



➔ Spring Awakening
artwork by Darcy Simonson



CHOOSING HAPPINESS

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THE GRATEFUL GODDESS

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Spring has finally awakened, and like a hidden geyser trapped too long under a blanket of ice, so has our joy. We really enjoy living in the North Country, as each of the changing seasons brings an opportunity to visit another aspect of ourselves. In summer, we thrive along with the grasses and the crops. There is a sense of peace and security that comes with the growing season. In autumn, we harvest the fruits of summer, bathe in a sea of blazing color, and marvel at the abundance of both. During winter, dormancy dominates the Dakotas and we have an opportunity to retreat into ourselves. Patience, serenity, and anticipation guide us through this long and colorless season.

Then comes Spring; a time when bitter cold bows to new life, and the odorless air becomes fragrant with honeysuckle and fruit blossoms, the sweet baby's breath of the Cre-

ator. Children's laughter, bounding bunnies, and busy birds join in the dance of new life. It is an awakening of the earth and the spirit, and a sense of profound gratitude fuels our happiness.

Spring always has that affect on us, a rebirth of sorts, but is it possible to maintain this awakened state of happiness throughout each of the changing seasons? Can we keep the joy of spring flowing through complaints of too much heat in the summer, too much wind in the fall, too much snow in the winter? We think so, provided we consciously choose to find purpose and beauty in what we are given, and stop blaming outside circumstances for our unhappiness.

Weather, people, work, money (outside circumstances) are often scapegoats for our unhappiness, and the means by which we feel justified to complain, blame, and live as

victims. In this mind-set we are riding the roller coaster of unconscious thought and tend to be reactive, rather than proactive, and victims rather than creators. So, what does it take to replace blame with bliss, or complaint with compassion and creation, and live as victors rather than victims in our own lives? It takes a willingness to look within ourselves at the actual cause of our unhappiness. It takes a choice to become conscious of the thoughts we think and take responsibility for our lives.

Blame and complaint are blinders we unconsciously wear that keep us from experiencing joy. But just as we put the blinders on, we can also take them off. The French novelist, Colette, wrote, "What a wonderful life I've had! I only wish I'd realized it sooner." Unconscious thinking essentially means, you are oblivious to the 60,000 thoughts that stream

though your mind everyday; your mind is on auto-pilot, and you're just along for the ride. In contrast, when one is living consciously, they become the pilot of their thoughts, and consequently the creators of their lives.

How does one begin to live consciously? By becoming aware that we are not our thoughts. It is when we step back and recognize that the chatty, often negative voice in our heads is not who we are, and become an observer of those thoughts rather than a puppet to them, that we begin living consciously. It is from this realization and correction that we begin to take charge of our happiness.

Next time we find ourselves complaining, blaming, fearful or worried, we can choose to stop and assess how we are feeling. If it doesn't feel good (and it never does) it is our bodies way of prompting us to re-

lease and replace negative thoughts with gratitude, love, forgiveness, and other high-vibrational thoughts. For those of us with an ingrained habit of negative thinking, it might feel uncomfortable to shift from the negative to the positive at first, but every time we catch ourselves thinking unconsciously, we are on the path to conscious living and consequent bliss.

No matter what the weather, the balance in our checkbooks, or the temperament of others, when we remember who we really are and leave the mind-chatter to the squirrels, we can drink from the well of peace and love that dwells within us; and that's when everyday will feel like a spring awakening.

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