

**CYCLES OF POWER**

**A User's Guide to the Seven Seasons of Life**

**by Pamela Levin**

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**(Back cover)**

## **Cycles of Power: A User's Guide to the Seven Seasons of Life**

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It turns out that the apparent chaos or randomness of life has a pattern - a cycle composed of stages. *Cycles of Power* presents the incredible architecture of this universal and life-sustaining process.

The natural timing of the cycle means that life unfolds in the same series of stages we began in childhood. Whether we are male or female, this cyclic feminine structure provides fundamental tools for living, and it is the very ground from which we draw our sustenance. Like the gentle hand of a loving mother, the cycle serves as a devoted guide that:

- § Reveals how to know our stage as well as our age
- § Provides nourishing messages to support us
- § Instructs us about which symptoms are normal
- § Warns us when we're heading for trouble
- § Illuminates ways to get back on track

This process also reveals how to support each other in relationships with family members, friends and co-workers. It provides guidance for parents and grandparents as we cycle through the same stages as our children and grandchildren. And it provides guidance for recovery from addictions, including Inner Child work.

*Cycles of Power* presents life-transforming information with rich primal imagery delivered in an anecdotal, person-to-person style. Now, instead of merely surviving predictable crises, we discover how to thrive in the stability of our cyclic nature.

Pamela Levin, R.N. is an award-winning author, international lecturer and consultant. She is a leader in the fields of Transactional Analysis, Human Development and Clinical Nutrition. She has been in private practice helping people heal physically and emotionally for over 30 years.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Preface	iii
<b><u>PART I</u></b>	
Chapter 1    The Cycle	1
Chapter 2    Cycle Sabotage	16
Chapter 3    Seeds of Power	36
<b><u>PART II</u></b>	
Chapter 1    The Power of Being It's OK for you to be here, to be fed and touched and taken care of.	53
Chapter 2    The Power of Doing It's OK for you to move out into the world, to explore, feed your senses and be taken care of.	86
Chapter 3    The Power of Thinking It's OK for you to push and test, to find out limits, to say no and to become separate from me	122
Chapter 4    The Power of Identity It's OK for you to have your own view of the world, to be who you are and to test your power	159
Chapter 5    The Power of Being Skillful It's OK for you to learn how to do things your own way, to have your own morals and methods	196
Chapter 6    The Power of Regeneration It's OK for you to be sexual, to have a place among grown-ups and to succeed	227
Chapter 7    The Power of Recycling	

## **PART III**

### Developmental Exercises

Chapter 1      Creating a Vision

Chapter 2    Developmental Script Questionnaire

Chapter 3    Using The Think Structure for Creating Your  
                Personal Developmental Affirmations

Chapter 4    Exercises for Developing the Power of Being

Chapter 5    Exercises for Developing the Power of Doing

Chapter 6    Exercises for Developing the Power of Thinking

Chapter 7    Exercises for Developing the Power of Identity

Chapter 8    Exercises for Developing the Power of Being Skillful

Chapter 9    Exercises for Developing the Power of Regeneration

Chapter 10   Exercises for Developing the Power of Recycling

Conclusion

Glossary

Bibliography

References

## PREFACE

We human beings long to discover and integrate ourselves into the promising perfection found in the pounding surf, an exquisite stand of trees, a parade of stars against the moonlit night sky. We search as if seeking a mirror in which to find ourselves. What does it mean to be human? What do we have in common with rocks, trees, ocean, sky, animals, and people? What is our relationship to the universe? How are we organized?

Cycles of Power is a work focused on these queries. It is about both discovery and recovery. It is about finding, reclaiming and learning to be sustained in the basic growth cycle which is our human birthright.

The life course of each individual has a basic cyclic structure through which personal history unfolds stage by stage. These are our growing seasons, our teachable moments, our critical learning periods: phases when given the right conditions, we can make gigantic leaps. To maximize nature's gift, we need only carry out the appropriate developmental tasks. Nature's pattern forms the basic ground for responding to all the other variables of life.

Evolving cyclically means that certain issues and themes return over the course of time as we come back to the beginning point and pass through them again, often in a more sophisticated way. We even remark that someone is acting like a two-year-old or a teenager or a baby. This natural recycling is nature's cleaning schedule - a way of providing regular, scheduled healing periods to flush out old toxins, bring in fresh nutrients and heal old scars.

The architecture of this extra-genetic learning system is one our ancestors knew intuitively. They lived in the natural rhythm of their own lives in the same way the lived in the natural seasons of the year. They understood themselves to be part of nature and nature to be part of them. As modern people we need to relearn that it is both natural and healthy to repeat childhood stages in adulthood.

Many aspects of life are clarified by knowing the stages within the cycle, their essential tasks and how to use them as support to achieve success. For example, the essential emotional nutrients in each stage nurture healthy development within the natural seasons. Because it is natural to grow from birth until death, it is natural to show signs of stress when that growth process is interfered with. Considering how much effort it would take to try to prevent a season of the year from occurring to

work against nature's pattern, it becomes easy to understand why we feel stressed and develop physical symptoms. Thus using this view, some otherwise puzzling physical symptoms may be readily translated into missing sequences of development and the process by which they can be completed is made clear (see Part Two).

The information presented here is intended as a guide in harmonizing human life with human nature as part of nature. It is both a map of healthy development and a structure for successfully realizing personal dreams. Its principles apply to recovery from a dysfunctional childhood, to raising children, to being a satisfied parent, to the creation of healthy, growth-affirming relationships, to increasing effectiveness in any aspect of life. We can relax, knowing that we can prevent future crises by carrying out present tasks using methods to deal with them which are implied in our body clues. Finishing growth tasks as they arise, we completely avoid developmental crisis - at midlife, at retirement or any age.

Further, we can return to foundation levels of development to finish incomplete sequences of childhood. It is never too late for any adult to have a happy childhood because limiting decisions can be changed, early issues which bind up energy can be resolved, and developmental gaps from childhood can be filled in with new healthy experiences, providing a firmer foundation that supports more sophisticated adult abilities. Such work is necessary because no parent can be perfect or provide all the love, nurturing and support needed at every age in childhood and no child is able or necessarily ready to take in what is given. Therefore discovering the lack of some inner resources in adulthood is a reactively common experience. However, we need not just make do or avoid what is missing. Instead, we can take what we were given and expand it to be all of what we need. Results seen as only dimly possibly become reality.

The process by which this is accomplished involves a natural ability called regression. Done without conscious knowledge or an appropriate environment, it can be most unfortunate. Being a two-year-old, five-year-old or six-month old in a grown-up body can be extremely hazardous. A method called corrective parenting provides under contract the same environment and temporary protection necessary to complete what regression attempts to gain - a new organizational experience at the inner level where it is missing. Thus "adult children" heal the inner child to become truly grown up.

The key is to learn to greet grown-up dysfunctions, whether physical or mental, emotional or relational, as messages from the inner child who still needs something and hasn't given up. Accurately translating and appropriately acting on

these messages, we can truly liberate ourselves from helplessness in otherwise tyrannizing circumstances.

Cycles of Power is based on nearly two decades of research involving over 1,000 people for a few hours up to a few years. I have been child and parent, the student and "the studied". My aim was to discover common patterns, unifying trends and to communicate commonalities.

I came to this study from a medical background as a nurse who was weary of human suffering and eager to prevent it. Training with psychiatrist Eric Berne, author of Games People Play and founder of Transactional Analysis, I began to discover patterns common to certain ages. For example, 26-year-olds often had difficulty concentrating, felt as if the bottom were dropping out of their lives and also has skin problems. Thirty-two-year-olds frequently had trouble with authority and were dissatisfied with a perceived junior standing in the social fabric.

The importance of these discoveries I sensed only vaguely at the time. Later, living in the country I lived and learned nature's ways. Returning to the city to work with clients I finally recognized how the deeply personal is also universal. Within us is the same pattern of organization manifested in every form from the molecule to the Milky Way. Rather than proceeding in a straight line from birth to death, human life follows nature's pattern and that pattern is cyclical. Even though we each modify it, this generic cycle is universally valid.

This theory has passed many times through the stages it describes, reaching Maturity at a point in history when the formalized study of cyclical development is still in its infancy. Some pieces of the developmental puzzle have already been contributed by Freud, Jung, Rupertini, Buhler. Piaget described how children learn, but stopped his theory at the threshold of maturity.

Montague in Growing Young provides another piece when he states that human beings are meant to be in an unending state of childhood development and that we are intended to remain childlike. Erikson painted a life-long picture of growth, leaving the cyclic commonalities between childhood stages and their more grown-up versions undiscovered. Berne outlined the scripts people live and the games played to advance them, leaving some questions about how scripts develop. Daniel Levinson in Seasons of a Man's Life and Gail Sheehy's derivative Passages studied crises and patterns of adult men's lives as defined by the externals of their lives, but not why people face them, why they occur at specific ages, nor what approach might lead to successful resolution. A new science, chronobiology, is

currently amassing a wealth of knowledge about the internal time-clocks found in biological organisms.

Cycles of Power's publication coincides with time when our culture is beginning to show signs of a new historical cycle, a Third Wave, as Alvin Toffler has christened it. Just as the first stage of each person's development is concerned with being, so, too, is this new stage in history concerned with issues of being. On a planetary level, we are experiencing intensely the symptoms of degeneration arising from culture cut off from the natural cyclic process. We are searching for more integral ways of being as we decide between global survival and nuclear/environmental suicide.

Additionally, the female principle is re-emerging as both women and men call for workable alternatives to one-up-one-down sex roles. Alienated from the natural world and our own natures, we seek alternatives to the linear scientific model. We need a holistic science which sees humanity as a part of nature and nature as a part of humanity. We need connection with our own inner cycle because it is our connection with each other, and to all of nature and because our individual and collective survival depends upon it.

Three conscious omissions have resulted from keeping the focus of material in this edition as that of personal recovery and healthy individual development. The first is a wide range of material supporting the cycling view of how matter is organized. Instead, interested readers will find references in the bibliography.

The second is a presentation of the cycle from conception to birth. The decision not to include it here points to its great significance. Because it is so primitive, because it has such a profound impact on later development and because it requires specialized techniques, its own separate treatment is well deserved. Informed readers will no doubt recognize themes suggesting unresolved fetal issues in the case material presented.

The third omission is an anthropological one. The cultural implications of a cyclic life process are no doubt profound. However fascinating it may prove to effectively cover how cultures currently and historically relate to this fundamental life process, to consider the implications for a culture's viability, disease patterns, incidence of violence, ability to remain cohesive, etc., it must remain a separate undertaking.

Portions of this book were researched through Group House Community in the San Francisco Bay Area, California; the members and facilitators of Mothers, Fathers and Others Who Care About Children in Minneapolis, Minnesota, now (Self-Esteem, A Family Affair); Orrs Springs Healing Retreat Community, Mendocino County, California; the Eric Berne Seminars of San Francisco (formerly the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars); the Schiff Rehabilitation Project (Cathexis Institute), Oakland, California; A Growing Place of Cincinnati, Ohio; and the Experiencing Enough Trainings, Seattle, Washington.

The completion of this manuscript was greatly assisted by the editing of Lloyd Linford, Robert Landheer, Sunny Mehler, Daniel be Horin, Susan Ettinger Keegan, Catherine Keller, Jennie Burton, Oni laGioia, Jean Clarke, Sally Dierks and Sheila Hartmann.

Special thanks go to my clinical sponsor, Joe Concannon, and to two special people, Gail and Harold Nordeman, who unfailingly gave of themselves under all circumstances throughout this long process.

Grateful acknowledgment is also made to the many people in this book who have generously consented to share their experiences, and who have used their own cyclic process as a potent and effective healing tool.

My thanks also to the many clinicians and educators who applied this knowledge in their work. It is through their hands that the self-published version rapidly found its way throughout the United States and to dozens of other countries. I am especially grateful to Velma Bourke, the University of Quebec, Canada, the Indian students who translated and produced the first French language translation. It is through these people that Cycles of Power has taken root as a personal guidebook for grownups who felt so in name only and renamed themselves adult children.

As each individual life adjust back to the harmony of nature's design, a much needed cultural shift begins - away from violence, substance and people abuse and addictions, the people around them also begin to organize around emotional sustenance and the satisfaction of needs. All people in every part of the world in every stage of growth deserve this environment. Cycles of Power is dedicated to this vision. To paraphrase Wordsworth, may we all,

"Come forth into the light of things  
Let (our) nature be our teacher."

Pam Levin

September, 1988

## **Praise for Cycles**

“Pam Levin’s leading-edge work is the foundation for Homecoming’s Inner Child material. She provides the most advanced effective and compassionate structure available for Inner Child healing.” John Bradshaw

“We use this material for the Parent-Child Resource Centre, which offers women a community of support that includes workshops on parenting and topics of interest to women...” Program Coordinator for Salvation Army Family Services, Ontario, Canada

“This material is invaluable in my work...” drug abuse counselor, New York

“I’m researching how to apply this information to working with mentally handicapped adults for my degree at the University of Frankfurt. “ Health professional, Griesheim Germany

“Now that I know I’m not **supposed** to outgrow what I needed as a child, I can finally feel normal!” Graphics Designer, California

“I didn’t realize there were stages in parenting as well as in the children being raised, and especially that they are the same stages! Fantastic! My parenting skills have now improved and I’m also much more relaxed. Thank you.” Parent, Seattle, WA.

“...a joy to read and reread this marvelous book.” Editor, Child Care Resources, Ohio.

“My therapist gave me this information two years ago, and it still brings insights.” Client, Batavia, New York

“I found your words very inspiring, and although new concepts to me, very familiar. What I’d been feeling inside was put into words. Thank you.” Twenty-year-old first-time mother, 8 months pregnant

“People in retirement communities love Cycles of Power. They intuitively understand the childhood of old age, and use the tools to go ahead and do what they need to do, to meet their needs and separate from their families at the end of life.” Geriatric counselor, Scottsdale, Arizona.

“Please send two more books. The first one was bought at a conference in Montreal.

I still hear powerful messages from it and want to share its value with family.”  
Therapist, Duluth, Mn.

“I am a movement therapist and use this material to strengthen cognitive understanding and skills in the area of development.” Massage practitioner, Clinton WA.

“This is a new bible to me... please send a few more copies, one of which is for my brother’s birthday...” Reader, Victoria, B.C.

“I read this book for myself. Now I’m going to teach it to my psychology class.”  
Reader, Malibu, California

“I am in Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous and have been in Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families, Alakid and Overeaters Anonymous. Your book told me what I was covering with all these addictions.” Reader, Minnesota

“I learned so much after reading Cycles of Power, including that I have more work to complete and how not to repeat the problems I have with my daughter. Thanks so much.” Reader, Baton Rouge, LA

“I graduated from university with an A average in Psychology and Philosophy and a minor in Drama. With all that mind work, I didn’t learn a thing. My [Inner] child was searching for me. You gave me the key. I have begun to open some doors. My heart is full. My child smiles and cries. I exist. Thank you.” Reader, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

“Thank you... such spot-on advice! It works like a charm.” Mother, Orinda, Ca.

“Your book was the perfect healing tool following my divorce. I only wish I’d known before.” Reader, Illinois

“I want to use this information in a class I’m teaching for codependents and adult children of dysfunctional families, and later in a class for nurses, and also on health, healing and wholeness.” R.N., Kansas City, MO.

“We are writing for permission to use this material in our book on training psychotherapists...” Coauthors, London, England

“Clearly, the Divine Mother light shines on through you and this material. “ RN

supervisor, Oakland, CA

“I am using this material for a research paper required for my Psychology of Family course.” Advanced degree student, Mill Valley, Ca.

“I had trouble getting your books at the school library because, apparently they are always checked out...” student, Marin Ca.

“Can you refer me to a Masters’ or PhD program based on this information? My career goal is to apply this material to working with parents and children in both educational and therapeutic settings...” University student and mother, Kronberg, Germany

“I use this material in my work with ACA’s and with victims of sexual abuse because they are totally ignorant of what good parents do. It has a wonderful, “melting effect” with them.” Clinical Psychologist, Taylor, Missouri

“A solid book, appealing thesis, absorbing case studies. Rings in my ears.” Reader, San Francisco, Ca.

“Cycles is one of two books that are required reading in my training groups. Southeast Institute President, Chapel Hill, N.C.

“This is an incredible resource... for individuals and groups.’ Editor, Common Ground of Hawaii.

“... emphasizes our need for the right environment when we repeat the stages.” Parent educator, Minnesota

“... a powerful book.” Faculty member, Bank Street College, New York.

“I read it like a novel... packed with information and yet fun to read.” President, Educators Unlimited, Minnesota

“... an exciting addition to the literature... can be read at different depths... reveals a philosophic insistence that hope is always alive and a better life is possible for each human being.” Author and founder of Mothers, Fathers and Others Who Care About Children.

“I’ve not found any material written that makes such clear distinctions between the

current developmental tasks of adult life and unfinished business from previous stages.” Supervisor of Graduate Programs in Buddhist Psychology, Naropa University.

“Cycles offers parents of mentally retarded children ways to understand and apply normal stages to their offspring as they attain comparable mental ages.” Director, Timpany Center for Special Education, Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, California

“Brain injured people go back to ground zero, a prenatal state. Cycles describes how to take them through the stages of childhood so they can redevelop. This book is basic; it’s the bottom line and should be used as key material for all the human services people, for in-service training and in medical schools.” Therapist for brain-injured people, Kansas City, Mo.

“As a classroom teacher, Cycles provides me with concrete ways to support and build self-esteem in my students.” Teacher, San Antonio, Texas.

“I am going to suggest this as a must for my students.” University Psychology instructor, Ontario, Canada

“Superb information, excellent presentation, full of insights.” District Services Dept., Santa Clara County Schools, Ca..