



PhenomeNEWS Magazine Book Review (Enlarged Text)

BOOK TALK:

The Real Me

by Gayl Woityra

In "Book Talk" we often discuss books written by noted authors. It's a pleasure, however, to report on a book by a local author, one in *phenomeNEWS*' back yard, so to speak. This month we shall discuss ***The Real Me: Awakening Your True Self*** by Sandra Agazzi Chimenti (Creative Books and Music, L.L.C., Rochester Hills MI 2007). Sandra Chimenti, M.Ed., is an author, musician, parent, and educator. Her background in education clearly manifests in her book.

This book is quite different from those we have discussed in recent months, and yet it clearly relates to those works about spiritual transformation in that it contains the same themes, featuring "Seven Aspects of Spiritual Awakening," one of its subtitles. It differs, however, in that its focus is on process rather than detailed textual content. What I mean by that is that it isn't a book that you would primarily read from cover to cover. Rather, it is a work that guides your awakening, step by step. In a sense, it is an inspirational, educational, interactive workbook.

The fact that I used the word *workbook* must not suggest that Chimenti's book is a dry or boring, fill-in-the-blanks workbook. Quite the contrary! This book is lovely to look at, its many pages displaying a variety of print (fonts) that result in an artistic book. Each page of "Positive Affirmations for Empowering Your Life" could serve as daily inspirations.

As an educator, I love a good lesson plan. Chimenti demonstrates her background in education with her creative and clear organization of the topics and development in her book. The interactive "workbook" effect is not overdone, but rather is organized to encourage the reader to respond personally to each section of the book.

The author begins with a letter to the reader, urging the reader to "imagine these are your own inspirational words written to yourself." This makes sense because the major part of the book focuses on "Seven Aspects of Spiritual Awakening," with each of the seven aspects followed by a dozen to 40 pages of positive affirmations. Affirmations are always stated in the first person ["I"]; so indeed, they are words you could say to yourself.

In ***The Real Me***, Sandra Chimenti combines a philosophical / psychological / educational approach to her work. Readers will find many echoes of contemporary spiritual themes along with a focus on recognizing and processing emotions. Chimenti emphasizes that "your thoughts create your reality," while she also says, "to create happiness and success, you must first process your current emotions." I especially related to her point of "responding" to a situation instead of "reacting." This is a very important insight for us all.

In a brief discussion called "Communication Guide," the author notes several important points, such as how important it is to "calm down." Throughout the book she encourages journaling--writing down your feelings, experience, situations, and then "letting it go." Again, at the end of each segment in the book, readers will find a place to respond to the previous pages.

The primary section of the book presents the "Seven Aspects of Spiritual Awakening." We will mention each of the seven and highlight one or more insights from the pages of positive affirmations that create that section. Chimenti's point is: "Our spiritual journey is a constant evolution toward a higher understanding of who we are and of our connection to our Divine Creator." Although she has "numbered" the aspects "for convenience," they "usually do not follow any particular order in our life." In fact, most of them are operative in our lives simultaneously. She names the first aspect, "Divine Creation." This aspect provides the opportunity for us to find our relationship to God, our Divine Source. "As we awaken to our Divine Source and remember we are divine creations, we become empowered to love who we truly are."

Aspect Two is "Communication" and it is filled with wise advice for everyday life. Chimenti notes in an affirmation, "When someone says something negative, I now remember it is not up to me to change the person." From my experience, nearly everyone needs to work on that issue. Another affirmation related to that one is: "It is not up to me to change or shift someone else's beliefs. . . . We are all on our own journey toward enlightenment." Another insight (and affirmation) to ponder is: "What I believe is what I will see. My beliefs influence my life."

Aspect Three is "Apology and Forgiveness." These pages emphasize how important it is to honor and respect oneself as well as others. "I am doing my best with what I know at each moment and so are others." Like Eckhart Tolle, author of ***The Power of Now*** and ***A New Earth***, Chimenti honors the present moment: "Now is the only moment that is truly here." Like Tolle and others, the author also notes the problem of resistance: "What I resist . . . persists. What I focus on . . . continues." More great insights via affirmations are: "I now leave *blame, criticism, and judgment* behind. . . . I accept responsibility for my own thoughts and actions."

Aspect Four covers “Gratitude and Praise.” Clearly, as Chimenti writes, “Gratitude changes my attitude.” One affirmation particularly resonates with my own life experience and what I have observed in others. “All my feelings and emotions, whether positive or negative, are part of a life lesson I may need to experience. Once the theme of the lesson is learned, it will feel more like a blessing.”

Aspect Five involves “Loving Choices.” Here we become more aware of how we make many choices throughout each day. One affirmation notes: “Sometimes I choose to see the positive, sometimes the negative. The one I ‘feed’ is the one that grows.” Another point that most of us need to constantly remind ourselves about is: “The only one I can truly improve is myself. . . . I now let go of any expectations or hope of changing others.” Now that is realistic! I especially liked the affirmation that says: “God sends us each other to support and guide one another toward happiness.” The lesson here is clear. We are not here to “control” others in our lives, but to love and support them.

Aspect Six encourages “Flowing in Life.” This part reminds me of the Zen idea of allowing life situations, experiences, and emotions to flow through you, rather than catching and holding onto them. “I empower myself by embracing life.” A practical affirmation here is, “When I feel stressed, I now stop whatever I am doing and I BREATHE.” Also it is important to remember “What I am experiencing may be temporary,” and “All of life goes in cycles.”

The final and Seventh Aspect encourages “Sharing Gifts and Talents.” Some insights here begin with “Effort is different from struggle.” For all the perfectionists out there, here’s a big one: “I now let go of my need to be perfect according to the world’s standards.” Why so? The author reminds us: “We are already God’s perfect creations,” and “God gives all of us gifts to share with one another.”

A note before we leave this section. This book is a horizontal, rather than a vertical publication. That is, it is 8 inches wide and 6 inches high. Therefore, each page, 6 x 8, is like a large note card. Each page of affirmations in each aspect section may carry one or several affirmations. Readers could prop up a favorite page as a reminder for that day. Another option for those with copiers would be to copy a favorite page or two to paste up on the bathroom mirror or the refrigerator as reminders. This book is clearly one that encourages creative reader participation.

The concluding section of the book contains pages that provide interesting exercises, experiments, meditations, writing assignments, ceremonies, prayers, positive affirmation creation guides, all of which encourage readers to participate as fully as possible in awakening their true selves. One of my favorite exercises here is one called “Mirror, Mirror,” an exercise that involves interacting with others. Among the insights here is the author’s point that “When people do things that bother us, it is our issue as well as theirs.” In other words, what life brings us, and what other people say or do, are all neutral events unless we allow ourselves to be affected by the situation, and we react—usually emotionally and without forethought. This is what happens when we, or others, take things personally. We have, instead, the choice to respond when that is appropriate, but the problematic issue only becomes ours when we “react” to it. The very positive side is that “since we are all connected on a higher level, we affect one another with our peacefulness.” That is a point to ponder, indeed. Another exercise emphasizes this very point. Chimenti says, “When you are at peace within yourself, you are able to share your peace with others.” A further exercise helps us process the insight that “Whatever you believe inside will show up in your world in some way. So, as you change your thoughts, you change what you see in your life.”

The author’s excellent organization also includes a fine list of recommended additional authors and books, plus a list of resources and services. An index of all the positive affirmations and statements in the book is another welcome resource.

Indeed, *The Real Me* is a charming work, filled with inspiring wisdom and insights. It is easy to follow and could be perfect for summer musings. And what is “The Real Me”? Chimenti encourages us to say, “I am filled with love . . . I am love . . . this is the Real Me.” Sandra Chimenti’s website is: www.CreativeBooksandMusic.com

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