



Poetry, dreams, and the body

by Rick Belden

My dream is made in my body.

— Eugene Gendlin, [Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams](#)

I first discovered the relationship between poetry, dreams, and the body in the process of writing my book, [Iron Man Family Outing](#). In fact, the book was the direct result of my exploration of that relationship. I was having a lot of important dreams at the time, filled with detail and [information that required my attention and action](#), and I was finding it harder and harder to get everything down in my journals each morning. One day I got the idea that maybe I could record my dreams more concisely as poetry rather than as prose, and it worked pretty well for me. So well, in fact, that after a few months, I found that I was writing a book ... a book with a title that [came to me in one of my dreams](#).

I was also, at that time, coming into a new form of relationship with my body. I'd been treating my body like a mechanism for most of my life, a strange and mysterious *other* that felt external and separate from what I thought of as myself, an unreliable machine that suffered from all sorts of inconvenient problems and breakdowns that no doctor I'd seen could explain. I know now that this sort of separation and dissociation from the body is very common among men and boys in my culture. I also know now that it's common to another demographic group of which I am also a member: adult survivors of childhood abuse.

Somehow, and I honestly can't say how this came about, I found that my body was, like my dreams, another rich source of [imagery and information](#) that expressed itself well in

poetic language. I believe this discovery was largely stimulated by the emotional processing work I was doing at the time, in which I was taught to tune into my body as a way to locate and unlock the psychological and emotional energy I'd been forced to repress as a child. As time went on, I gradually began to see my body as a partner rather than as an adversary. I also found that my body had something to say. I only had to give it the time and the space to speak.

In a poem called "[body memory](#)" from *Iron Man Family Outing*, I said:

*time passes but nothing is lost
I can't fool myself
my body remembers everything.*

Poetry is the language of my dreams and my body. In my experience, in life and as well as in writing, poetry, dreams, and the body are intertwined and inseparable.

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Rick Belden is a respected explorer and chronicler of the psychology and inner lives of men. His book, [Iron Man Family Outing: Poems about Transition into a More Conscious Manhood](#), is widely used in the United States and internationally by therapists, counselors, and men's groups as an aid in the exploration of masculine psychology and men's issues, and as a resource for men who grew up in dysfunctional, abusive, or neglectful family systems. His second book, [Scapegoat's Cross: Poems about Finding and Reclaiming the Lost Man Within](#), is currently awaiting publication. He lives in Austin, Texas.

More information, including excerpts from Rick's books, is available on his [website](#) and [blog](#). You can also find him on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).