



CAPACITAR—An International Network of Empowerment and Solidarity

Transforming Fear — Patricia Mathes Cane, Capacitar Founder/Co-Director

CAPACITAR is network of people who share a desire to heal and empower themselves, as well as heal and transform their groups and societies, especially those living in areas of poverty and violence; who believe that through nurturing, listening and responding to the deeper wisdom of body and spirit, it is possible to bring peace and healing to our world.

The CAPACITAR network includes people from diverse countries, cultures, generations, socioeconomic backgrounds and experiences, who encourage and support a spirit of solidarity and hopeful interchange. CAPACITAR shares techniques of healing, team building and self-development with leaders to encourage physical and spiritual transformation, working in such a way that all involved are empowered to act out of their own source of strength and wisdom. CAPACITAR connects people through an international network of solidarity, building relationships of cultural and personal understanding, responding to needs identified by community groups within a country.

Our name, CAPACITAR, is a Spanish word meaning to empower, to encourage, to bring forth.

Fear plagues the hearts and minds of most people these days. In our recent Capacitar workshops in New York, the Midwest, Texas and California, many described increased anxiety, nightmares, and body pain, symptoms related to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). September 11 shattered the illusion of security with which we have lived in the U.S. Our nation struggles with disillusionment, incomprehension and national grief: "How could this happen to us?" "Who could do such terrible things to good people?" As we try to make meaning of the horrific attacks, we are challenged to look more deeply at our own fear, as well as at the root causes of the violence in our society and in ourselves. No war, heightened security measures, gas masks or antibiotics can alleviate this fear and return us to feeling safe again. **What is needed now is a way to work with our fear, to transform our wounds into wisdom, and to awaken our soul as a people in solidarity with the human family.**

To help us in our healing process, it is important to consider the impact of violence and trauma on the body, mind and spirit, and to better understand the nature of fear that results. Sandra Bloom, MD, former president of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS), in her book *Bearing Witness: Violence & Collective Responsibility*, describes the U.S. as a traumatogenic society, with 75% of the population suffering from some type of traumatic experience and PTSD. (Since the September attacks she would probably project over 90% of the population.) Bloom goes on to say that our major institutions—political, economic, educational, religious, medical, and familial—are traumatogenic, that is they promote trauma because of the nature of their structures, values and behaviors. Within traumatogenic institutions, trauma perpetuates itself impacting the whole society across the generations. Everywhere we are faced with the results of institutional violence: abuse in the family, massacres in the schools, sexual abuse in the military, promotion of violent attitudes in the media, economic exploitation of the poor. Constant exposure to violence deeply affects the body, mind and spirit through a prolonged state of fight/flight arousal. The resulting traumatic stress, if not released, can lead to a variety of physical symptoms, such as stomach disorders, headaches, insomnia, nightmares, numbness or hyper-arousal, along with anxiety, strong emotions, panic and fear. A holistic approach to healing involves releasing the blocked energy through various energy-based practices such as breathwork, acupressure, Tai Chi, and meditation, in order to promote a state of balance and harmony in the midst of challenging life experiences.

In her excellent new book, *The Places that Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times*, Pema Chödrön teaches us ways to work with and transform our fear. She points out that we can let the circumstances of our lives harden us and make us increasingly afraid, or we can let them soften us and make us kinder, more compassionate and loving. A deep wisdom is always available to us, but we usually block it with habitual patterns rooted in fear. Beyond fear lies a state of openheartedness and tenderness, "bodhichitta", which is "capable of transforming the hardest of hearts and the most prejudiced and fearful of minds." Through meditation and other practices, we can cultivate steadfastness and unconditional friendliness toward ourselves, developing the capacity for experiencing our emotional distress with clear-sightedness and attention to the present moment. This issue of the newsletter shares some ways to work with breath to transform fear and to care for ourselves in difficult situations.

We have learned a lot about this process from friends in other parts of the world, most recently in Colombia and Chiapas, who have been deeply affected by trauma and violence. This newsletter tells of what Capacitar is doing in these countries, as well as in New York, to walk in solidarity and to learn from these valiant people. Capacitar is being called upon, now more than ever, to empower people in their own healing process, transforming fear and victimhood with energy and resiliency into wisdom and nonviolent action. The current global situation, if approached with wisdom and compassion, can be a catalyst for awakening us all to our true nature as a human family.



September Capacitar workshops in East Harlem, NY

Capacitar in Columbia — Patricia Farrell, OSF

Colombia is a rich country if wealth is measured by natural resources and by the beauty of its countryside. It is even richer in cultural diversity. About 25-30% of the population is Afro-Colombian and 3% is indigenous of a wide variety of very different languages and traditions. Another 40-45% is mixed. The rest is largely of European descent. It feels like a large, cosmopolitan world. Unfortunately, like many other Latin American countries, the material wealth of Colombia has been, historically, in the hands of a small minority and the political system structured to protect their interests. The result: a culture of violence.

The current, escalating conflict is generating thousands of deaths each year. There are over two million internal refugees, giving Colombia the third largest internal refugee population in the world, after Sudan and Sri Lanka. The displaced people from the countryside generally go to the cities. But there is no work there, so some turn to prostitution and others to gangs, contributing to the culture of violence. Of the estimated 30,000 deaths a year, only 10-15% are attributed to the war and to drug trafficking. The rest are from the generalized violence, which reflects a long history of social injustice. That injustice continues to be manifested in large-scale impunity. Only 3 out of every 100 crimes are prosecuted. It is a very tense situation.

I felt privileged to be part of bringing Capacitar's work of healing and transformation to a country in such need. It was clear on the first trip I made with Pat Cane in August of this year that people were hungry to learn how to heal the woundedness of their lives and their communities. On the second trip, from which I have just returned, it was even more evident.

In Cali 20 women have been meeting every two weeks to review and practice what they learned in the first workshop. There was not enough space to accommodate the number of people who wanted to come to a second workshop. In Buenaventura I did a workshop with displaced people, community leaders, and with midwives who serve the displaced population and poor communities along the Pacific coast. In Bogota educators and religious attended. Some of them have never taken the time to take care of themselves and found the permission and encouragement to do so in the Capacitar workshops. In Medellin, Bogota, and Cali I worked with groups dedicated to supporting and healing political prisoners and they were eager to use the Capacitar practices in the prisons. In both Cali and Bogota teams formed to continue their own healing and to begin to share Capacitar practices with other groups.

On our next visit to Colombia Pat Cane and I will do further work in forming and supporting the teams and in helping to develop a plan for Capacitar that is specific to Colombia. We know there will be no immediate end to Colombia's violence and the pain of its people. But some new relationships have been formed. The ground is fertile and the seeds have been planted. Capacitar is committed to tending to the growth so that people in Colombia can heal themselves and their society.

Capacitar in Chiapas — Mary Litell, OSF

On September 12th, the day after the massacres in New York and Washington, D.C., a group of eighteen women and men gathered in San Cristobal de las Casas to begin the formation of a Capacitar team in Chiapas. Most of us who gathered had experienced the effects of trauma either directly - a few are survivors or displaced - or secondarily through exposure to violence, conflict, and/or work with victims of trauma.

Every moment of the time in this three day training was colored by the terrible events far away in the U.S. but also so alive in the grief of those of us who are U.S. citizens, and in the compassion of the others as they relived the sorrow and terror of massacres and other terrible events they've experienced in Chiapas. It was the compassion that renewed our sense of purpose.

We developed a sense of team and experienced the flow and balancing of physical, emotional and spiritual energy with Capacitar practices. We also learned practices to alleviate the effects of trauma, and we deepened our understanding through our discussion of energy and trauma theory.

In an amazing way, grief and hope, sorrow and deep joy, fear and the experience of our own power came together in those days. We knew that something new was being born among us and that we would continue working together for our own healing and transformation as we work with the communities in Chiapas so that they, too, might be healed and transformed.

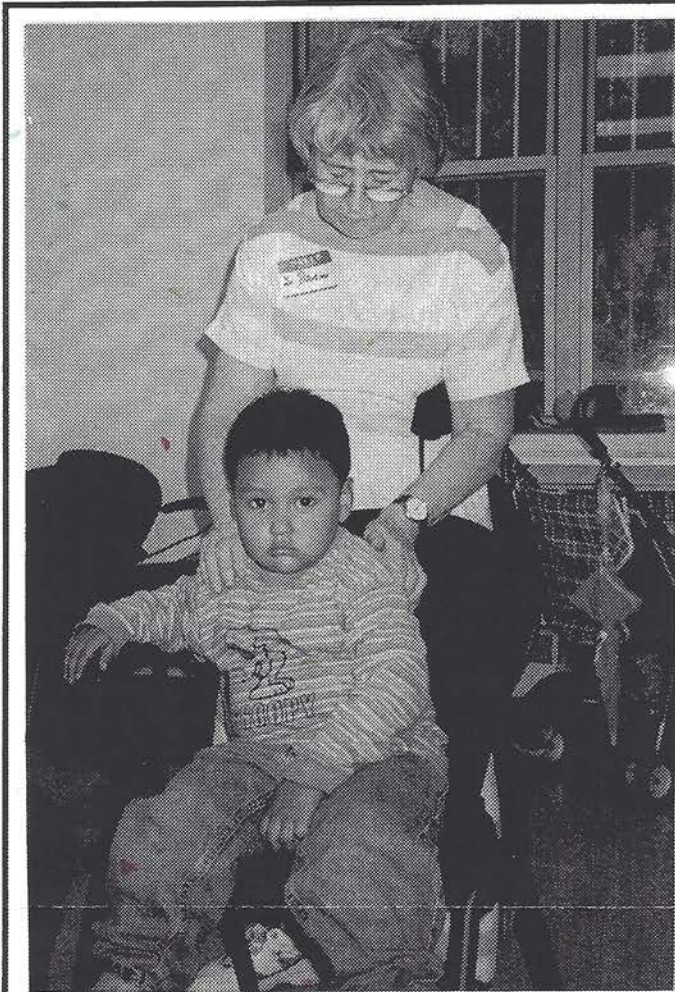
Together we established two different times of the day and two places for continuing the daily practice of Tai Chi, and later for other practices.

Some of us immediately shared our learnings by leading two workshops. The first in San Cristobal, included people engaged in efforts for social transformation. The second was in Acteal with members of the "Abejas" (Bees) communities who continue their stance of non-violence and move slowly toward the difficult process of reconciliation after the displacement and massacres of the last years.

Since my return, the new Capacitar team, called "CAPpaz," has continued to meet and practice together and plan for the development of Capacitar in Chiapas. One member of "CAPpaz" wrote describing a workshop that expresses so well the spirit that gave birth to this Chiapas team. "Movements for Peace: Tai Chi, Pal Dan Gam and Sacred Dance" is a workshop/retreat for people to deepen their experience of these practices, but is also time to discern how to move as peace every day - to look at how we use our bodies in big and small ways, to make and be peace."



Capacitar in New York—Patricia Mathes Cane



Fran Whelan, OP, at a Capacitar workshop in East Harlem

Maria and her 7 year-old son relaxed into a hand massage, peacefully sharing a few healing moments after all that had happened in their community. Like most Hispanics and African Americans in East Harlem, their lives had been deeply affected by September 11. Many, as refugees from Central America, had fled violence and poverty in their homeland. Now three weeks after the terrorist attacks, as smoke and ash still hung in the air throughout Manhattan, children awoke with nightmares, mothers complained of headaches and shattered nerves, and some reported flashbacks of other violent events experienced in their lives. The Capacitar workshops were welcomed to give the families skills to deal with their daily lives.

Synchronistically we scheduled these NY workshops a year ago at the invitation of Fran Whelan, OP, who has lived and worked in East Harlem for over twenty years. Street altars with pictures of loved ones lost in the World Trade Center were evident everywhere—in front of housing projects, public parks and fire stations. Posters of the missing, as well as notices announcing funerals and memorial celebrations for lost friends were posted on street corners and in elevators. Ground zero of the WTC was like a graveyard with the smoke of destruction and the ashes of victims still pouring forth from the site. The presence of the thousands who died there was palpable, as friends and family came to mourn their tragic passage.

Our workshops included families, along with staffs and service workers of the Little Sisters of the Assumption Center in East Harlem which does outreach to thousands of poor, immigrants, and refugees living there. Many of the staff and outreach workers had not had any time to care for themselves in the hectic days following the attacks, when everyone needed their attention. As Capacitar we see our work as second wave after traumatic events and disasters, when the aid workers go home and people are left to cope with their pain and healing process. Capacitar is committed to working in NY in the coming year, especially training those who work with the underserved and marginalized.

CAPACITAR SELF-CARE CORNER

Breathwork to Transform Fear

Often in our Capacitar trainings we are challenged to work with few resources and little other than our own bodies and breath. In truth nothing else is needed! Breath is the source of life. During inhalation fresh energy is brought into the body, and energy centers to nourish cells, tissues and organs. With exhalation stress, stagnant energy and toxins are released. Breath is the simplest most direct way to focus one's energy and to connect with one's center. Breathing through a stressful time is an effective way to let go of tension that accumulates in the body. Long deep abdominal breathing at a difficult moment can release anger and anxiety and change the way we handle a situation. There are many ways to work with breath. Meditation practices from Asia use breath to still the mind and to center oneself in the present, in the Source. Diaphragmatic breath promotes mindfulness and deep consciousness. A simple cleansing and clearing method, parallel breath, is taught by Fritz Smith, MD, (Founder of Zero Balancing). This practice can be a means to clear oneself of fear, negative thoughts and strong emotions, and to bring healing to others and to difficult situations.

Resources We recommend the following books: Gay and Kathleen Hendricks, *Conscious Breathing*; Pema Chödrön, *The Places that Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times*.

Parallel Breath

1. Wave of Breath Up & Down within Yourself:

Sit erect with a straight spinal column. Breathe the energy of the earth up through your body and breathe the energy of the heavens down through your entire body. Feel the breath flow like a wave up & down your body-mind-spirit.

2. Cleanse and Clear Your Body-Mind-Spirit

Feel the flow of breath like a wave of parallel light or energy, like rain, cleansing and clearing your body, cells, nerves, & tissues. Do this 4 to 5 minutes staying present in the moment, cleansing and clearing, letting go completely.

3. Breath to Clear and Heal Person or Situation:

Place in the energy field in front and separate from you an issue, problem, person, or global situation. Do parallel breath within yourself; and then imagine that you can also breathe the energy up and down at interface in front of you, around the issue, cleansing, clearing and healing the pain or suffering of the person or situation. 4 or 5 minutes. Then let go of the issue.

4. Finish with Breath within Self to Ground/ Center:

Do parallel breathing within yourself.

HOLIDAY GIFT SUGGESTION

What shall I give _____ for the holidays?

I can't think of anything.

Yet, I want to remember him/her during this festive season.

GIVE A GIFT OF PEACE BY MAILING THE ENCLOSED FORM TO CAPACITAR.

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Gifts Made In Memory of

Marya Novitski

Andrew J. Rebmann

Remember CAPACITAR In Your Estate Plans

Requests - Gifts made through your will may be for a specific percentage of an estate or a specific sum.

Gifts of Life Insurance - You can transfer ownership of a life insurance policy to CAPACITAR.

The legal name is CAPACITAR, Inc., Watsonville, CA

CAPACITAR Calendar 2001-2002

- November 30-December 2 Training 1, Milwaukee, WI
- December 1 Body-Mind-Spirit Workshop, Redwood City, CA
- December 3 New Orleans, Paper to International Society for the Study of Dissociative Disorders, International Conference
- December 8 New Orleans, Poster Presentation, International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, International Conference
- Monthly No. California Workshops: St. Anthony Farm, Marian Residence, Elmwood Correctional Facility, Seton Hall
- January Trainings in East Timor
- January Trainings in Belize
- January 26 Board Meeting, Presentation Center
- February 7-10 New York Workshops
- February 18 - March 3 Guatemala Workshops
- March 2 Body-Mind-Spirit Workshop, Redwood City, CA
- March 16-17 Training 4, San Diego/Tijuana
- March 22 Workshop, Juarez, Mexico
- March 23-24 Training 1, El Paso, TX
- April 19-21 Capacitar 3, Cleveland, OH
- April Trainings in Colombia
- April 17-18 Organizational Trainings, Appalachia, VA
- May 25-26 Workshops, Indianola, Mississippi
- June 15 Body-Mind-Spirit Workshop, Redwood City, CA
- July 3-10 Nicaragua Workshops
- August Trainings in East Africa—Tanzania, Kenya

Trainings

- Wisconsin Training in Multicultural Wellness Education
Sponsored by the Center to BE, West Bend Wisconsin
Nov. 30-Dec. 1; Mar. 8-10; May 31-June 2; Sept. 13-15.
For information: Marjorie Wilbur 262-629-1937, Mwctobe@execpc.com.
CEUs offered through Marian College.
- California Training in Multicultural Wellness Education
—Sponsored by Capacitar, Mt. Alverno, Redwood City, CA
2 CEUs per quarter offered through UCSC Extension:
Feb. 2-3; May 18-19; Aug. 24-25; Nov. 9-10
- Texas Training in Multicultural Wellness Education
—Sponsored by Capacitar, El Paso, Texas
2 CEUs per quarter offered through UTEP:
Mar 23-24; June 22-23; Sept. 7-8; Nov. 16-17
- Projected New York Training—Multicultural Wellness Education
—To be announced

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www.capacitar.org