

## **The Cycle of Life: Creating Smooth Passages in Every Life Season**

by Pamela Levin

The Nourishing Company, 2007

202 pages, \$24.95

*Reviewed by Angela MacKay*

I very much enjoyed this book, as it leads the reader through a lot of material in a gentle yet rich flow. In *The Cycle of Life*, Levin proposes seven life stages that not only describe the sequence of child development but also how these same developmental stages continue to cycle throughout adulthood every 13 years, allowing the self to continually evolve and grow. Drawing on theories of child development, transactional analysis, neurology, biology, spirituality, the chakras, and the human energy system, this book provides the reader with an overview of the stages as well as tools for assessment, growth, and healing. Although I am not a Certified Transactional Analyst, I am familiar with the basic theory, and I appreciated Levin's definitions of transactional analysis concepts that appear throughout the text. She also provided a glossary of terms at the end of the book as a resource for definitions of commonly used terms.

The seven stages Levin presents are:

- Stage One: Being — The Ground of Our Existence
- Stage Two: Doing — The World of Senses and Action
- Stage Three: Thinking — The Conceptual Realm
- Stage Four: Identity — Our Ever-Evolving Self
- Stage Five: Skillfulness — The "How-Tos" of Our Lives
- Stage Six: Regeneration — Creation and Procreation
- Stage Seven: Recycling — Manifesting the Promise of Life

Because this book is written in clear, direct language, I found it accessible and easy to digest. The format is in three parts. Part One introduces the stages within the context of nature and life itself, establishing the ground to better understand human development. Part

Two describes the stages in detail, each chapter ending with a summarizing chart and activities for that stage. Part Three applies the theory and provides readers with more tools for working with the stages in their own lives.

The author integrates theory and information through symbols and imagery, creating a dense yet simple text. An example of Levin's writing comes from the chapter on stage seven:

Adulthood represents a shift from creating the foundation for our lives to building, layer by layer, upon that foundation. By now we've been through the cycle enough times to have some idea of how to handle its stages and growth tasks. Our first acquaintance with it was in the world of water, between our conception and birth, when our growth energy going through each stage was focused on growing our bodies with all their basic parts and downloading very primitive learning systems from our mothers about how to run those bodies.

We added a second layer of programming as we went through a shorter cycle during our birth transition from the world of water to the world of air. Once born, we added a third layer, built on the other two, as we constructed the foundational experiences and laid down the fundamental programming upon which we would build our grown-up lives. Then during adolescence we integrated all these separate stages along with their encoded primal childhood experiences. (pp. 99-100)

Although I enjoyed the book as a whole, it was Part Three that made the strongest impression. Here the author helps readers assess where they are stuck with regard to the stages and provides activities that shed light on the darkest, unconscious corners of the self. Within the activities, Levin provides key theoretical information and examples that facilitate insight and awareness, guiding even the most stuck individuals to have a better sense of themselves and where they are at. I particularly found the activity in the chapter entitled "Identifying Self-Sabotage" helpful. This activity helps readers identify stuck thoughts

and behavior, allowing them to re-author their lives by creating a blueprint for healing, a healing image, and a new structure for thinking.

Levin continues to engage the reader as Part Three continues, reminding us of why we would want to shed light on those unconscious, dark corners and how those struck places affect our external reality. She writes:

The place to start when encountering problems in our outer life is to go inside ourselves. This may seem counterintuitive at first. After all, if there's a problem in the outer world, why would we the turn within to seek its solution? The answer is both simple and profound: we are powerful beings who are always in the process of manifesting our beliefs, however unaware we may be of what they are or that we are doing it. This reality is borne out not only in the world of counseling and therapy, but also in the worlds of quantum physics, brain research, and understanding neuropeptides. All confirm that what's going on inside us is far more important in shaping the contents of our lives than are any outer events. How can this work? In quantum terms, we interact with the outside world, provoking the outside world to coalesce into a particular state. It is a truth that four-year-olds know well, for they are still living in their magical state, where they are grappling with the idea that if they entertain certain thoughts, they make them come true. They know, as we have forgotten, that we are participating in creating the effects of reality. (pp. 150-151)

The chapters are infused with quotations from a variety of sources, including Rumi, Margaret Mead, Eric Berne, and the Buddha as well as the lyrics of singer Joni Mitchell.

Overall, *The Cycle of Life*, was a wonderful overview of Levin's theory of developmental stages, accessible to both client and therapist alike. It left me inspired to read in more detail about the subject. Levin provides a list of resources and other material she has written, aiding

## BOOK REVIEWS

the reader in learning more about the cycles of life and how they relate to culture, the chakras, neurological development, and the law of proportion. This book provided me with a better understanding of myself and my own stuck places as well as a new way of relating with clients and their cycles of life.

*Angela MacKay, MSc., is a psychologist (Candidate Register) from Nova Scotia, Canada. She specializes in child psychology and play therapy but also works with adolescents, adults, and families. She can be reached at [angela@halifaxhealth.ca](mailto:angela@halifaxhealth.ca)*