

# Dancing with Monsters

CHRONIC ILLNESS as CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION

[www.dancingwithmonsters.com](http://www.dancingwithmonsters.com)



## Dancing with Monsters: a guide for groups and individuals

By Kate Wolfe Jenson

I am delighted and honored that you are interested in working more deeply with the ideas in *Dancing with Monsters: Chronic Illness as Creative Transformation*.

If you are working alone, you can write (or draw or move through, etc.) your answers or simply use the questions for contemplation.

If you are working in a group, you can use the questions as discussion starters.

If you are a new group, you might want to spend some time establishing ground rules. A couple of my favorites are:

1. EdChange Multicultural Pavilion, <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html>
2. Helpful Concepts of the EA Program  
<http://www.emotionsanonymous.org/Concepts.html>

Remember, too, that the creative experiments built into the book are invitations to deepen your exploration of chronic illness and/or creativity.

Please send me e-mail at [kate@jensons.com](mailto:kate@jensons.com) to let me know what you've done and what I can do for you! (*Hint: I love visiting support and book discussion groups!*)

Blessings and thanks,

Kate

### Part One: Discovering the Dance

I have divided my healing process into four parts: overwhelm incubation, reconciliation and rededication. Does that fit for you? What did I miss? How is your journey different? (*The Pattern of the Dance, pp. 24-29*)

Have you experienced a change so significant that you divide your life, in your thinking, as “before (the change) and after (the change)”? What was it like to undergo that shift? (*Diagnosis Response, pp. 30-32*)

Have you ever felt like *you* have a monster? Has the secret of your monster separated you from others? Is it ever helpful to compare your monsters with those of someone else? (*Mac and His Monster pp. 33-36*)

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## Part Two: Overwhelm

Have you met someone whose attitude toward difficulty impressed you (either negatively or positively)? What lessons can you learn from them? How can you influence your own attitude? (*The Ways of Life and Death* pp. 43-46)

Depression is a powerful, stifling experience. I suggest trust as the angel that carries me through it. How do you continue in the face of depression? What is helpful? What isn't helpful? (*The Underworld of Overwhelm: The Demon of Depression, The Angel of Trust*, pp. 47-51)

Do you ever hide from your emotions? What are the signals that allow you to recognize what you are doing? Do you have ways of surrendering to your feelings without being out of control? (*Dodging Grief: The Demon of Desolation, The Angel of Surrender*, pp. 56-59)

What is on your list of people, places, activities or attitudes that move you toward happiness? (*Connections for a Good Life*, pp. 52-55)

## Part Three: Incubation

When does stubbornness serve you? When does it get in your way? Does it work to “soften and surrender”? Are there ways to invite healthy surrender? (*In the Quiet: The Demon of Stubbornness, The Angel of Consciousness*, pp. 74-76)

Have you faced a situation where there is no way to win? How have you responded? Where do you place your faith? (*Playing to Lose: The Demon of Ambition, The Angel of Faith*, pp. 81-84)

## Part Four: Reconciliation

When is it easy to ask for help? When is it difficult? Is weakness ever a gift? (*On Asking for Help: The Demon of Self-Sufficiency, The Angel of Vulnerability*, pp. 97-101)

Does this help you to think of body, mind and soul as separate entities? Why or why not? How comfortable are you with not knowing? (*Separating Body and Mind: The Demon of Analysis, the Angel of Uncertainty*, pp. 103-107)

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## Part Five: Rededication

If you could design a perfect “healing room” for yourself, what would you include? Would it depend on the moment? (*The Healing Environment: Deterring Demons, Inviting Angels*, pp. 121-123)

What has been your experience with being included or excluded from groups? How important is it to you to “fit in”? Is there something you can say to yourself that makes it easier to be different? (*Angel Invitation Number One: Dare to be Different*, pp. 124-126)

“A place for everything and everything in its place.” Is that your ideal world? How comfortable are you when things are out of control? (*Angel Invitation Number Two: Lose Control*, pp. 127-131)

Is there a difference between allowing and accepting? Does surrender seem like a good or bad idea...or both? (*Angel Invitation Number Three: Allow, Accept, Surrender*, pp. 132-134)

Have you ever been relieved at finally putting a name to something? Tell of a time when switching the name of an experience has helped shift your attitude toward it. (*Angel Invitation Number Four: Name What’s Happening*, pp. 135-138)

Where do you place your trust? What promises do you hold dear? (*Angel Invitation Number Five: Trust*, pp. 139-141)

What habits or practices are essential to your well-being? How do you encourage yourself to do them? (Is chocolate ever involved?) (*Do-be-do-be-do: Things to Do While You’re Healing*, pp.147-150)