

# Corporate Bigwig-Turned-Guru Emits Good Vibrations

Students learn about spirituality's impact on the body and soul.

by Albert Lerner, M.D.

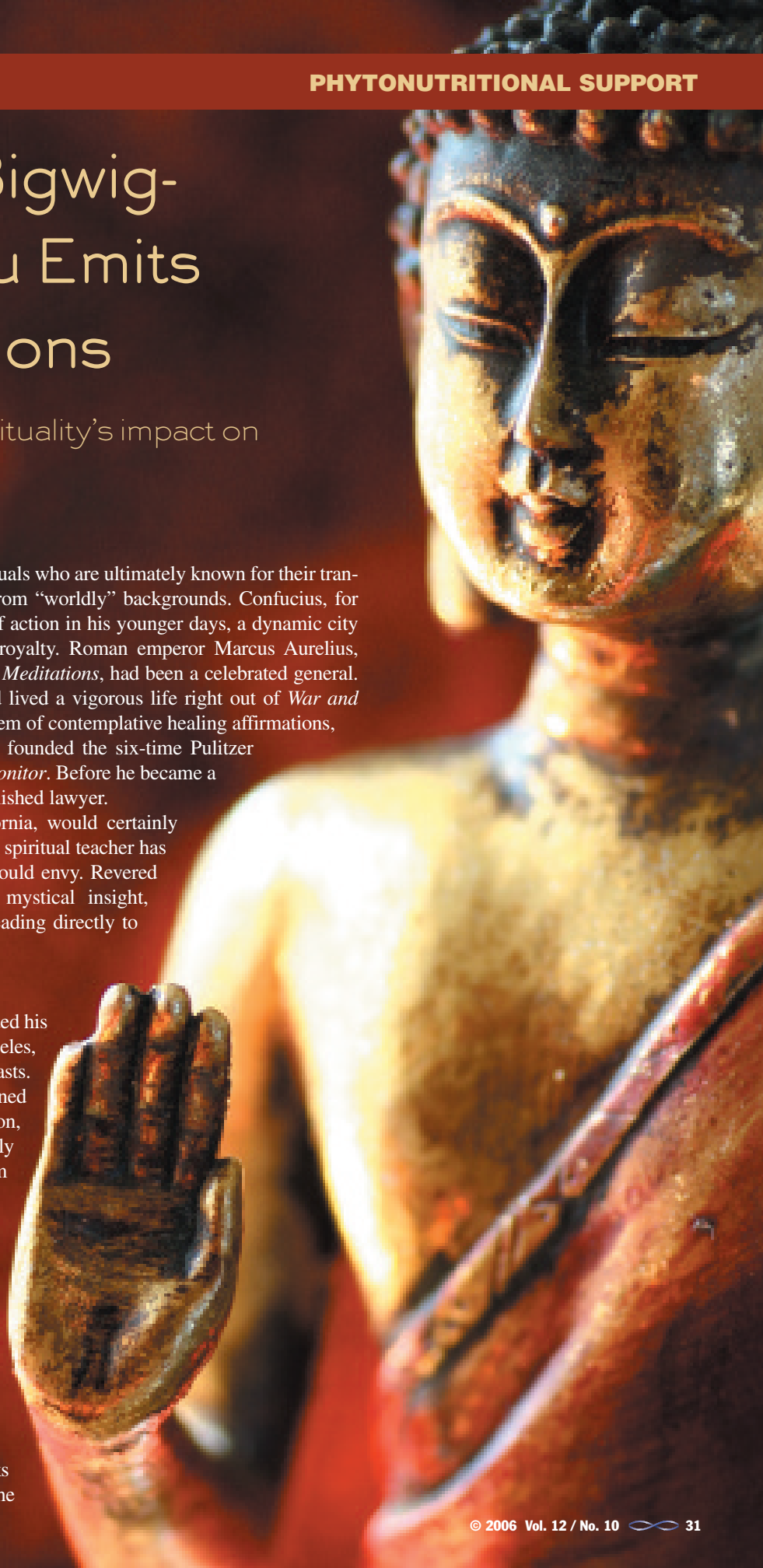
It is often the case that individuals who are ultimately known for their transcendental wisdom come from “worldly” backgrounds. Confucius, for example, had been a man of action in his younger days, a dynamic city magistrate and advisor to royalty. Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, before he wrote his famous *Meditations*, had been a celebrated general. Leo Tolstoy, a mystic in his later years, had lived a vigorous life right out of *War and Peace*. Mary Baker Eddy, known for her system of contemplative healing affirmations, was also a busy news-paperwoman, having founded the six-time Pulitzer Prize-winning daily the *Christian Science Monitor*. Before he became a spiritual leader, Gandhi had been an accomplished lawyer.

Brooks Barton of Santa Monica, California, would certainly blush at the comparisons, but the 61-year-old spiritual teacher has had a career that, quite frankly, any CEO would envy. Revered today by his numerous students for his mystical insight, Brooks's early résumé suggests an ascent leading directly to the top of the corporate ladder.

## Fast Track

The son of a successful surgeon who divided his time between offices in Boston and Los Angeles, Brooks grew up on both the East and West Coasts. Thanks to a propitious introduction, he interned for a United States Congressman in Washington, D.C., at the tender age of 19. Brooks promptly enlisted in the armed forces during the Vietnam conflict and, perhaps because of his political acumen, found himself assigned to army intelligence. He was sent to the army's famous foreign-language school in Monterey, California, to learn Turkish. At only 21 years of age, he became the principal liaison between the Turkish general staff and the Pentagon. “I got quite an education on the inner workings of American and international politics,” recalls the smiling silver-haired spiritual guide.

Out of the army two years later, Brooks moved to Los Angeles and enrolled in the



business college at the University of Southern California. With his master's degree in business administration and a proven knack for diplomacy, he soon became the managing publisher of the *Hollywood Reporter*. A couple of years later, longing for another challenge, he entered the world of finance and was duly appointed vice president of Home Savings of America, the largest savings and loan organization in the nation at that time. Still in his early 30s, he joined mega-realtor Coldwell Banker, eventually becoming first vice president of its international division, overseeing major mergers and acquisitions in London, Paris, and New York.

Whew! Not bad for a guy who, today, views success in very different terms. At 38, Brooks would walk away from his meteoric career path—not because he could go no higher, but because he had a vision.

### The Road Less Traveled

“I was at a dinner party,” the soft-spoken philosopher recalls, “when I suddenly felt very tired. I went home and collapsed into bed. Sometime during the night, I had an incredibly vivid dream vision that told me I had to change my life—or be dead of a heart attack within five years—because I wasn't doing what I came here to do. And that's when I decided to become a teacher.”

Brooks already had an extensive knowledge of Eastern philosophy—a passion of his that was mostly unknown to his business colleagues. Now, he dove even deeper into the waters of mystical revelation. He studied with East Indian yogis, Tibetan gurus, and shamans from Brazil and Peru, all the while reading everything he could get his hands on. Before long, his interpretations of the universal spiritual experience attracted the attention of a psychologist who wanted Brooks to give workshops to professors of psychology and psychiatry in San Francisco and Berkeley. He was being asked, in effect, to teach the teachers.

“I took the job and got along well with the Ph.D.s and M.D.s in the class. Basically, I shared with them what I had learned about psychology and its interaction with the human body. My theme was this: If a person is willing to take

responsibility for reality, that reality can change.”

### Eye-Opener

To illustrate his point, Brooks shared a reality-changing experience of his own. Since childhood, he had had to wear thick glasses for nearsightedness. Before the days of laser eye-corrective surgery, he was told he would wear spectacles for life; after all, eyesight rarely improves with age. Unwilling to accept the verdict of contemporary ophthalmology, Brooks began to focus carefully—not on clinical eye charts—but deep within himself.

“When I took off my eyeglasses,” the handsome educator explains, “I saw fuzziness. So I decided to look deeper into the fuzziness, and I saw trauma from my childhood. I was startled because it was an experience I had completely forgotten. So I chose to relive that trauma, and all of its discomfort, over a number of introspective sessions. And a strange thing happened: The more I witnessed that childhood experience from the vantage point of the present—allowing the pain to make itself known—the better my eyesight became. I haven't worn glasses at all for 40 years.”

Brooks explained to his learned students—doctors and professors all—that early traumatic experiences can

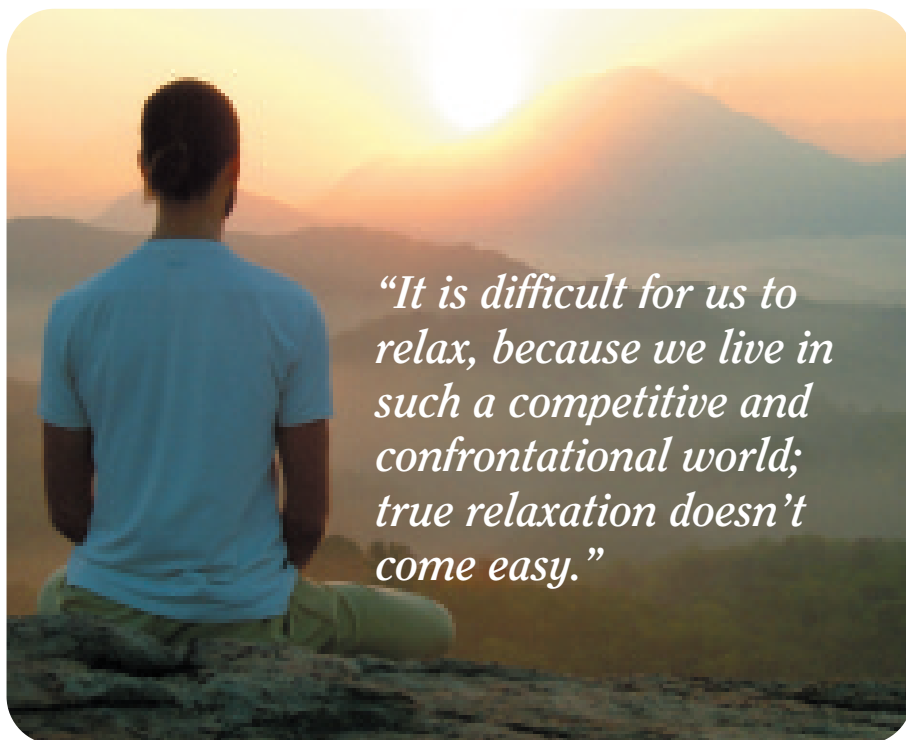
manifest themselves as conditions normally thought to have exclusively physical causes. “As a child, I reacted to that negative experience in a way that closed down my vision,” he told the class. “As an adult, I decided to look at that experience as an educational opportunity, and when I did, my vision cleared.”

### The Journey Inward

If such a deliberate introspective process could help his eyesight, Brooks wondered if it could also be applied to other conditions in his life that were perhaps influenced by childhood trauma. His mind raced with possibilities. Was it possible that some of his hidden anxiety came not only from his own experiences, but from those of his ancestors as well?

The prospect of inherited ancestral trauma did not seem unreasonable to him. After all, if the shadow of a hawk passed over a clutch of newborn chicks, they would run for cover, never having actually seen a hawk before in their young lives. Could this instinctive behavior be the result of a negative species experience encoded into the DNA and passed on to successive generations?

“I believe that ancestral trauma can be transmitted, oftentimes for thousands of years,” Brooks says. “I'm convinced these ancient 'memories' are locked up inside



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of us, encoded into our DNA, and that it might be a good idea to reckon with some of them before the body responds in a negative way, just as my body reacted to a childhood trauma by metaphorically shutting its eyes."

Brooks believes that by confronting these anxiety-producing memories and allowing them to unfold harmlessly, an individual can negate their destructive power. "I go inside these places and feel the trauma as part of my body's history. I take responsibility for healing that experience so that it is no longer dominant in my body's history and so the anxiety can dissipate and leave my body. I believe a person can reverse both childhood and genetic trauma completely out of his or her body so that they can become independent of the orientation of the past. In other words," he smiles, "they can become free to live and to enjoy life in the present."

### **Laying Down Your Sword and Shield**

The trick to liberating pent-up emotional anxiety, Brooks maintains, is relaxation—not the kind of relaxation we feel lying on a hammock in the backyard (although that's a good start!), but an unbending of the psychic backbone, so to speak. A loosening of somatic tension all the way down to the cellular level. And that kind of letting go is easier said than done.

"It is difficult for us to relax," the easy-going professor observes, "because we live in such a competitive and confrontational world. All of our lives, we have been conditioned to be constantly on guard; true relaxation doesn't come easy."

Brooks's observation might even apply to the health-conscious among us. After all, much of what we read is presented to us in confrontational terms. The skin is described—and quite correctly so—as the body's "first line of defense." We are taught, truly enough, that our immune system protects us from "invading" bacteria and that our white blood cells "fight" infection. If we are wise, we will eat nutritiously to "guard" against "challenges" to our health and take supplements to "bolster" our natural "resistance." We sagely wear appropriate clothing to "shield" ourselves against the

harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun, just as we exercise to maintain our "strength." Is it any wonder we often think of our bodies as fortresses?

Of course, healthy bodies are fortresses against challenges to our well-being—and, if we're smart, we'll support them with good nutrition, dietary supplementation, and exercise. But Brooks believes that a fortress mentality applied to every other aspect of our lives may very well inhibit us from the kind of relaxation he is advising.

He dramatizes the process like this: "What's the cause of your condition? Why are you not at ease? Let's go find out; let's go back and follow it through. Let's go way back to the origin of what's making your body close down. Oh, I see: That's when your daddy beat you with a belt when you were a child, and you never got over that. Feel the pain, forgive your daddy, allow yourself to love him and yourself right now. Your body is beginning to relax, isn't it? There's more light in your body, more energy."

The relationship between relaxation and renewed energy is evident in Brooks's own dynamic lifestyle. Although he teaches in Los Angeles, London, New York, and Tokyo, he moves through time zones without fatigue, his body clock in tune with a kind of universal tempo. He doesn't require a great deal of sleep (perhaps because he knows how to relax!), and he watches his diet—though perhaps for different reasons than most dieters. "We eat," he explains, "to reestablish our link with nature. When we have a meal, for example, of fresh fruits and vegetables and wild fish, we feel connected to Mother Nature, and our bodies feel grounded. On the other hand, when we eat fast food from the corner drive-through, we feel separated from nature, alone with our burps and heartburn. Nutrition, then, is an experience that enhances who we are."

### **Good Karma**

During his studies, Brooks has met spiritual leaders who could, with a simple word of greeting, instantly inspire reciprocal feelings of trust, safety, and openness. Today, he gives his students that same sense of security. His manner is so calm, so friendly, and so cognizant of



*"When we have a meal of fresh fruits and vegetables and wild fish, we feel connected to Mother Nature and our bodies feel grounded."*

one's inner beauty that it is a distinct pleasure to simply be the recipient of his "hello." Just talking to Brooks about the weather evokes an inexplicable thrill of communion—as if the commonplace words being said carry meanings well beyond the topic of conversation. It is no wonder that so many of his students count themselves fortunate to be in the same room with this wise and caring human being.

Sometimes his students express their gratitude intuitively. About 13 years ago, one of Brooks's pupils approached him after class and exclaimed, "I have just met your next wife!"

"I beg your pardon?" asked Brooks. The student went on to explain that he had met a lady who was so obviously Brooks's soul mate that they were destined to meet in a kind of karmic rendezvous, even without his introduction; it was simply a question of sooner or later.

In that case, thought Brooks, it might as well be sooner.

Today, Brooks and his lovely wife, Alison, offer seminars on the Psychology of God, Feminine Leadership, the Life of Choice, the Economics of God, Sacred Marriage, and a number of other thought-provoking and life-changing themes. Their program is called Art of God ([www.artofgod.org](http://www.artofgod.org)), in tribute to all the great spiritual teachers throughout human history who were, in word, manner, and deed, "artists of God."



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