

She has found what she calls her "higher self." ... teaching her techniques to others. "This," she says, "is my role this time around."

BY LAURIE NADEL



A Peek Inside Her Psychic Seminars

Over the past 15 years I have been finding out how multidimensional we are," says Shirley MacLaine, smiling, her luminous cap of copper hair framing her face. "We are not basically physical. We are not basically mental. We are multidimensional."

Her audience of 1,000 sits in the darkened grand ballroom of a Boston hotel, their attention riveted on her every word. Dressed in a turquoise sweater and white sweat pants tucked into turquoise boots, MacLaine is standing on a small stage, bathed in soft light. Borrowing a metaphor from show business, she says, "Each of us is director, producer, writer and star. Everything that we are resides in us, including

Scenes from MacLaine's *Out on a Limb* were filmed for TV in the Peruvian Andes. Right: with writer Nadel.



the capacity to change ourselves."

This is Shirley MacLaine's latest one-woman show, a kind of metaphysical nightclub act in which she is entertainer, author and spiritual teacher. Most of the people in the audience appear to be comfortably middle-class, in their late 30's and early 40's. The majority are women.

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How to Develop Your Psychic Potential

In an exclusive interview, some weeks after the Boston seminar, Shirley MacLaine talked further with Laurie Nadel.

FC: How would you advise people who want to develop their own psychic potential?

MacLaine: Meditation is a great tool, but it's not as easy to come by as it sounds. You have to give it a lot of time. Give that as a gift to yourself. I would do yoga, breathing and exercises to help the body align itself. And go to the religious or the occult section of any large bookstore and begin reading (see list, page 73). A specialized metaphysical bookstore would have books on chakra-raising techniques. Work with those colors. Trust is the main thing, personal trust that in everybody's life there is a kind of intelligent energy at work that will empower them. The transformation starts with the self.

FC: What's the first step?

MacLaine: Taking some time every day for yourself. Deep breathing. Meditation. Visualize the chakras and respect that you have seven invisible energy centers through which you express creativity, emotion, love, intuition, etc. And be really

aware of what you put in your body—obviously, the fewer chemicals, the better.

FC: Do you now see yourself as a spokeswoman for the spiritual movement?

MacLaine: Perhaps I think because I've gone so public and

used my life as a point of identification, and yet nothing bad has happened to me. I haven't fallen off my limb.

FC: Did you find that when you started to explore the psychic realm, it took over your life?

MacLaine: No, it makes the conflict and the struggle more purposeful, more real. It doesn't take over my life—it enriches it.

SHIRLEY MACLAINE (From page 50)

They have come from around New England and around the world to hear more about the psychic experiences MacLaine claims to have had—and to have some of their own.

Since February, MacLaine has been hosting a series of two-day seminars like this one in cities around the country. More petite and much younger-looking than she appears on camera, she is a powerhouse onstage, radiating energy as she says, "We are here for a purpose: to bring something to earth and to bring something to ourselves and to others."

She has titled her seminars "Connecting With the Higher Self." And everyone, according to MacLaine, has a higher self, which she defines as "our link with that Universal Intelligence we call God." By communicating with that higher self, MacLaine believes, we can not only improve our self-understanding, we can also take a step toward developing psychic abilities.

This is an extraordinary statement from an extraordinary woman, who has been—in various professional incarnations—an Academy Award-winning actress, an outspoken feminist, a political activist and the author of a best-selling series of memoirs, the last three of which deal with her psychic experiences. In *Out on a Limb* she describes consulting with "channels"—people who, like mediums, claim to conduct messages from the spirit world. In *Dancing in the Light*, she develops her own theories of metaphysics, a branch of philosophy that seeks to explain the nature of being and reality by looking beyond the physical realm into

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the unseen. She describes consulting with one of the best-known channels in the country—a woman named J. Z. Knight, who is said to convey communications from a 35,000-year-old warrior named Ramtha, who lived in the legendary lost city of Atlantis. And she continues the saga of her spiritual development in her just-published *It's All in the Playing*.

Despite a growing acceptance of psychic phenomena, Shirley MacLaine's outspoken belief in extrasensory perception (ESP) and reincarnation have often made her the subject of ridicule. In a published cartoon, one salamander says to another salamander that in the lost city of Atlantis he was Shirley MacLaine. And during a recent Emmy Awards show on television, host David Letterman quipped that the program was being sent to Shirley MacLaine via satellite so that she would be able to see next year's award winners right now.

But ridicule, MacLaine tells her seminar audience, only forces her to be more articulate about her beliefs. "We are in a spiritual age, whether people make fun of it or not. This is my role this time around, to glean this information and share it."

Psychic powers are accessible to everybody, she maintains. People who consider themselves beginners in these matters—as three-quarters of her seminar participants say they do—have simply not "consciously developed the spiritual aspects of their personalities." Strengthening that spiritual core can bring a new serenity, MacLaine tells them—a sense of being centered and calm at all times.

Apparently more and more mainstream Americans

In spite of her strong views, MacLaine does not preach. She expounds and expands, bounding across metaphysical fields, plucking ideas as if they were flowers and offering them to her friends.

What is the "higher self"? What does it look like? After her crash course in Metaphysics 101, followed by questions and answers, MacLaine turns her audience's attention to a chart showing a line of seven colored disks running up a human spinal column and into the head. The discs represent energy centers, called *chakras* in Sanskrit. Ancient Hindus regarded the *chakras* as wheels of fire and

Says one man: "No one can express herself like Shirley. On this subject, she's like what Dr. Ruth is to sex."

believed that when these discs are in alignment, they help enable humans to connect with their higher selves.

To align the *chakras* and integrate the forces they represent, MacLaine suggests beginning with the color red at the base of the spine and visualizing each *chakra*, in turn, as a colored ball of light. As you mentally move up the spine and visualize the colors, she continues, feel what each *chakra* represents: red for grounding with earth and balance; orange, at the groin, for creativity and sexual energy; yellow, at the solar plexus, for emotions; green, at the heart, for love; blue, at the throat, for communication; indigo, at the head, for inner vision; violet, at the crown of the head, for integration with higher consciousness.

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now admit to acknowledging the existence of psychic phenomena. According to a poll conducted by sociologist-priest Andrew Greeley and the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Council, 67% of Americans said that they had experienced ESP or some other paranormal phenomenon such as telepathy (the ability to communicate mentally with another person) or clairvoyance (the ability to "see" beyond what can normally be perceived).

These findings and the strong response to her books indicated to MacLaine that the time was right for her to begin talking about her experiences with the public face-to-face. More than 600 people attended her first seminar in Virginia Beach, Virginia, last February. Word of mouth and her appearance on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* generated still more interest. The turnout in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Boston reached the 1,000 mark at each seminar. Each participant pays a \$300 fee, which does not include travel, accommodations or meals. "It's a lot of money, but it's not excessive," says a 45-year-old man who lives in the Boston area. "And no one can express herself like Shirley. On this subject, she's like what Dr. Ruth is to sex."

"I balanced out what I should charge," MacLaine says, "and I came up with \$100 for mind, \$100 for body and \$100 for spirit." She plans to use the proceeds to build spiritual centers where people can go, at practically no charge, for meditation and healing sessions.

Visualize yourself in a beautiful garden with birds of all the *chakra* colors, she tells her audience. Relax and see the green leaves and trees. Nearby is a stream. "Look at the color of the water," she says. "Mix the blue of expression with the green of the heart."

"Across the stream stands a tree, which attracts you because something there wants to talk to you," she continues. "You move closer toward a brilliant white light under the tree and you allow your higher self to emerge from it—meet it," MacLaine says. "It is

you. It has always been with you, not only in this life but for as long as you have lived. This is your real self. This is the personal God you have always wanted to meet.

"With your higher self beside you," she instructs the group, "see yourself with the person who has hurt you most deeply. Ask your higher self how you helped to create that painful situation and listen to the answer. It will tell you how you participated. Once you have connected with your higher self, you can ask it for help and infor-

mation. You need only to be quiet within to hear the answers."

The hotel ballroom has been transformed into a sea of 1,000 people sitting or sprawling on the floor. Waves of conversation ripple through the room as people discuss what they have just heard.

"I saw my higher self as a white shadow of me."

"When I had to visualize the person who's hurt me most deeply, the person I saw was myself."

"I couldn't really see my higher self—it was kind of a cloud."

But MacLaine wants each participant to go one step further. "I want to prove to you, so that you can prove to yourselves, that you really do have psychic abilities," she announces, asking everybody in the seminar, including this reporter, to choose a partner. I pair off with a young man I have not seen before.

She asks each of us to rub our hands together to generate energy. Then we each put our right hand on our partner's forehead, between the eyes. That point, MacLaine tells us, is known as "the third eye" and represents the seat of intuition. Next we are each to ask our higher self: "What is

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my partner's immediate past and immediate future?"

My partner—a young printer from New York City—responds quickly. "I see you in a wedding gown standing on a staircase," he says to me.

"That's correct," I tell him. "I got married on a staircase in a brownstone house about six years ago."

"I see a very strong community of friends," he continues.

I admit that, yes, we live in an area where we have many close friends, and have lived there for the past several years.

Now, the immediate future: "I see a little girl about 2 years old standing somewhere in the country," he says. "I see you taking care of her."

I acknowledge that we are considering moving someplace where our daughter, who is 2, can be closer to nature and where I can spend more time with her. (Two weeks later I found myself in a rural part of the South showing my daughter butterflies and pelicans.)

Then, with my eyes closed and my hand on my partner's forehead, I tell him, "I see a yellow light and a bridge." Since yellow is the color of the solar plexus *chakra*, which represents emotion, I ask, "Are you in a period of transition now?"

"Yes," he says.

"Across the bridge, there's a barricade of cement blocks. It's very sharp and jagged. Does that mean anything to you?"

The young man explains that six months earlier he was emotionally strung out and very much on edge. Since then, "I've been working on becoming more clearheaded and more aware," he says.

I am amazed at how we have picked up these images from each other's lives, especially since we have never met before, and at how appropriate the images are for each of us.

At the end of the seminar, people smile as they file out of the ballroom exchanging names and phone numbers. Outside in the hotel corridor a bulletin board is tacked with messages: people looking for others who live in their area and share their interests. Strangers 48 hours ago, new friends now hug each other, aware of the intimacy that comes from sharing the private, spiritual side of themselves.

For Shirley MacLaine, the techniques explained during the seminar are not as important as the need for each person to discover and tune into his or her higher self. "This is essential for personal happiness," she says. "The only stumbling block is one's own doubt, the belief that it can't be true because you don't deserve it. But the moment you start using it, it changes your life." ■

Laurie Nadel is a writer for CBS News in New York City and the author of Corazon Aquino: Journey to Power, just published by Messner/Simon & Schuster. This is her first article for FAMILY CIRCLE.

For further reading on this subject, Shirley MacLaine suggests the following books:

- *The Tao of Physics*, by Fritjof Capra (Shambhala Publications, 1975)
- *Many Mansions*, by Gina Cerminar (New American Library, 1967)
- *Color Therapy*, by Linda Clark (Devin, 1975)
- *Edgar Cayce on Reincarnation*, by Noel Langley (Warner Books, 1967)

- *The Chakras*, by Charles W. Leadbeater (Theosophical Publishing House, 1972)
- *The Roots of Consciousness*, by Jeffrey Mishlove (Random House, 1975)
- *The Nature of Personal Reality and Seth Speaks*, by Jane Roberts (both Prentice-Hall, 1974 and 1981)

For more information about the Higher Self Seminars, write to P.O. Box 67F00, Los Angeles, CA 90067; or call 213-277-9002.