

# Catching Up with Author John Friedlander ~ Meditation Teacher and Psychic

Interviewed by Bill Zirinsky  
Photographs by Gloria Hemsher

*For a long time now, John Friedlander has been the leading psychic, and teacher of psychic development, in the region. Because of his books, and the fact that he has lectured and taught around the country, he has become one of the nation's better known serious psychics. His writings are substantive and far-reaching. He has mentored, taught and influenced many people in the Ann Arbor area's thriving "intuitive awareness" community.*

*He is the author of two books. His first book, The Practical Psychic, co-authored with Cynthia Pearson, was first published in 1991. His next book, Basic Psychic Development, A User's Guide to Auras, Chakras and Clairvoyance, co-authored with Gloria Hemsher, was named by Amazon one of the 10 best occult/metaphysical books of 1991. Between the two books, he has been published in six languages. Friedlander is also a graduate of Harvard Law School.*

*Friedlander lives in Ann Arbor with his wife, Pamela Moss, who is a professor at the University of Michigan School of Education.*

*The Crazy Wisdom Community Journal first interviewed John Friedlander in the fall of 1997. Now, eleven years later, we decided to "catch up" with John, who is turning 60 in June, to see what he is thinking about now-days.*

**Bill Zirinsky:** John, I know that you are taking your work in some new directions. Please tell us about that.

**John Friedlander:** Perhaps the two most exciting new directions are:

1. Clairvoyant exploration of the seven planes of consciousness as described marvelously by the theosophical writers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: Never, to my knowledge, has the actual ability to find and utilize those planes and sub planes been taught in large groups in a straight forward way. In our classes we learn to go up and down the energy scale of those seven planes, each with seven sub planes, much like a choir learns to sing the pitches of the scale accurately so that beautiful music can be made. As we become more and more skilled at finding precisely the various planes and sub planes, we begin to explore more deeply what exists and what can be done at each energy level.

For example, this energy scale allows any person to find precisely what the theosophists meant by the concept of the

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soul. The word soul is used by various systems and teachers to stand for many different things so that the very concept of a soul can be very confusing, imprecise and of little use for the meditator. The energy encountered at the level described in the Theosophical accounts of the soul is the center of human evolution as we move into the Aquarian Age. Engaging this soul energy with precision facilitates a spiritual path which perhaps uniquely embraces every day life. More on this later.



John Friedlander

"I'm primarily a teacher of meditation, a meditation based on one's ability to perceive one's own aura, *and* the aura of others. This leads one to be a psychic, a healer, a channeler, a coach, and for me, an author."

2. Clairvoyant exploration of the particular energy called kundalini: There are many mystical approaches. All could be said to utilize an energy path that takes one towards unity consciousness. The various energy paths move towards unity from different energy frequencies, from different parts of the seven planes and sub planes. Unity can be experienced from any centering, from any plane. The principal path I follow utilizes a soul perspective embracing and engaging in the relationships of everyday life in our current society.

From a clairvoyant perspective, kundalini is one of many possible energies that can be utilized in spiritual investigation. It's an energy that is uniquely powerful for physical healing and generating mystical states. It operates outside the normal grasp of the personality, outside the energy frequencies of everyday life, and thus must be explored carefully.

Exploring kundalini clairvoyantly allows us to utilize the resource of kundalini and its power in alignment with the soul's exploration, that is, in an exploration of everyday life and relationships in this society. We can use kundalini to explore just how far we can properly go in healing our bodies, and what psychic awareness tools we can utilize to enhance our engagement with life, as well as use it to produce mystical states that facilitate wisdom.

**Bill Zirinsky:** When I interviewed you almost eleven years ago, your group was sponsoring classes and workshops on psychic development. I still see listings of classes and workshops which you're leading. What is the mix between the teaching you're doing here in Ann Arbor and teaching you're doing around the country?

**John Friedlander:** Our group continues to teach a core curriculum of 4 courses in aura awareness, though they've been totally revamped, greatly speeded up, with lots of entirely new material and taught with our own greater understanding and technical skill (for example, now, when I and my co-teachers train students in channeling, it is easier to see when the students are channeling real guides, and

when they are channeling thought forms. Thought forms are floating conglomerations of thought and emotion. Channeling them can be useful some times but channeling true guides is always better.)

The courses provide a whole system of spiritual adventure grounded in and adding to our skill in the relationships, challenges and pleasures of everyday life. I no longer teach the first level course in the Ann Arbor area, nor do I take new clients for psychic readings. Some of my advanced students teach that class and take new clients for readings. I do teach advanced psychic development classes and the classes in kundalini and the seven planes here, and teach about once a month in other cities.

**Bill Zirinsky:** Do you have a new book on the horizon? If so, can you tell us about it?

**John Friedlander:** My coauthor, Gloria Hemsher, and I are working on our next book; we have reams of material but a completed book is not near.

**BZ:** In our interview you talked about Seth's radical idea of grace -- "living your life in a relatively unobstructed way" and that grace is not something which comes from above, but rather is "growing in your life path". Would you care to comment on that, now?

**John Friedlander:** Grace normally understood, involves a gift from a transcendent good, a reaching outside the human sphere. It seems to imply a transcending of the particular and flawed nature of human life. What makes Seth's idea of grace radical is that it arises out of a cherishing of the complexity and apparent limitedness of our human lives. Thus, every person living their life with reasonable authenticity is in a state of grace, not just saints, or the elected.

From Seth's point of view, one might be in a state of grace without being consciously aware of that grace, just being in flow with your own deeper purposes is a state of grace. However, we can become consciously aware of an underlying ever present joy which is analogous to some



more conventional senses of grace.

Fundamental to, and underneath every human dance of pleasure and pain, is a sacred, joyful and meaningful embrace of every moment of human life. It is always and already present, just usually unrecognized. When one cultivates a grounded awareness, one can engage more and more moments of life with a sense of that underlying sacred joyful embrace.

**BZ:** I loved your description of yourself as not particularly a sweet person, as a somewhat irritable person. In our earlier interview, when talking about grace, you wrote that “you could have a really nasty person who is in a state of grace because they would be *in their life*”. I’m a great Larry David aficionado (Larry David wrote many of the Seinfeld episodes, and has a sitcom on HBO called *Curb Your Enthusiasm*) and he is unable to help himself when it comes to his pickiness and nastiness. I struggle in my own life with an irresistible urge to be contentious and provocative, just like Larry David. You have previously described your challenges when you were younger in dealing with what you referred to as your “arrogance”. What are the continuing lessons for you of your own irritability and arrogance?

**John Friedlander:** I don’t believe in striving for perfection. I do believe that the complexity of personality with its strengths and weaknesses is the training ground for our most profound spiritual project. I try to accept my weaknesses and use them as part of the raw material of my engagement with life. Therefore, I am cautious with my character flaws. I don’t just use will power to crush them, or substitute some transcendent love for them; I become aware of them in specific encounters, and use my awareness to take apart the specific belief structures which have held them in place. The key here is to look at specific belief structures, not abstract and global ones.

The psychic awareness tools we teach are particularly helpful in this adventure. For example, during the few days when I answered these questions, I had some insights and did some useful energy exploration on arrogance. I had recently overheard a friend engaging in a set of comparisons between himself and others in a way that I, myself, often did a decade ago. Back then, I hadn’t even realized how arrogant and self-defeating the behavior was until my co-author pointed it out. When I heard my friend making those comparisons, I was both distressed that he would do this (it’s self defeating and I wish he knew it, but I could see psychically he didn’t want my advice), and I was distressed that I used to do the same thing.

The next day, still thinking about my unknowingly arrogant friend, I noticed a quite beautiful but oddly amiss psychic energy in my aura. As I explored it, I found that it was an energy of high aspiration, an energy of wishing to excel; but that it was held in place by some unconscious energies of inappropriate competition, which in turn were repressing and covering up energies of shame. The beautiful energy was covering up less skillful energies which were generating a subtle arrogance (well, it seemed subtle to me). In the following days, I cleared those energies and

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found my aura become more relaxed, and more available for happiness, more supporting of kindness and generosity.

My flaws such as irritability and arrogance are not so much barriers keeping me from my spiritual goals, as they are part of the framework my soul uses to build awareness as it learns how to follow desires skillfully, with kindness and generosity. As I, at a personality level, cleared the energy that paralleled my friend’s unskillful comparisons, I could see my soul collecting my experience for its own deeper purposes.

**BZ:** You had described your life as a psychic and teacher of psychic development and channeler as “like being a 2 year old --- every single day I can perceive something I have never perceived before”. I’m the father of a five year

girl, and it’s an adventure for me, but much much more so for her, and her perceptions were even fresher a couple of years ago. How well are you managing to keep your perceptions fresh each day?

**Friedlander:** Life as a psychic and teacher just gets to be more fun, even more like being a two year old. Since the principal tool for developing awareness is awareness itself, the more awareness one has, the faster one generates even more awareness. So, where 10 years ago, I might average one new perception a day, now it is many new perceptions a day. As one cultivates awareness, one moves from being happy only when one’s desires are met, to having fun with most of the perceptual and awareness adventures that constantly pop up. Even aggravating events can be fun. They aren’t always fun for me, but they can be when I avoid getting lost in the aggravation, and stay interested in just what is happening and why. The aggravation is still there, still real; just experienced in a context of adventure, even a certain amount of delight as barriers to fully engaging life fall away.

**BZ:** When I interviewed you at length, you were approaching 50. Now you must be approaching 60, unless you’ve figured out how to set the clock back. Someone recently said to me, “well, 60 is supposed to be the new 40, but that’s bull. 60 is 60, and it’s hard.” Would you please comment on aging, your own and other people’s. Are you still as open to the adventure of consciousness exploration? What are your thoughts about dying, at this stage of your life? Have you faced any major health challenges, and how have they affected you? I’ve thrown in a few different questions, here, but maybe you can answer each of them.

**Friedlander:** I find aging shocking, naggingly inexorable, and wonderful. Everyone I know who is about my age suffers aches and pains, and no one I know would trade their accumulated know how for a young body. I haven’t experienced any major health challenges, but nearly 60 is what sociologists call young old—if I don’t lift weights, I hurt, and to tell the truth, if I do lift weights, I still hurt, just less. My pain is minor enough that I can be mostly amused, a little like my own comedy, but the pain does impact what I can do.

Life for me now is far and away the best it’s ever been. Being nearly 60 is cool—I’ve been through the battles of my youth and middle age, I’ve made some excellent choices and more than a few serious errors. I’ve been with my second wife for nearly 32 years. The first 7 were often hard; our marriage has been getting steadily better each and every year since. I have better times with my family of origin, and I have wonderful friends, collaborators and students; several as close as family. I’m comfortable with myself. I’m a jerk less and less often, and practice kindness and generosity more easily and often.

Concerning death, as a clairvoyant it is easy to see the beauty and the renewal of self in one’s greater self that follows death. For the most part, death has not affected me personally, so there is a whole level of the physical reality of death that I have not had to deal with. There is an intimacy of experience with death and its impact that clairvoyance is no substitute for; a depth of experience that others can relate to more truthfully than I would be able to.

**BZ:** You have previously talked about people on this planet moving from an “age of individuation” into “true group consciousness”. What I inferred from what you actually said was that this transformation was an inexorable process, and that you couldn’t really predict how long it would take...somewhere between 75 and 500 years. I’d be very interested to hear your current thoughts about this slow shift.

**Friedlander:** I believe human kind has been evolving over the last 2,000 years, exploring the nature of a particular isolated consciousness where we are separate people in separate bodies. This exploration has taken place both for the pure joy of experience, and to develop sufficient individuality/awareness in our souls that we will become able to participate in the far more complex interactions of the group consciousness. These complex, subtle and intimate interactions in an emerging group consciousness will increasingly become our experience in the Aquarian Age.

My guides say that the field of the personality is the

training ground for this evolutionary development. As we explore the play of desire, and the effects of pleasure and pain, each bit of experience is gathered by the soul. When we become skillful enough in our experience/awareness, a critical mass is reached and the soul becomes able to operate in more dimensions, it can follow its uniqueness as it interpenetrates other consciousnesses and forms gestalts with them.



Our souls can only reach this complex clarity by learning to deal authentically with conflicting polarities. The best example of the kind of skill that generates sufficient awareness for the next human step is the ability to have a conversation skillfully with another person with whom you are in conflict (the book *Difficult Conversations*, available in your store, is wonderful for this. In spite of my then 30 years of reading and training, I never understood how to talk about emotions until this book was published in 1999). Complex awareness requires that one be able to follow one’s desires without getting excessively caught up in them, to be able to engage the dance of pleasure and pain with relatively little avoidance of the world as it is, to be passionate without being a slave to one’s passions.

**BZ:** John, you are deeply well read in so many areas of what I might call “consciousness studies”. As we baby boomers age, our collective evolution has continued. You can now trace your own involvement over the last 40 years, from the time you lived in a ashram in India to your earliest involvement with Jane Roberts, and with Lewis Bostwick in San Francisco in the early 70’s. We now live in an era where there are probably 20 yoga centers in the Ann Arbor area, and we will soon have five natural foods supermarkets, and those facts represent the slow spreading and changing of American consciousness. At the same time, we’re living in an era of theocratic terror, dirty bombs, and global warming. What do you make of this all?

**Friedlander:** I’m an optimist. As Seth said many years ago, mankind has always had the capacity to annihilate itself, even before modern technology. I think humanity and the planet will make it through these challenges. I already have felt new energy changing the Mental and Astral planes so that alternatives to terrorism are more likely to be used, though that energy may take years to fully manifest in physicality. Seth, back in the early seventies, stated we would have a quite peaceful unified world by 2025, and my guides still agree. Global warming is scary, but my guides say we will weather this storm also, and in this century address our environmental needs.

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