



WHEN LIFE BREAKS THROUGH

The Dynamics of PRH Helping Relationships

A collective work realized by PRH-International

Introduction

The PRH approach to personal growth is primarily a journey of self-knowledge and of taking charge of one's life in order to become who one truly is, to know for what purpose one was created, and in order to give meaning to one's life.

André Rochais

Our book is written for ordinary people. We want it to be accessible to a wide range of readers. At the conceptual level, our approach may seem complex, but experience has shown us that, for most people, putting it into practice is quite simple. Our approach was built on observations of the inner realities of everyday life. Thus, we have decided to present it in the same fashion, that is, through the description and analysis of growth journeys of ordinary people. The step by step process is written in a simple style consistent with our approach.

Our approach is founded upon a positive view of the person. This view is based on our experience with a variety of people and has been tested by our daily observations in the course of working with them. After several years of observation, we came to the conclusion that *each person has a deep-seated life energy that drives him or her to become who he or she truly is*. Events or the behaviour of others can interfere with the normal process of growth and lead individuals away from the positive core at the heart of themselves, but these negative effects can be reversed. It is possible for persons to free themselves from these negative effects through a healing journey, to discover their positive core and to attain greater harmony within themselves and in their relationships.

From what we have expressed, it is possible to perceive the three fundamental focal points of our approach: growth, healing and restoration of inner order. We have created specific tools to help persons grow along each of these focal points.¹

TRANSFORMING GROWTH JOURNEYS

Personal growth in PRH takes into account the individual circumstances of persons. We respect and encourage their freedom of choice and give priority to the aspirations of the “being”, the positive core at the heart of persons. In our opinion, growing and living to the fullest is not some fixed state to attain. Rather, it is an inner dynamism which must be consciously and gradually sought after each day of our lives. Similarly, *the being* is not a philosophical principle reserved for an elite few. It is palpable and can be experienced in our inner depths. By immersing ourselves in

¹ During his lifetime, André Rochais created these tools in collaboration with his colleagues. Since his death in 1990, other members of PRH have taken responsibility for the development of pedagogical tools.

the life force present at the being level, we discover direction and meaning in our lives. The stages in a PRH growth journey do not result in an idealized state of happiness. They serve as markers for growth, healing and restoration of inner order. The stages attest to the possibility of real and lasting changes in relationships: with ourselves, with others, with our environment, and with the spiritual dimension of our lives.

GROWTH IS OBSERVABLE

The most effective way to discover the PRH approach is to experience it firsthand. In stating this, we shed some light onto our psychopedagogical approach. However, in order to demonstrate to a broader number of people the extent to which personal change can be brought about by our approach, we present the growth journeys of several persons. In most chapters, we explore in-depth the journeys of one or two of these persons rather than a more superficial overview of several people's experiences. During the course of writing this book, we kept in mind our goal of demonstrating what our approach can do both *within* and *for* persons. This goal influenced the content and presentation of the book.

PRH ANALYSIS IS THE KEY

PRH Analysis is the keystone of our approach. Our method of analysis sheds light on inner life and leads us to discover new things about ourselves in order to live more fulfilling lives. Simply put, *PRH Analysis* is done in three stages: naming what is experienced inside and needs to be analyzed; describing or exploring the various

elements of what is experienced; and entering more deeply into it to discover its underlying content. When we analysed the growth journeys of the persons presented in this book, we used the same three stages process. In each chapter, we *identify* what the persons are experiencing, we *describe* the ongoing work and we *enter* more deeply into key findings emerging from that work. These various analyses of growth journeys illustrate either particular stages of the journey or the journey in its entirety.

EXPERIENCED PRH EDUCATORS

When Life Breaks Through is the collective effort of several professional PRH Educators. Each author has more than twenty five years of experience with the PRH method. Together, they have facilitated countless workshops and have helped hundreds of persons. At the time of publication, they were all working actively as PRH helpers. This book is a result of the authors' in-depth understanding of human growth, of their professional experience in PRH Helping Relationship and PRH Analysis, and of their own growth journeys with the PRH method.

Each chapter has a theme based on the experience of a particular helper. The helper presents either selected elements or the entire trajectory of the growth journey of one or more persons. The book was written in a collegial, rather than a collective, way.² Each author prepared a draft of her analysis of the persons' journey. This draft was presented to the other authors and reviewed through the lens of their common experience. As a result, *each chapter was ultimately accepted by every author as an accurate illustration of their shared professional experience.*

² In a collective work, the authors may present different and possibly contradictory viewpoints. The authors of a collegial work all agree with the entire contents.

ACCOMPANYING THE GROWTH JOURNEY

As you will see right from the first chapter, we present a variety of growth journeys. However, we have chosen to focus mainly on the experience of persons engaged in long-term journeys involving work on the three focal points of our approach (growth, healing and restoration of inner order). At different stages of their journey, one of these focal points may predominate, but our approach is based on the integration of all three. They are complementary.³ The analysis of such growth journeys highlights the inter-relationship of our pedagogical tools and the benefits of using them in an integrated way. *These growth journeys also allow us to illustrate that change is possible at a very deep level and to share the findings of our many years of experience and observations on this subject.* These growth journeys demonstrate that it is both realistic and possible for “ordinary” people to gain access to their inner richness, and to the most deeply buried layers of their past, in a conscious, purposeful way.

Most of our discoveries about human growth are based on a large number of observations made in the course of our work in helping relationship. However, the majority of persons using the PRH approach for their personal growth do not limit themselves to individual helping relationship. *We do not encourage them to do so because PRH is not a therapeutic approach, but rather a tool for increasing deep self-knowledge at all levels of the person.* On the other hand, to examine a PRH growth journey without taking into account the work done in helping relationship would not accurately reflect the experience of most people with whom

³ This is why we often use the expression growth, healing and restoration of inner order as a unit. However, during the course of a growth journey, persons may decide to focus on the axis that corresponds best to their needs at the time.

we work. Consequently, even though the persons in this book used other PRH growth tools, our focus is on their journey in the course of helping relationship.⁴ It is through the analysis of their personal history and the work done with their PRH helper that the richness of the human heart and its life force can be seen.

PERSONS: THE HEART OF OUR BOOK

Like most people using the PRH tools, the men and women whom we present in the following chapters have undertaken a growth journey and progressed as their aspirations and needs emerged. Their psychological health at the beginning of their journey was within the norm of the general population. All of these persons functioned adequately in their social and professional worlds.

These men and women remained in charge of their own growth, which is consistent with our pedagogical approach. Without their consensual cooperation, this book would not have been possible. In full collaboration with their helper, each person analyzed their own journey. They devoted many hours to individual interviews and to reading drafts. They responded to the sections of the chapter that concerned them. They reacted, brought nuances and completed certain aspects of their experience. They also gave us permission to use several of their journal entries from different stages of their growth journey. *The whole PRH method of growth focuses on helping persons to analyze their own experience.* This was also true for our approach to this book.

⁴ Some changes can only happen in a specific relational context such as the one developed in helping relationship. In some cases, only there can persons learn to become comfortable enough with their inner life to be able to analyze and understand essential aspects of it. Without help to explore these aspects in a trustworthy environment, they would remain inaccessible to the persons.

We have taken different measures to protect the identity of the persons in order to respect their privacy. The name of the helper whom they worked with has not been associated with their specific chapter. Furthermore, the identity of the author of a particular chapter is known only to the writing team. In no case was the identity of a person on a growth journey known by the other members of that team. We have of course omitted any details or facts about their personal lives that would allow the persons to be identified by their family, friends or colleagues. Particulars such as duration of the growth journey, age, dates of events and professional activities have also been purposefully omitted.

OUR GUIDELINES WHEN WRITING THIS BOOK

Our option to demonstrate what the PRH approach can *accomplish in and for* persons led us to methodological choices. As a result, in order to understand our perspective, it is important to state what this book is not.

This book is not a collection of extraordinary personal testimonies.

We have not brought together a collection of opinions, pros and cons, about our approach. We have stayed away from personal accounts that belong to the realm of the anecdotal or the extraordinary. Even though each personal journey is unique and each story is special, what is described in this book can be generalized. We are not attempting to highlight spectacular results from using our approach. Our aim is to show the various aspects of the person that can be reached by our approach and the depth of transformation it enables.

This book is not a pedagogical treatise. We do not discuss all aspects of our explanatory framework⁵ in order to show how they apply in a personal growth journey or how we use them in particular situations. Our goal is not to illustrate our tools for growth by showing how persons use them. We take the opposite approach: analyzing a few growth journeys to shed light on the tools that were used and how the tools proved helpful to the persons involved.

This book is not a counselling guide. Our approach does not proceed from theory to practice. We do not present a list of techniques to be applied in various circumstances. We do not present a ready-made approach applicable to all persons at various stages of their growth. This book is not a description of "model-type" growth journeys. The uniqueness of each person's journey does not lend itself to this kind of generalization. There are, however, some aspects that are common to most journeys, and these appear in the various chapters.

The preceding expresses what our book is not. However, there is one last aspect to underline in order to understand what we mean by a PRH growth journey.

ORDINARY PEOPLE

Persons who achieve more harmony, and who have more satisfying relationships, do not live in a kind of nirvana that is out of touch with real life. As you read about the growth journeys in this book, and see the benefits derived from their work on themselves, you may be tempted to idealize the persons' lives and their journeys. It

⁵ By explanatory framework we mean the totality of our observations about persons and their growth processes. It is explained in detail in the book *Persons and Their Growth: The Anthropological and Psychological Foundations of PRH Education*, PRH-International, Poitiers (France), 2nd edition, 1997, 292 pages.

is true that these persons now feel happier. They have greater self-awareness. They react in constructive ways to situations that often disturbed them in the past. They have greater emotional maturity. They are more conscious of their choices. They are engaged in work or occupations that better match their aspirations. They progressed steadily on a long and sometimes painful road. But, *these persons are neither perfect nor superhuman*, and neither are their helpers.

Our approach is not a magic potion that increases tenfold the personal potential or instantly heals every bit of human suffering. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the growth journey with our method is a path of inner transformation that requires a great deal of commitment, determination, courage and perseverance. The road is not easy but we have the experience and the unwavering certitude that it does lead people, beyond and despite all that has wounded them, to the heart of the most noble riches in the human being.

