

# ARTS & CULTURE

## End of relationship leads to rebirth, empowerment for author

By Maria Connor

LA JOLLA LIGHT

It took Diana Marie Weitzel more than 15 years to write her book, almost the same length of time she was married to the man who gave her this story to tell.

"Fall Into Freedom: An Affair Inspires One Woman's Search for Truth" is both an autobiographical account of Weitzel's struggle to come to terms with her husband's adulterous affair and a philosophical how-to manual. In coming to terms with her own personal truths, Weitzel discovered a formula for moving past the devastation and into happiness.

"It took me 17 years, but I don't think anyone else has defined love as simply," she said.

The author will sign copies at a premiere book launch June 24 from 2 to 6 p.m. at The Living Room, 1010 Prospect St.

The publication and release of her book is just one of the startling achievements borne from what Weitzel calls an extraordinary crisis. On a Friday afternoon shortly before their 18th anniversary, Weitzel's husband told her he was in love with another woman. The divorce was finalized just four months before what would have been their 20th anniversary.

Her husband's betrayal left Weitzel in a dark and frightening place, filled with panic and uncertainty. She feared losing his love and being alone. Her life as a wife and mother — a life she was content with — suddenly fell apart.

"I felt like I'd been living in a bubble,



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Diana Weitzel worked for 15 years on her book.

then the bubble burst and I fell to the ground," she said. "It was that terrifying fear that caused me to begin my search for truth. I needed the understanding."

She had begun meditating about a month before her husband's bombshell, and that internal focus helped her gain courage to begin her quest for understanding, to answer the question of why. Why had her husband cheated? Why was she suddenly questioning her purpose in life? Why did she think she needed to hold on to her husband?

She got herself through by meditating, praying and reading. During one period of deep meditation, she heard a

voice that seemed to come from her soul telling her to write a book, Weitzel said.

"I felt I had finally been given my life's purpose, besides being a wife and mother," she said.

Driven by a need to understand the emotional dynamics of her failed marriage and her response to the event, Weitzel returned to school in 1989. She completed a bachelor's degree in psychology from California State University, San Marcos, then went on to earn a master's in psychology with an emphasis on counseling from Chapman University.

During this period, she was writing. Gradually she realized there were three factors necessary for love and happiness: understanding, forgiveness and compassion. These elements became the basis of her philosophy.

"I lived understanding, forgiveness and compassion," she said. "These three keys were my philosophy and how I lived my life."

Healing herself was the first step in regaining happiness.

Her introspection brought Weitzel to believe that we bring childhood hurts into our adult relationships. We then attribute these negative feelings to our partners, which can lead to all kinds of destructive behavior, including extramarital affairs.

"To heal the symptoms, we have to seek, find and heal the root cause," Weitzel said.

After the affair, Weitzel realized her husband's actions had created feelings of worthlessness. She was also disturbed by her lack of ambition beyond motherhood.

She tracked the cause of her insecurity to behavior by her own parents, who made her feel ashamed to be a woman. Her mother acted like women were less important than men, she said. That attitude was also responsible for her dependency on her husband and fear of having to make it on her own in the world.

Before she could progress, Weitzel had to forgive her mother and let go of the hurt.

The affair, which once seemed so devastating, inspired Weitzel to take a deep look at herself, she said. Her spiritual growth, wisdom and accountability created not only a healing life philosophy and touching book, but also a stronger, more honest relationship with her daughters. She hopes her lessons in life will enable them to make better choices about relationships.

While finalizing the book, Weitzel lived in La Jolla. Daily walks on the cliffs overlooking the ocean brought her peace and a chance to meditate with nature, she said.

"It was a huge fall, and when I fell, I fell into my search for truth, which led to finding freedom," she said. "I never thought that I would be as big of a human being as I am now. If I can do it, anyone can do it."

The 59-year-old now lives in Cardiff and each day is filled with vibrant joy, she said.

"Before the affair, I was a sweet housewife," she said. "Now, I hope I'm still sweet, but I am also a wise adult with a beautiful spirit."