

Love is an Expanded Capacity*

by Christina Grote, ITPI Board Chair

George Leonard and Michael Murphy created Integral Transformative Practice® (ITP) in 1992 based on the notion that expanded human development occurs as a result of the cultivation of body, mind, heart and soul through long-term, dedicated practice. ITP, as Murphy often cites, is the “base camp for the further reaches of our extraordinary human capacities.”



Much of the theoretical framework of ITP is derived from Murphy’s book, *The Future of the Body: Explorations into the Further Evolution of Human Nature*. Published in 1992, after 15 years of research and development, this book is a deep study of these extraordinary capacities, how they contribute to human evolution, and the transformative methods used to cultivate them.

In this book, Murphy offers a positive view of the potential of humanity: that we are poised to take an evolutionary leap which would be marked by a fuller expression of capacities that we all have, latent within us. Citing an old teaching story, Murphy describes these capacities as a sack of gold that we are carrying on our backs, but don’t even know we have.

In *The Future of the Body*, Murphy classifies extraordinary capacities into 12 categories, capacities that he believes were inherited from our animal ancestors and are active within us now in varying degrees. All of these capacities are capable of developing into supernormal versions of themselves through evolutionary processes and our own efforts, even appearing spontaneously under the right conditions.

The 12 extraordinary capacities are as follows:

Perception of External Events	Somatic Awareness and Self-Regulation
Communication Abilities	Vitality
Movement Abilities	Abilities to Alter the Environment Directly
Pain and Pleasure	Cognition
Volition	Individuation and Sense of Self
Love	Bodily Structures, States and Processes

In recent years, Murphy has added two more capacities: Memory and Imagination. He characterizes the emergence of these extraordinary capacities as “the budding organs and limbs of our emerging supernature” and hypothesizes that their widespread activation would bring about a new stage in human evolution.

According to Murphy, “What is being proposed here is an integral approach to development that is not purely transcendental or purely materialistic; an approach where the mind, feelings and flesh are fundamental to creative advance; *where our world engaging capacities would be cultivated within a deepening spiritual realization, and would be viewed as necessary to our development rather than an impediment to it.*”

Serious researchers have studied capacities like mental telepathy (which falls into the Communication Abilities category) for decades. Dean Radin recently published *Supernormal*, an excellent book presenting research on these topics. Despite strong evidence proving their existence, mainstream science continues to dismiss expanded capacities because they don’t fit the prevailing mindset.

Extraordinary capacities, or “superpowers,” show up, in both positive and negative forms, in popular culture. We also see them evident in sports. In recent decades we have seen exponential advances in what athletes are able to do. Ancient Indian writers described “siddhis”, or attainments, that were a result of years of yogic practice but most traditions dismiss extraordinary capacities as distractions or even impediments to spiritual growth. Certainly we would need very strong moral development to be able to handle these powers.

I am intrigued by the idea that we may be consciously furthering the progress of humanity through activating our own capacities as part of our personal practice. “Is it possible that, as we develop our innate capacities, we are aligning with a universal drive to self-surpass?” Nature has leaped itself many times on our planet – from rocks, to plants and animals, to human beings. “We just don’t know what the limit of our capacities is; we don’t know how many human potentials are suppressed by our culture. But if we give ourselves permission to explore them, many more could surface.”

I’d like to write about one of these capacities – love. Murphy describes love as “the culmination of caring behavior evident in animal life, and our profoundest transformative act.” Adam Crabtree, a colleague of Murphy’s, writes about love itself as an evolutionary force – that as we love something, we help it to flourish. It seems that we are predisposed towards goodness, although often it doesn’t look that way.

My husband and I were recently in Rwanda at the time of the 20th anniversary of the genocide that killed 20% of the population, approximately 1 million people. In a book about that horrific period, *Beauty from Ashes*, I read the story of a woman – inspired by the model of forgiveness displayed by one of our great prophets of love – who went to the home of a man in her village who was responsible for the brutal murder of much of her family, and forgave him. To me, that is extraordinary. But as incredible as this is, the expression of love can go even further, to unconditional love – “love that transcends normal needs and motives, revealing a unity among people and things more fundamental than any differences between them; love that is its own reward.”

It often takes extreme circumstances for this kind of extraordinary love and compassion to be triggered, (the unselfish heroism in New York after 9/11 comes to mind), but we have the opportunity to intentionally develop our latent capacities in a balanced way in the course of our own daily lives. Why not start with those capacities most needed in our world, like love, equanimity, and perception of oneness with others?

*All quoted material is from *The Future of the Body* by Michael Murphy.