential. We say that in the void all potential exists. The stem cell is like the void in the developing embryo. And to the degree you go to the placenta or you go to the adult, you can find stem cells but it's like bringing something out of the void—as soon as you start to bring it out of the void, it gets more specific and its potential is limited.

We have within us the same

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Joan's book  
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potential as the stem cells. It's an amazing potential for transformation and growth. I believe we are more magnificent beings than we can ever begin to imagine.

*You talk about how emotions are a vital part of who we are. Are we too easily swayed by emotions? Can we become addicted to certain feelings?*

When you have a pattern of behavior by emotion, you actually shape that energy field to who you are and to that pattern. It's hard to break that pattern because you've limited your total life force and chosen from a certain set of frequencies which represent that pattern. You become comfortable with that pattern and it takes more energy to open it up to a bigger pattern.

It's just like when you learn to play the piano. You have to remember where your hands are, remember where the notes are, remember what gets emphasized, what doesn't, what gets loud and what gets soft. You learn the piece and then you sit down and it becomes a whole thing in you. What you have been doing is literally patterning the subcortical networks—the ones that don't have consciousness—and you have established a pattern. Then it's hard for that person to play a particular piano piece any differently because that pattern has

been set in the energy field. I think it's true both for addiction and for passion. It isn't the process—it's the content that either becomes addiction or an open portal to expansiveness. You can create the habit of looking for the more expansive perspective. And that can be the same kind of energy patterning; we just don't call it an addiction because it's functional rather than dysfunctional. The mechanism of setting up the energy pattern is the same.

*Does that mean that we can rewire the brain to experience something different?*

Essentially yes, but what is the wiring of the brain but a pattern of activity? There's no actual "wiring" in the brain because the neurons don't touch each other. But there is a pattern of activity and when you break open that pattern of activity you could say you are "rewiring" things because you are removing that old pattern and putting in a new one.

And it's really not so much that you even replace the old thinking. What the body demonstrates for us is that we can keep all the old stuff while still transcending it. For example, monkeys have digits, but chimps were the first ones with opposable thumbs so they could grab something. Even the fetus in development has a tail that then goes away. The body transcends

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the “old,” but it doesn't get rid of it. It just puts something new on top of it and uses the old in a completely different way.

*So rather than simply releasing that which is “negative,” cellular wisdom would tell us that we can actually integrate it?*

You actually integrate elements of the old behavior. When people feel they cannot live without something, the element of wanting can become spiritual—what we call a spiritual yearning. It's still an element of yearning, but it's about something completely different—it's yearning after freedom.

Viktor Frankl came out of the Nazi concentration camps and wrote *Man's Search for Meaning*. Other people came out of that same terrible experience completely shut down and restricted. My father-in-law was like that. He came out of nine concentration camps and his whole philosophy became, “look for the flaw.” Viktor Frankl's was “look for the meaning.” My father-in-law took his fear and concretized it as a perspective to approach every new initiative. Frankl took his fear and transcended it.

However, sometimes there is no element that you can integrate. I

could not have remained in academia because it cut off some of the flow of my life energy to me. You could say that I integrated who I was through that experience and it has contributed a lot to who I am today. By reflecting back on what didn't work, I developed a yearning for what I wanted. And often, contrasts help you clarify what you desire. When you see what you don't want, the contrast helps you see what you *do* want. Are there elements from that past experience that I have incorporated into my life? Oh, yes. I couldn't have written *Cellular Wisdom* without it, but I'm in a completely different state of being. Sometimes I think negative experiences have to be released and let go and then maybe later you find the elements you can integrate. The longer I'm away from the convent, for example, the more I appreciate my learning about silence. I didn't recognize that gift when I was there. Now it's become an important part of my life. I had to let the pattern dissolve before I could see an element that I could pick out and incorporate. But first it had to destruct.

The female body does this all the time—every time a woman ovulates. Every time we release an

ovum, the follicle disintegrates totally and develops a corpus luteum. Then we start to secrete progesterone and that's what would support a fertilized egg. If the egg is not fertilized, the uterus lining comes down. But that cycle keeps repeating in anticipation of the moment when there may be something that is going to implant and grow.

*How would you describe what cellular wisdom has to say about the idea of the "soul," and "consciousness?"*

When Spirit enters matter (we are Spirit-matter hybrids), at that interface is where the soul resides. Consciousness, I think, is an expression of Spirit in matter. Consciousness has always been, but it exists at different levels. If something is alive and it exists in any way, there's some level of consciousness in it. But we can encode memory and we can keep alive a pattern of energy by choice. I think we don't realize how powerful our choices are. We can live passively and simply react to the world, absorbing the values everybody else tells us we should have; or we can live proactively, but proactively means making choices. I think we can change an energy field in an instant.

If we get to the point where we say we don't want to live this way

any more—this is not allowing me to be the fullness of who I am—we have the power to change things. The power that we have as Eckhart Tolle says, is in the *now*. I totally agree with him. The past is gone, the future isn't here yet—our only power is in the now. So in the *now* we either reinforce those old patterns or we can resonate more deeply with Spirit and open up to greater awareness, greater expansiveness, and greater possibilities. Those choices sculpt who we are. The soul is what we sculpt moment by moment by our choices.

*Would you say that the key to hearing our own cellular wisdom is to go into the silence and listen?*

Absolutely. It's not a screaming, screeching sound—you have to be quiet. I find in my personal life that I have to spend a certain amount of time alone and quiet. I need an equal number of days alone as I do days to work with people in coaching or in teaching my workshops. Everywhere in the body, times of intense activity alternate with times of quiet. Ignoring the on-off rhythm that is part of life's natural template leads to exhaustion, loss of creativity, and troubled relationships. We, like our bodies, need the balance of silence. That's where we connect with our cellular wisdom. •