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Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice Volume III (4), Summer 2007

Expressive Therapies Research and Thought Leadership Authored by
Members of Lesley's Institute for Body, Mind and Spirituality

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Introduction to Special Issue on the Institute for Body, Mind, and Spirituality (IBMS)

Susan Gere

The Institute for Body, Mind, and Spirituality (IBMS) at Lesley University was established for the purpose of promoting inquiry, training professionals, conducting research, developing new programs, and providing leadership in the area of body, mind, and spirituality health and education. IBMS serves as a nexus for body/mind activities at the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences at Lesley. It incorporates the university's mission of empowering students with the knowledge, skills, and experience to succeed as leaders and catalysts in their professions and communities. The goals of the Institute are humanistic, holistic, and transformational. The humanistic aspect focuses on the empowerment of the individual to change and grow using extensive collaborative learning and adult models of pedagogy. The interrelationship of body, mind, and spirituality emphasizes a holistic view, and tools for physical, mental, and spiritual growth supporting a transformational approach to individual development and social change.

For the purposes of the Institute, health is broadly defined as a dynamic process of wellbeing, which integrates mental, physical, social/relational, aesthetic, and spiritual elements. Prevention is emphasized as the best way to attain and maintain health and healthy behaviors. Within IBMS, spirituality is defined as intrinsic religiosity, a developmental process that involves character; social values; connection to other human beings and deeper aspects of oneself; and embracing the concept of something greater than oneself. That "greater something" has been defined by cultures around the world in many different ways throughout human history. Whether in the form of our relationship with nature, a philosophy of purpose and morals, or a deity, this core definition of spirituality emphasizes that all life is connected, interdependent, and meaningful. Spirituality is viewed as a holistic maturational process, not as the absorption of the tenets of any specific religion. The development of this sense of connection and purpose within the individual fosters healthy behavior; positive self-esteem; good cognitive learning; consideration for others; a sense of relationship to family, community, history and nature; and an understanding of how individual actions affect these underlying connections.

This issue of the *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice* (JPPP) focuses on contributions relating to body, mind and spirituality from members of the IBMS advisory board, Lesley University faculty and staff, academics and practitioners from the community of scholars in the arts, psychology, healthcare and religion. The articles are varied and show the breadth of interest in practice and scholarship related to body, mind and spirituality in higher education, in healthcare settings and in international conflict resolution work. They address pedagogy, practice and social justice issues.

The issue is organized into two groups of original work. The first group contains articles written for this issue of JPPP. The second is a group of edited talks given at recent conferences developed by IBMS. From 2005 to 2007, under the direction of Professor

Susan Gere and the IBMS Board, with administrative support from Yishiuan Chin and Graduate Assistant, Buki Papillon, IBMS sponsored programming that connects Lesley University faculty and the wider professional and academic communities. Collaborations with WGBH, the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, the Fetzer Institute's Campaign for Love and Forgiveness, the Harvard Divinity School, Boston's Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, and the Massachusetts School for Professional Psychology have supported training and research symposia for academics, professionals and community members.

From higher education, Jared Kass, Julia Byers, Robin Cruz, Louise Pascal, Cheryl Giles and Joan Klagsbrun seek to establish the relevance of teaching and learning cultures that take into consideration the well-being of the whole person and promote the transformation and spiritual maturation of global citizens. Mindfulness in the service of learning is the central theme woven through these contributions. Jared Kass' teaching and scholarship calls for an integrative educational model promoting spiritual maturation that transforms our behavioral patterns and relationship to ourselves and to others. He proposes that well-being and peaceful communities are possible when we reduce reactivity and the reenactment of negative experiences—thus interrupting what he calls the “chain of pain.”

Similarly, in training pastoral counselors, Cheryl Giles is committed to creating healthy, sustainable communities through facilitating spiritual grounding and growth and what Parker Palmer calls “hidden wholeness.” In their review of an on-line international discussion group for teachers, Julia Byers, Robin Cruz and Louise Pascale posit that beneficent classroom practices support the possibility of both recognizing and neutralizing difficult social and personal conditions in the service of learning. Likewise, Joan Klagsbrun offers clear rationale and instructions for using Eugene Gendlin's “Clearing a Space” to help students minimize the negative effects of personal stress in the classroom. Michael Franklin and Vivien Marcow Speiser also refer to “Clearing a Space” as a contemplative methodology with similarities to “Authentic Movement.” Their article makes the scholarly link between ancient meditative practices and this contemporary, movement based form.

Jana van der Veer's personal narrative reveals her own transformation in perspective on the mind-body connection through the experience of traditional Japanese medicine. Nathaniel Mays' reflection on Jackie Robinson provides an example of inspiring, spiritually mature behavior that has relevance for academic institutional settings.

Using the arts in healing, Karen Estrella, Dicki Johnson, Marion Nesbit, Susan DeCristofaro and Joan Drescher bring the reader into artistic spaces that are both autobiographical and creative. Karen Estrella writes about the importance of attending to the imagination in the creation of art, in healing and in social action. Marion Nesbit and Susan DeCristofaro demonstrate how the imagination and commitment of one inspirational person led to an arts-based university/community partnership at the Dana- Farber Cancer Institute. Joan Drescher's “Moon Balloon” project grew out of her own experience of being empowered by the arts and her recognition that children in crisis, in hospitals, schools and social service agencies need to be empowered to express their emotions.

Dicki Johnson's work found inspiration both in art and in nature. In her original and groundbreaking article, she demonstrates how her professional life as a teacher of the art

and technique of Isadora Duncan and as a dance therapist led her into the development of an archetypal “Gesture Dance” that forms the foundation of healing circles she has used to train professionals who deal with traumatic events in communities around the world. Dicki proposes that the foundation of health and wholeness is the ability to enjoy and explore both solitude and affiliation. She observes on the sense of disconnection from self and others in our society noted by other contributors. Like Lily Fessenden, she observes on the need to integrate body, mind and spirit in an ecological context. Lily, and Dicki both propose our connection to and awareness of nature is foundational to our spiritual lives and to our sense of connection to the worldwide community.

Activists Lily Fessenden and Farid Esack inspire and challenge us to confront social and ecological injustice and the larger systemic issues that perpetuate environmental degradation and atrocities committed against our fellow human beings. Our sense of disconnection from ourselves and from our environment is echoed in John Woodall’s call to expand our moral and aesthetic identification with others in order to end the effects of intergenerational social and political trauma. He and Farid Esack each suggest that our sense of identity—as individuals and as groups—defines our sense of social justice and that our ability to resolve conflicts depends on strengthening our sense of common humanity.

Like Jared Kass and John Woodall, Farid Esack’s experience as a leader in the new South Africa directs him to endorse the possibility of achieving a just and peaceful society but cautions that moral and ethical injustice must be confronted. Indeed, a cultural critique of mechanistic, disconnected, oppressive social conditions in modern society that lead to objectification of the self, the other and the environment is threaded through the essays. As the antidote, concepts of wholeness, social justice and transformation of perspective resonate throughout the journal. The arts, spiritual practice, nourishing relationships and social activism are all seen as paths to wholeness and reconnection with self, others and the environment.

Buki Papillon provides a detailed overview of the IBMS symposium on “Body, Mind and Spirit: Innovations in Research, Practice and Pedagogy” which drew graduate students and faculty mentors from all over New England. Jared Kass’ keynote address, “Spiritual Maturation: A Developmental Resource for Resilience, Well-Being and Peace” has been adapted for publication in this journal as have the papers of two of his respondents, Cheryl Giles “Developing Spiritual Maturation: Claiming Our Hidden Wholeness” and Karen Estrella “Awakening the Imaginal.”

“Imagine: Expression in the Service of Humanity, Moving Towards Forgiveness” grew out of a conference in Tel Aviv, Israel in 2006 on creative approaches to working with conflict in groups in general and with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular and a partnership with the Fetzer Institute Campaign for Love and Forgiveness www.loveandforgive.org. Presenters and participants explored common elements in cultural and religious conflicts, the intergenerational repetition of trauma and creative approaches to healing and transformation.

Three segments of “The Power of Forgiveness” film sponsored by Fetzer Institute and produced by Martin Doblmeier provided the catalyst for a discussion of the power of forgiveness in alleviating anger and grief caused by the such horrific human transgressions as the tragedy of September 11, 2001, forgiveness in the Amish community and the context of the Holocaust. Edited keynote addresses by South African theologian Farid Esack and the closing address by Harvard Medical School psychiatrist John Woodall bookend the rich conversations developed during the conference about the importance of activism and hope.

This special issue of JPPP is an opportunity for IBMS to bring together scholarly and inspirational work by an interdisciplinary group of writers who address multiple levels of stress and disconnection inherent in contemporary culture. They also suggest many hopeful routes to healing and wholeness including transformational education, spiritual maturation, mindfulness practices, movement, art, ecological awareness and engaging in social justice work. They each offer their theories and methods to help us—as professionals and as human beings—to reconnect, to heal ourselves and to heal our world. We are grateful for their work and for their contributions.

Well-Being, Chocolate and You

Julia Byers. Robyn Flaum Cruz, and Louise Pascale

Editor's Note: "Well-Being, Chocolate and You: The Promotion of Beneficence in Graduate Teaching and Learning," focuses on the online and e-mail discussions between eight professors who exchanged ideas on the promotion of well-being in the classroom. "These (ideas) included our balance of holding the educational environment to match the ongoing needs of students and faculty; a heightened awareness of establishing the promotion of well-being that positively affects growth; articulating obstacles that get in the way of positive learning; and the importance of "chocolate" as a metaphor for being human."

During the fall semester of 2005, online and e-mail discussions among seven professors were used to exchange ideas on the promotion of well-being in the classroom. Part of a Scholarship for Teaching Grant, the group's work was supported by the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences (GSASS) at Lesley University and facilitated by the Director of the Expressive Therapies Division of GSASS. Throughout the discussions on the Promotion of Beneficence in Graduate Teaching & Learning, cross-over between both concerns for the well-being of university students and faculty occurred frequently. This paper summarizes and reports on the outcome of the experience.

The group defined beneficence in the following ways: "the act of pleasure and unconditional goodwill and compassion for all those within reach of our influence," "when learning connects to real lives," and "what transpires in the classroom despite whatever the subject matter is, that makes us all feel more human." There is literature in undergraduate and graduate education, often under the umbrella of adult and transformational learning theories, that addresses beneficence and the concerns that rather naturally evolved in the group's discussions. For example, Mezirow (1991) yields insight into the importance of relationships, feelings, and context in the teaching process, highlighting critical reflection and the belief that experience alone is not enough to effect a transformation. "Effective learning does not follow from a positive experience but from effective reflection," (p.162).

Merriam (2004) writes that development is fundamental to adult transformational learning, and Baumgartner (2001) gives an overview of several philosophical approaches to transformational learning. She notes that the constructivist approach asserts that adult education should lead to empowerment while another approach stresses that the affective, emotional and social context aspects of the learning process must be acknowledged as part of the meaning-making process. A third approach defends the link between spirituality and learning (Dirkx, 1997, 1998; Healy, 2000).

Taylor (2000) reviewed 23 studies that used Mezirow's model, supporting the need for "a safe, open and trusting environment" that allows for participation, collaboration, exploration, critical reflection, and feedback (p.154). Taylor uncovers several ways to foster transformational learning by "fostering group ownership and individual agency"

(p.155) and suggests “placing the teachers at the center of their own learning in a critically reflective and social group setting contributes to transformation,” (p. 155).

Cranton (2000) focuses on ways to create Mezirow’s ideal conditions and suggests several strategies such as faculty relinquishing some of their authority in the classroom by doing such things as using first names and creating learning contracts and recognizing learner’s learning styles. Parker Palmer (1998) recommends promoting beneficence by recognizing the challenges teachers face in classrooms everyday. He gives voice to their efforts and recognizes that teacher isolation becomes an enormous barrier to promoting well-being. Palmer encourages authenticity in teaching, valuing the establishment of collaborative communities as a way to foster a more healthy education environment and provide a nurturing space for educators.

In the Promotion of Beneficence in Graduate Teaching project, the logistics of actually “talking” to one another and creating a comfortable and collaborative community was accomplished through cyberspace. This presented challenges in and of itself as we convened geographically dispersed faculty from Cambridge to Maine and Israel. For many of us, this was a first-time experience and we faced some technical challenges.

Several authors have addressed this type of electronic communication and the issues that accompany it. *Virtual Conversations: A Modest Means for Engaging Faculty at a Distance* (Floyd & Whitesel, 1999) promotes asynchronous online communities, noting these benefit institutions as well as faculty. But along with the benefits of technology, there are challenges. Platt (1999) points out that virtual groups share common goals but a key element is building “trust” with the group which can take time.

In *Current Conversations: Teacher Talk on E-Mail* (1996), the frustrations of computer crashes and other technology snafus are not seen as outweighing the benefits of technology for providing an opportunity to build a working relationship with colleagues, creating a trust that “cut across the isolation of classroom teaching and the hierarchies of university culture.” From the experience with the Promotion of Beneficence project, we would add one more idea—cutting across the isolation created by geography.

The Promotion of Beneficence Project

As the group’s dialogue progressed over the course of the project, we were astonished by the commonalities we experienced in our attitudes and philosophy of teaching even though we came from different disciplines including Expressive Therapies, Counseling Psychology, Creative Arts in Learning, and Audubon Expedition Institute. Through articulating different teachable or learning moments we discovered several emerging themes. These included our balance of holding the educational environment to match the ongoing needs of students and faculty; a heightened awareness of establishing the promotion of well-being that positively affects growth; articulating obstacles that get in the way of positive learning; and the importance of “chocolate” as a metaphor for being human.

Initially, the plan was to use synchronous online discussions or “chats” eight times over three months to compare, contrast, and get at our ideas of beneficence in the classroom. However, technological difficulties plagued the group. But our on-going

frustration with not being able to get everyone online at the same time did not derail this committed group of people from continuing to explore ideas. As a result, a regular small group was able to use an instant messaging service, while the others used asynchronous means (e-mail) to respond individually to the entire group. The facilitator's role was key in keeping current topics organized for the synchronous and asynchronous discussions. We adjusted, and continued to discuss vulnerabilities, frustrations, doubts and growth through honest and real stories.

It became evident that the role of establishing the learning climate of the class was very important to each faculty's ideas of beneficence. As a demonstration of this holding environment, the range of professors' experiences with beginning and ending class rituals showed that the use of class time was considered significant to the outcome of scheduled activities in promoting well-being. Subsequent learning or teachable moments were also explored.

Another theme that surfaced focused on the environmental implications of the class space for on and off campus teaching. This highlighted and raised the issue of what gets in the way of promoting well-being. Faculty 'confessed' to personal and external obstacles to successful teaching. These obstacles included the reality of passing through check points in occupied territory for one professor that made the framework of teaching challenging from a philosophical and practical point of view. This alternative experience differed significantly from the Western experience of teachers and students late for classes because of traffic or weather conditions. The inclusion of professors teaching off campus outside the US helped to humanize the discussions of our collective assumption and biases.

The overall experience of making time to reflect on promotion of well-being for both the faculty and the students was a meaningful tension in exploring the roles and expectations of higher education. Being honest with students about personality style, work obligations and other activities were seen as functioning in the service of being authentic

Beginnings & Endings—Timing & Pacing in Teaching

Early in the discussion of beneficence, beginnings and endings emerged as an important theme and led to discussion of timing and pacing. Some examples of how this group uses 'time' in the classroom to support the experience of well-being are included in this section and are taken directly from transcripts of the discussions.

*"I like to start each class with checking in with the students about any unfinished business or anything on their minds. I then like to have 10 minutes to talk with them and get us all on the same page. In psychopathology, I like to end with a song from a video or from a Broadway musical that is somehow connected with the diagnostic category we have discussed (e.g., for anxiety disorders—"Whenever I feel afraid" from *The King and I*). I want to convey the universality of the issues we have discussed, how art addresses the same challenges as does psychopathology and leave with something more upbeat and inspiring."*

"So, making it safe for students as well as myself, is my first order of business. In the 2nd year supervision class in dance therapy which I am teaching for the 1st time, I am starting each class of with a warm-up. For the first few weeks, I led the warm-up, and now the

students are leading. I wanted to establish dance, movement and our bodies as the medium for learning for a number of reasons. First, I imagine that all of my students are kinesthetic learners, in addition to having other learning styles. Second, I teach class from 7 to 10 at night - not the best time of me for stay awake. Moving helps to keep me awake and alert. And, third, I want us to practice embodiment as much as possible, with self awareness. Sometimes the movement is purely focused on warming up individually, but usually there is some component of relating to others. I'm afraid my endings are less structured. They are usually affected by the fact that we are out of time. There is so much to pack into the three hours, and the good part is that we are all awake and engaged in learning."

"Beginning and ending classes. This is an interesting topic I think and I'm eager to hear from all of you. Having just come off a teaching weekend I'm aware that I was quite conscious of how I began and ended each day. I was teaching the 3rd course in the students' sequence and it was their first occurring during the school year. Their first 2 courses were in the summer. So...I noticed how tired they were for starters. I always do some kind of physical warm-up, stretching, vocalization, something to wake them up a bit. Then we all sing. Sometimes it's a greeting song, sometimes a song that involves movement. But my purpose is ALWAYS to try and build a feeling of an ensemble so I find songs that encourage interaction between participants, movement, and require listening and paying attention to others. I find songs that are easy to learn because most of my students are self-conscious about singing. I end each day with a song. It brings the group together, gives us focus, and allows us all to leave in harmony. Often they choose the song they want to sing for the ending song."

"I just remembered this. I knew someone once who worked with students with severe behavioral problems and she always baked something in the morning and they arrived at class smelling yummy muffins. It worked."

Experiences of Well-Being in Teaching

Another theme that arose in the discussions was different group members' experiences of well-being in their classes. Some excerpts from discussions that highlight this theme follow.

"A great class for me is a great class for my students. Those classes can be best described as those where the flow is open. In a good class I feel that I am getting more than I am giving and the students feel like they are getting more than they are giving. It's a paradox. Perhaps it is the in-between space, the synergy, the relationship that gives to both of us.... Let's talk about moments, experiences for well-being in teaching. Just last week a student in my clinical skills class suggested that for the holiday season we do something we had done in a previous class he was in with me, have all the students bring in food for a potluck which reminded them of some personal or cultural feeling of being nurtured. We ate and they all shared about their personal and cultural experiences. It's often a high point of the class because it combines so many of the senses, is so connected with positive energy, and deepens the connections between the students. What was so pleasant and nurturing for me was the fact that I hadn't thought about it myself, that it was suggested by a student who

had studied with me in a previous class. To me it felt like the harvest from a well-planted garden and the children wanted to take care of the parents. “

“Sometimes when I am facilitating/guiding/teaching I feel like one of those tin lights that has many holes where the light emerges and goes off into a myriad of directions. I never know what receiver will be out there and it feels important to keep shining.”

I think that it [beneficence] has to do a lot with the trust you build with the students; like that the space holds but does not crush you. I know my experience with many students is that they love it when you respect their minds and do not give them ready made recipes—that I don’t treat them like they are vulnerable and will break.... you know it is sometimes here such a big hassle to come to class with all the closures and hardships on the road so it helps to do some debriefing if possible... sometimes I am delayed or stopped by the army, or I have to witness something difficult like students being harassed on the way to class. So for me, too, I need to debrief. I know yesterday I was trying to go from Jerusalem to Ramallah for a meeting and had to wait for an hour at the checkpoint and then I decided to give it up—it was just unbelievable. I guess for us beneficence in class sometimes is to help the students keep up their motivation to continue.

“I taught a class in conflict management once where I suggested that students always had a choice....there was a lot of resistance to this (my parents will do this or that). A student who had never said anything raised his head off the desk and told his story about making a choice (a hard one) and how transformative it was for his life. It changed the dynamic in the class completely as well as my belief about what was going on with him. He decided to leave home (as a sophomore in high school) rather than abide by his parents rules. As a result they eventually went to mediation and worked out a way to be in a relationship with each other and he ended up moving back home after a year. It became apparent that he had been listening during all of the classes but it wasn’t until it got real—until I was challenging and challenged that he responded. There is something about the moment in class when something comes up that really matters—or that connects to something we know about—a moment of recognition that suddenly makes one know that we are engaged in something that has value outside the classroom.”

Obstacles in Teaching for Beneficence Group

Members also shared frustrations and vulnerabilities within the process of teaching. The following are excerpts that express the struggles and challenges within the academic milieu.

“Unsigned evaluations by students. (I had one traumatizing class in Las Vegas early in my teaching.) I much prefer my evaluations to be face to face. Of course that assumes that the student will say what she thinks. I realize that my students are much better at stating their needs than my clients are with the result that students’ conflicting needs are more clearly articulated than are the clients. Containing those conflicting needs requires greater strength from me. Of course, the stronger I become, the better my well-being in the long run.”

“I live with the fear that the in-between space, the synergy between teacher & student may not happen in my next class. Sometimes it does not but usually it does and that is why I go on and look forward to teaching. I monitor my boredom... What parts of teaching am I most dreading? In response, I have given assignments that I am interested in reading. Avoidance and denial and creativity are sometimes the best strategies in dealing with administrative headaches such as challenges to my grading (too easy), or use of the new technological ‘breakthrough’ that ended up being nightmares for me and my students.”

“In the beginning of my teaching days which was around 12 years ago I was working with students who were training to become kindergarten teachers. I was teaching different courses: developmental psychology, learning through play, theories of counseling, and so on. My students were in their late teen or early twenties and I took for granted that they all came to college out of their own volition and chose their field themselves...but that was a mistaken assumption as many of the students did not choose either the college or the field of study. They were driven to it by default because of factors like test scores, or the family economic or social status for women—because in our conservative society teaching is an acceptable profession—it is among the most important determinants of what field of study you are enrolled in.”

“In my first semester of teaching in Birzeit which is my Alma Mata, I was very nervous. I went into the classroom and it was a big crowd of 38 students in an auditorium. My preoccupation was to look for some familiar faces to concentrate on to lessen my anxiety. I found one student I knew from when she was a child. I was so happy that I kept looking at her, but that was problematic after a while as I needed to explain to the whole classroom what to expect from the course and to prove myself (i.e. impress them). I guess I looked anxious and in the midst of my confusion one of the students opened a cola can and a bag of potato chips. It made a lot of noise and my first reaction was, ‘aha—I am being tested’, so I thought I either take myself seriously and act like I don’t accept it or just go with it. I stopped talking and got everybody’s attention and then said ‘WAW - it feels like I’m in the middle of a potato chip advertisement’. And then I made a munching sound and the hiss of the can opening ... everyone laughed, and I relaxed after it. What was interesting in that incident is that I was not sure of what my strength in teaching was and somehow that incident helped me realize that I can do much better when I joke and don’t take myself so seriously... although there was a risk there that I made myself vulnerable—if the students didn’t laugh it would have been such an anticlimax, I think that allowing oneself to be vulnerable is what can bring us close to the students and softens that “power” relationship and provides a model for the students for human relations.

Overview of the Scholarship for Teaching on “Beneficence”

Participants exchanged the following comments as reflective of their experience in the project as a whole.

“First let me say that as a new teacher (since I haven’t taught in quite a few years), this forum has been a form of support for me. I have especially appreciated the considerations of beginning and endings of class, hearing the human frailties and successes.”

“Indeed that is why I am so interested in the notion of beneficence because we tend to make many assumptions about the fact that we do or do not need to make it part of our curriculum ...I’d hoped to collectively find what is common in practices that we do consciously or unconsciously...”

“I think it’s [beneficence] most often not even talked about. I remember some big shot music education guy standing up in a conference and announcing that all he wanted to do was ‘teach.’ He didn’t want to worry about anything else. It struck me as so odd and actually impossible.”

“Well, I think it’s safe to say that everyone has had a really busy fall and time has been short—but we have had a few great conversations...I think I’d summarize by saying that sharing stories about our teaching has pointed out the amazing things that people do individually to promote beneficence in the classroom and that teaching is sometimes really lonely...We hold a space for students and try to keep them engaged and nourished—that is sometimes difficult, and when we have difficulty doing it we worry and often have no one to confide in or else we feel funny confiding...”

“I found it great to think about these topics and to have someone interested in my thoughts. These are usually things I think to myself or speak to my supervisor. What was important for me to see is that I have grown as a therapist during the years. I am not afraid to face my own conflicts. And I am not afraid of facing conflicts in the group. And it has to do with transference issues as well. Thinking about well-being brought to my consciousness the fact that it is ok to not have well-being in class. It is normal and the other ‘side’ of it. It is important that the instructor is aware of the whole process. Staying with it will allow it to end! Trust the process we say. Yes, when things go bad, it is very difficult to trust. But lately I look at processes in life, clients, students, myself, as a rainbow of possibilities. If I use one color out of the whole, in a repetitive way, I deprive myself of the whole range, crippling my abilities in a way. I will not have the conscious will or choice in any of the colors. They will just happen on me and I will not join them. We don’t have much choice really but to agree to the flow and join it. With luck, we learn to appreciate the greater things that work in us, if they let us humbly join them. (Well this sounds a bit ambiguous by now.) Still I think you understand what I am saying.”

“As a clinical internship professor I use time in the classroom to promote well-being. I begin the first half hour asking students for their pulse. I also leave at least ten minutes for students to talk about their successful time in addition to their problematic cases. I find the use of humor combined with an empathetic response promotes well being. One particular example of the outcome of this kind of environment involved a student who confessed she felt repulsed by one of her special education clients. The class tried to help but they too felt stymied by the problem. I suggested everyone go home and sleep on it. The student phoned me the next day and wanted to share her sights and I asked that she share it with the group.

The student shared with the group how she realized that she had repressed the awareness of her twin who was born mentally challenged and permanently put into a locked facility. She hadn’t seen her in 20 years and was racked with guilt and shame. Because of the support from the class, she went to see her sister and was able to hug her for the first time.

Her experience was transformative in and out of class because of the humanness of the class.”

Miscellaneous Bits

Many small forays into other topic areas also took place in the discussions. One was introduced by the facilitator as “Chocolate—really dark sometimes filled with raspberry or really good chocolate not the cheap stuff can be a life saver in intensive teaching.” It became a metaphor for how faculty nurture themselves and how easy it is to forget or to not feel the license to include faculty when we speak of the importance of nurturing everyone in the classroom. As one faculty wrote, “It is so warm hearting to read your words, it is you in it, as if I hear you...Well, chocolate, I like it in all shapes colors and tastes.”

Another topic that arose was the aesthetics of the classroom—being mindful of space—the environmental implications in promoting well being. Some of the group’s comments on this topic are below.

“When I thought of what would make the classroom ‘an environment’ which advances well-being and comfort, and I thought of two things: one is the view in most of the classes that the students and I enjoyed. The classroom had big windows overlooking a beautiful view of the mountains and olive trees in the vicinity of the campus. I also thought of the interaction, especially that we had always discussions and active learning. Then I thought, well, it would also be nice to ask some of the students that I taught and three of them told me that what impressed them the most was that we sat in a circle. That for them was an important departure from the conventional way that the other teachers had the classroom look like.”

“Yes, concerning set up. The room, the ability for it to be not too tidy, is important to me. It needs to be large enough so that every one finds theirs space to do art. (Like at home, if the kids have their own bedroom, and then they join together in the living room.) The time, the ideal time for me is 3.5 hours. For a group meeting in teaching art therapy, the amount of people matters a lot. An ideal group seems to be between 12—14 students. (Which I never get) ...so that every one gets their attention and I can still keep my own well-being.”

“Psychologically/emotionally, I think the characters of the learning community—the trust and care with which people treat each other—are just as important to opening the body/mind/spirit to learning, to transformation.

The authenticity of the instructor is critical here—if she/he hasn’t done their own work, is insecure, leaky emotionally (projecting) and unable to facilitate and guide each student with a loving presence then some of that student’s (and community’s) energy will be taken up guarding themselves from her/him. So the health and well-being of the instructor is reflected in the quality of the learning that is happening—a good reason to support different kinds of professional development (not just papers and presenting!!). I would also make the case that aesthetics speak to our souls/spirits and that attention to beauty both in our surroundings and in the content increase our sense of well-being and open us to each other and the program of study. I am not sure we talked enough about brain-based

learning—about the connection between how we learn and the conditions in which we learn. There is research that shows that poor lighting, poor air quality etc. affect our ability to learn—that our physical well-being is critical to our capacity for interacting with new ideas. How do you manage to send your joyful, enthusiastic EXPRESSIVE self through e-mail so successfully! You make my day shine brighter. There. I have a lot of feelings about all this. I am a fan of emancipatory learning and even though I know instrumental learning is necessary (how do I use that screwdriver) I believe my capacity to do both is enhanced if not wildly better if my well-being is attended to as both student and instructor.”

“Set up is important as it allows known things to happen before we delve into the unknown that can be a bit scary. So, the beginning of a group tends to be the same. We do processing on what happened last time and the didactic aspects of it.”

“I thought much of the meaning of well being for me and in the classroom. It seems that my well being as an instructor affects the class, and as a beginning I see this as my responsibility as an instructor to first take care of me. We tend to forget that. It means even simple physical things like going to the toilet before class, having a drink, or being not hungry. So that I am not preoccupied and am ready to contain what may come. Well-being could be many things, constancy, trust, honesty, containment, being happy to see each other, being happy to come to class; anticipating excitement. I wondered if the importance of keeping well-being could not stop people from projection and expressing freely their resistances. Could all subjects have a place in the room? So if well-being has to do with feeling well only, then we might be depriving our students of their right for the ‘dark side’. I know from a long time of experience that nice is nicer... but not necessarily more effective.”

“It seems that well-being comes from attending to our needs. Working with our topics of body, soul, spirit, and mind brings to a state of confidence, that here is a place that I can find comfort in, I will be accepted, there are people like me—I am not alone. Within this context people might feel free to bring their ‘dark sides’. Still, I know that I have a tendency to be a ‘very good mother’ and quiet the antagonistic voices quickly... in the last few years I learned to stay with my own discomforts—which I find extremely important in teaching. I don’t fight off emotional discomfort, I stay with it. (In the group or with an individual) The art it seems, is to not be afraid to go all the way to ‘the dark’ in order to come out on the other side—to light, this is probably more intensified since Gestalt has taken a more conscious place in my life. Being able to contain the conflict, allowing the students to see me there, not afraid of it, gives them the opportunity to trust themselves, at least in this situation, to stay in it until they finish with it for this time. As an instructor I have to be aware of what is happening of course. And move with it like in art, to see the potential energy in what is hidden. So it might be that well being and conflict are interwoven together, one does not exist with out the other.”

Additional Reflective Thoughts From Facilitator Julia Byers

The inclusion of Israeli and Palestinian professors in this ongoing dialogue broadened the scope of global teaching. As I summarize our experience on the Promotion of Well-Being, I’m in Israel, mentoring, teaching, supervising and presenting at our co-sponsored

conference “Imagine: Expressions in the Service of Humanity.” Today is the last day of the intensive teaching of over 15 faculty from four different programs. Today the day began with the news that one of our students from the leadership program had been murdered the night before. An intruder came to her front door. As she opened the door, the intruder stabbed her in the stomach. Her 10 & 12 year old children heard their mother scream and called the police. They ran to find her in a pool of blood. She died on the way to the hospital. Since she was a lawyer there were all sorts of rumors about whether or not the criminal was a client or a robber or had other motives. No one knew. But the image in our heads, of a senseless murder was the fact that a student from our community had died. Her classmates were devastated. Neighbors and best friends were in our orientation, everyone was affected to greater or lesser degrees. In the service of others, people came forward to help those who were most directly involved. For others, it triggered profound grieving from former conflicts and losses. For still others the normalcy of death and dying through global media portrayed this loss as yet another indicator of the chiastic brutality that can be found in these different years and went about their work. While some may categorize this situation as crisis intervention, bereavement training or organizational response, I feel it still falls within the commonality of unexpected teaching experiences. The knowledge and awareness of how to handle human tragedy in the timing and pacing of the classroom experience; obstacles we face in learning; the skill of beginning or ending classes contextualized to the learning moments or experience in teaching; and or the need for further research in the scholarship of teaching which affects the beneficence for all, raises the need for confirmed dialogue with professors. Wellbeing is not only relegated to the allspice of therapeutic training. It encompasses all graduate university and faculty. In Israel, we immediately gathered to acknowledge the shock and the profound loss of our community members. Some professors announced the information and provided a moment of silence to reflect. Others made time to process the multiple levels of awareness in working & helping others under similar horrific circumstances. Some educators provided time for students to individually or in small groups share their concerns. Others only talked about the trauma if members of their class spoke up. Regardless of their orientation, the situation demanded attention and human care. People cared. People learned from each other. The air that surrounded us all became one.

While this report of on-line and e-mail discussion on group themes and topics represented a wide span of issues within the scholarship of teaching, it began a new phase of what might be possible for further group facilitation and research. It appeared that members of the group were able to express an authenticity of their experiences without fearing criticism or judgment; to confront the hardcore black and white words upon the screen demands an openness of heart and receptivity towards others.

The mere fact that professors were able to take risks in sharing their vulnerabilities, strengths, doubts, challenges and joys, demonstrated a sense of beneficence in and of itself. In many cases a parallel process of on-going attunement to students needs appeared to be consistent with professors’ reflections in the scholarship for teaching group. We imagine that with the continued technological advances and ease of communication through computer access, the need and request for enhanced professional teaching dialogues will

become an integrative reality. The well-being of communicating with others across the borders and barriers of geographical limitations is paramount to the continued efforts of authentic teaching. To confront the tendency of isolation experienced within collegial conversations, the format can be seen as an alternative support system. When in need, the dissonance or solace in eating chocolate, may indeed hold the fuel for survival in teaching at our most human moments. We can all gobble or devour the riches to bind our anxiety behind the cover of a computer screen, while feeling the companionship of others.

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Lily Fessenden, Environmental Educator and Division Director, Audubon Expedition Institute, provided us with profound statements integrating our understanding of the ecology of the classroom.

Varda Serok, art therapist and Adjunct Faculty in Israel, struggled with the written English language and the technology, but was able to communicate her heartfelt enthusiasm for wanting to dialogue. In fact, her willingness to be a part of this group facilitated her first use of email and she acquired a computer which was previously inaccessible for her.

Rana Nashashbi, Adjunct Professor in Palestine, and PhD student in Expressive Therapies, was most responsive in sharing real situational dilemmas in teaching within military conflict areas to broaden our global scope of the deep meaning of beneficence.

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Symbols of Hope and Healing

Joan Drescher and Liz Ennis

Using Art with Families and Children

Editor's Note: This article, co-created by Joan Drescher and Liz Ennis, explores Joan's personal journey, the circumstances that brought forth her book, "The Moon Balloon," as well as the Moon Balloon Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping children and caregivers communicate through the arts. The article also reveals the process through which Joan gets inspired with the subject matter of her murals. In this article, she says, "Because art had empowered me as a child, I wanted to bring this gift to others as an adult." Joan recounts how she has used that gift as a means to bring comfort to ill, grieving or distressed families, including those in the community of Dunblane after the massacre of sixteen children.

As an artist and a healer, my mission is to bring art and beauty into dark places. During times of illness and pain we are often disconnected from the very source that connects us to Spirit and makes us feel whole. Realizing that mission, I feel that any work of creativity invokes magic, both in the one who creates and in the one or many who receive. Creating art and sharing it with others has taught me to trust the universe, follow my heart, and draw from the light within.

As a young child, I believed creativity and spirit were one. My real world was filled with bullies, difficult math tests, and a lot of kids who thought I was weird. This led to me creating a safer world to revel in. From then on I lived in my imagination and started to draw the playmates I didn't have in "real" life. While my mother read stories to me, I created pictures, paintings and little books by the pound. Art enabled my spirit to survive and it was truly a special friend.

Art had empowered me as a child and I wanted to bring this gift to others as an adult. I had a successful career as a children's book author and illustrator after completing art school, but Spirit had larger plans. Sometimes Spirit sends down angels who totally change your life, and for me Ron Moir was that angel.

A colleague, friend, and mentor, Ron saw a special power in my work. He challenged me to take a creative leap and learn how to paint large murals, although I had never done anything like this before. What a difference it made to have someone who truly believed in the work I was doing and who was convinced that I could make a significant difference in the world.

"Prayer, art and healing all come from the same source...the human soul. Research has shown us that a person in prayer, a person making art, and a person healing all have the same physiology, the same brain wave patterns and the same state of consciousness." (Samuels, p. 1)

I went from working in isolation as an illustrator, to creating art that celebrated community in a very public way. Ron Moir was a board member and volunteer for Parent's and Children Services, a human service agency in Boston's Kenmore Square. He commissioned me to paint a large 10' x 10' mural, which took me several months to complete, for the agency's stairwell to welcome clients into their healing space. It was titled "Esplanade," and it celebrates the diversity of life, depicting one of my favorite gathering places in Boston.

Although Ron died very unexpectedly before the official unveiling of the mural, the very person he wanted me to meet, from Children's Hospital, was at the opening reception. We met and shared our mutual distress for the loss of our dear and beloved friend. He later commissioned me to create a series of kites with symbols of healing for the Joint Center for Radiation Therapy at Brigham and Women's Hospital. While researching kites, I found that in many Eastern cultures, kite-flying was a way to extend one's hand to the sky, and touch the Gods. Kites, to me, represent release and freedom. These kites, which were created for the radiation therapy room at Children's Hospital, work to humanize a high-tech area. They are often remembered by patients as symbols of hope, long after having left the hospital. I believe that Ron, on a different plane, helped to make many connections for bringing my art into hospitals. These first steps opened the door to numerous opportunities for creating murals, throughout the region, at many different health care facilities.

The role of art in healing, is as old as the healing temples of Asclepius, and the use of symbols in art goes back to the first cave paintings. Studies have shown that positive imagery has a strong impact on our immune system. Carl Jung, whose work has shown the importance of symbols and images, to the mind and body, did some of this research.

As time continued, I had a challenging assignment, to create a mural for Fall River Hospital, an urban hospital that served a diverse population along the coastal city. The Marshfield Hot Air Balloon Festival inspired me, so I ripped up all my proposed drawings and did new ones. I thought to myself, "How can anyone watch one of these hot air balloons and not feel anything?" The immensity, the beauty, the fantasy of taking off and letting go, and the colors piqued my imagination and I knew I had found something magical. The balloons were not earth bound and I saw the potential for unlimited kinds of fantasy. The crowd looked in amazement, as the colorful balloons drifted up into the sky.

The mural I created for St. Ann's Hospital in Fall River featured several hot air balloons decorated with flags from every culture present in the Fall River area. I wanted the mural to be seen as a symbol of hope, creating a connection between the people of Fall River and the hospital.

I always encourage students and workshop participants to open their eyes to what Spirit, or the universe, is trying to tell them about where their work needs to go. Often, you simply need to step back, and watch what is happening around you, in order to see the message or metaphor taking place, and then interpret how it applies to your life and work. It is so important to look within, and listen to what your instinct tells you to do. And while this can be challenging in the midst of your busy life, one can often save time in the long run

by doing just that. I have found that if you're not listening to the messages intended for you, life will force you to do things over and over until you "get it."

While I have had many mentors, kind enough to share their insights and knowledge with me, my studies for four years with Dr. Anita Olds inspired and influenced my life. She was an architect and psychologist who worked in hospitals, creating children's healing environments. Her work taught me the importance of bringing nature and the outdoor environment inside, especially in cancer wards. I learned that doing interactive art with children could be an extremely powerful tool. I also came to know the importance of how people's belief systems needed to be considered first in design, and how that can change an environment. I was taught to ask the question, when going into a room, "what do you feel?", "what do you see?" and then, design from that place.

A noted expert in the field of Mind/Body studies, Dr. Roger Ehrlich ran research trials proving that patients heal more quickly while viewing an image of trees during their recovery from surgery, versus viewing a brick wall. This would prove to be an important premise for all of the hospital work I would produce, going forward. Following a workshop I ran at the ACCH (Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals) conference, two nurses from Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital contacted me to create murals for their floor. I set about developing images of Central Park and its surrounding landmarks, trees and plant life into a mural for the hospital. It was titled the "Four Seasons of Central Park" and again, I made sure that the art would connect with people in all walks of life.

My friend, Joan Borysenko, has profoundly influenced my work and life. A doctor and pioneer in Mind/Body Medicine, I met Joan, who lived in the next town, through a mutual acquaintance. We had an immediate connection, and both shared a love of the creative process. I was interested in her mind body work and her use of symbols. We later formed a women's meditation group that nurtured our creative spirits. Joan and I were drawn together to collaborate on a project using healing words and images. The book "On Wings of Light" began to unfold, and although she wrote the words and I created the art, we feel as if one mind created the book, from a higher source. The book explores the vital connection between medicine, art and the healing process. The new revised edition was published in 2003 by The Institute for Body, Mind and Spirituality at Lesley University, and includes a guide and questions for reflection and journaling.

My work with Joan has continued for the past two years through the Claritas Institute for Interspiritual Inquiries in Boulder, Colorado. Joan asked me to become their Artist in Residence, in exchange for participating in their spiritual Mentor Training Program. incredible two year institute has helped me to bring Spirit into action, and to recognize more deeply, how my journey has been so spiritually guided.

The definition of my "comfort zone" in creating murals was significantly changed when I met Dr. Larry Wolfe, Chief of Oncology for the Floating Hospital for Children in Boston. He had been given a copy of *On Wings of Light* and was intrigued by my work. He later hired me to create seven murals, titled "Symbols of Courage". Although I had created a number of murals for children's hospitals throughout the country, the landscapes I had been asked to paint for this job were unfamiliar territory.

My challenge was to depict the journey that children and families travel while at the hospital, from the first diagnosis of illness, through the complete treatment protocol. Using symbols and images, I began the process of storytelling. In this special environment, I needed to paint the dark shadows as well as the rays of hope. The clinic was a place where pain and joy lived side by side. Here, it didn't matter what you looked like on the outside, because it would probably change soon anyway—what mattered was how you felt on the inside. I felt privileged for the opportunity to record and to paint this journey to the soul. Each child I drew opened a deep place in my heart that changed my life forever. Here, families of many cultures were bound together by cancer, all saying the same prayer, “please get well little one, we love you.”

To know your subject in creating art, you must become intimate with it. I spent the summer observing the ebb and flow of this unique place of healing. Sitting in the corner of the clinic, I watched a small, frail boy, receiving chemotherapy treatment. The multicolored fish swimming in the large tank in the waiting room transfixed him. As I began to draw him, my paper became host to an amazing transformation. I painted him riding on the back of a goldfish, while attacking cancer cells with his hypodermic needle. Each cell was magically turned into a goldfish. The chemotherapy that was feeding into his arm had transformed into tiny golden stars. I had climbed inside the mind of an eight-year-old patient, letting my imagination speak to the muse that resides inside, known to me as the “creative source.” The Oncology staff, to help empower children, by viewing the images and using visualization while receiving chemotherapy treatments, later used this mural.

“Coming Home,” is a mural that illustrates children who were once ill, now returning to playing baseball and getting on school buses. Unfortunately, not all kids who have cancer make it. “Chandy” started out as a small image depicting a delightful child I had worked with, riding her way home on the back of a lively white unicorn. While at home working on this painting one afternoon, I had no idea that, earlier that day, Chandy had passed away. I was later given a poem that Chandy had written, all about a wonderful white Unicorn. It was the last one she had written. How did I know I was painting the very same unicorn she had written about in her final poem? I didn't. We were touched by something far greater than this universe, a bridge between heaven and earth. A final mural was later painted to celebrate Chandy and all the other children like her, who expressed their courage through art and poetry. It was very gratifying to hear from the families who spent countless days, and hour after hour at the clinic. The community of parents whose children received treatment at the clinic felt the murals were a reflection of who they were. Through the murals, they felt a sense of being heard and seen and many said, “at last someone knows what I have been going through.”

While I have always loved creating art with children, teaching art classes in my home town, and with my own children, my path of learning about how art can heal was to take on a more significant role. I began working at the bedside of children who were hospitalized for chronic life-threatening illnesses, helping them to create everything from journals, to coffee-filter mandalas, to magic wands and crowns to wear.

After many years of this, I am witness to how creating beauty can help transcend pain. Art can be our universal teacher during times of illness, stress and isolation. It is our doorway to the soul.

Recognizing the need for children to have a safe way to express their emotions, I created *The Moon Balloon Book*. This gave children the opportunity to explore their emotions through a journey, represented by various hot air balloons. This interactive picture book invites the child to write and draw their own feelings and images.

Although the book was rejected by numerous publishers, I felt it was important to continue to share the message of “The Moon Balloon.” I decided to bring it to the brothers and sisters of children with cancer at The Floating Hospital. I made seven dummy copies of the book and began doing workshops. Many months later, I was approached by the ACCH with an offer to put the seven murals from “Symbols of Courage” on tour, and a request to publish *The Moon Balloon Book*.

Within days of the publication of *The Moon Balloon Book*, a tragedy occurred in the small town of Dunblane, Scotland, sixteen kindergarten children and their teacher were shot and killed. The ACCH sent 725 books overseas to help as a resource in coping with the unthinkable crime. “The Moon Balloon” provided social workers with a safe vehicle to facilitate discussion about the massacre, and it was an unthreatening way to help the community handle their grief. While officials felt they didn’t want people from America telling them how to handle their grief, they were open to having an artist visit, with intentions of helping them all to heal.

Since Dunblane, *The Moon Balloon Book* has been used to help children in crisis, through hospitals, hospices, schools, and social service agencies. The book has traveled internationally, bringing its healing message to communities throughout the world. A child life worker uses it with families facing environmental disasters and children with special needs in the Philippines, where it is called the “secret buddy.” In Italy, I have run workshops for the children at Gaslini Children’s Hospital, using *The Moon Balloon Book*. It is featured on the hospital website. The artwork from the patients using the Moon Balloon was displayed in the Genoa public library, honoring the children who created it. Gaslini Hospital has invited me back every year for the past six years. Workshops have taken place in Holland; Aberdeen, Scotland; and in Canada. The book also helped numerous families who were directly involved with the tragedy of 9-11. Recently, Dr. Judy Rollins traveled to Japan to introduce *The Moon Balloon Book* to hospital administrators who are interested in translating it into their language. This country has a high suicide rate among young children, because of bullying and shame, and because children there are not encouraged to express their feelings. However, feedback has indicated that the balloons offer children an acceptable opportunity to communicate through the use of drawing.

The Moon Balloon Book can be used as a picture book with young children or a verbal exercise with older children. The book can be used by children individually or in a group. Guides can be parents, teachers, therapist, nurses, physicians or anyone who cares about helping children express their feelings.

The role of the guide is to encourage the exploration of a child's inner world in a safe and positive way. The child sets the pace. This is a special journey of growth for adults and children. With the help of my colleague, Liz Ennis, we have recently written a training guide to accompany *The Moon Balloon Book*, so that others can be taught to use it. We run workshops for children and trainings for adults with additional exercises to care for the caregiver. We train people to be conscious of the relationship between images, symbols and feelings. Through this work we are teaching how to build bridges and improve communication, using art as a tool for creating a safe environment.

This book has helped to empower children and families to connect, even when they are overwhelmed by negative circumstances. The balloons are placed in a particular order in the book so that trust is built by the first safe balloon, gradually easing into more difficult balloons. The balloons are designed so that the participant can interact with them, putting their own images and symbols in the basket and all over the balloon.

I have always felt that *The Moon Balloon Book* brought me to Massachusetts General Hospital for children. MaryLou Kelleher, Clinical Nurse Specialist for Pediatrics, had been using the book with her patients. Upon meeting her, I was to discover that my vision of creating a way to bring art to patients, merged with hers. Together, we developed an "Artist in Residence" pilot program for Mass General Hospital, based on the book and workshops, bringing art to the bedside of children. That was in the year 2000 and I am still working there today. The AIR program has been funded by the Elizabeth Whiteside Charitable Foundation and the MGH Ladies Visiting committee. My work led me to create The Imagination Kart, a portable, whimsically decorated with kites that twirl and bells that ring. This cart is filled with art supplies and books which inspire children to create their own beauty and magic. By producing art from the cart, patients and siblings can transform their hospital room with their own art creating a healing environment. Workshops and trainings are also presented to pediatric doctors and staff, enabling them to integrate the arts into care giving and medicine.

Every time I go to my cart I think of a five year old patient named Sam, and his tremendous creative spirit. A little boy in and out of the hospital for the past four years, he would wake up in the middle of the night crying and screaming with bad dreams. Clinical staff tried to coax him to talk about his recurring bad dreams but nothing seemed to help. I had already worked with him using art as a way to help him to express his anger. I was asked by his mother if I could work with him, using the Moon Balloon, because she knew he trusted me and nothing else had been working. I started by giving him a book to draw in and he controlled the pace. He was able to draw pictures of his dream and what was taking place in it. In *The Moon Balloon Book*, he drew a wide variety of images and symbols and he told me the accompanying story. He explained that he was riding in a car driven by a doctor and that he was strapped in his chair, unable to get out. He drew a picture of his face and said, "I was scared." He was adamant about going through each page of the entire book. When we got to the "angry balloon" he was able to express how mad he was, because he had cancer. Knowing a bit about this child's life, I know he had a lot more than just cancer to deal with and the many balloons gave him the opportunity to address each problem. It was interesting to notice in which balloon he put each difficulty. After he finished, a big

smile covered Sam's face and he ran down the hall, book in hand, to share with his mother. Later, he and I created a half moon out of cardboard, which he called his dream sweeper. We attached it with a string to a pole so that every night before he went to bed, he could sweep away the bad dreams. Sadly, this little boy died in October of this past year. Throughout his struggle with cancer, creating art and expressing his feelings was one of the biggest things that brought him joy. His smile stays with me to this day.

Because of children like Chandy and Sam, I know how powerfully art can make a difference, and this continues to heal my own mind, body and soul. Thus, it has become important to me to expand the work and make it available to others. Because of this, I saw the need to establish a non-profit organization dedicated to helping children and families in the healing process, bringing the wholeness of life through images. It has come to be called, The Moon Balloon Project.

Although I had just been granted the "non-profit" status for the Moon Balloon Project, after a year of hard work and struggle, I felt very alone. I tried hiring several different people to assist me, but it just wasn't working out. Meanwhile, I was paying rent on an art studio in the next town, but I never had time to use it.

Then, at the acupuncture clinic I visited regularly, I met Liz, a recent graduate of the Master's Program of Expressive Arts at Lesley University, and the former Administrator of Thompson Island Outward Bound. Spirit stepped in again and made the connection. Liz agreed to work with me as the Co-Director of the non profit, with one caveat. I would have to agree to spend at least one day a week creating art with her, at the studio I hadn't been using. Working together, our exchange of energy empowered us both. To me, Liz was a gift from the universe.

Although our art is very different, we support one another on the journey of creating and healing. We are both witness to each other's creative process, holding the spirit of sacred space.

As an artist, I worked at the bedside of wounded people, yet Liz helped me to use art to heal myself. My role was helping Liz to get her work out, in connection with the world. This was somewhat like being an escort, where one person accompanies the other, to a new and different place. We recently participated in an "Open Studios" event, where Liz sold several pieces of her artwork. Making art, we have both become richer, deeper and have connected to others. Together, we created an artistic installation, featuring chairs which mirrored what *The Moon Balloon Book* does. Using layers of color, texture and meaningful symbols, we transformed our respective chairs into a three dimensional expression of feelings.

The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances.

If there is any reaction, both are transformed

—C.G. Jung

Spirit continues to guide us as we journey to bring the work of the Moon Balloon project and the process of healing art to others. We are creating a sponsorship program to be able to send books, training guides and workshops to crisis centers, hospitals, hospices and to

those families who could benefit by it the most. Many hearts have opened to us, and we hope that the Moon Balloon and its powerful symbols will help families to give voice to their emotions during difficult times.

We feel better when strong feelings are expressed, heard and acknowledged. Only then, when the dark clouds of unexpressed emotions have parted, can hope and love be honestly expressed.

— Joan Borysenko, PhD, author of *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*.

In creating art, and sharing it with others, we are providing our children and families the opportunity to open windows to a world where caring really does take place. What could be more important than remembering where to look during times of illness and pain? I consider it a gift to be on this journey and am excited about sharing the healing power of art, available to connect us to Spirit, the very source that makes us feel whole.

Resources

Lane and Samuels, 1998. *Creative Healing, How to heal yourself by tapping your hidden creativity*. Harper, San Francisco

Toward a Participatory Worldview

Lily Fessenden

Awakening to our Interdependent Nature

Being itself is not endangered, but if we humans wish to continue to participate in the world and to honor it in any semblance of the form which has generated and nourished life thus far, then we must quite self-consciously revive our practice of interconnectedness and reweave, or otherwise support the reweaving of, the fabric which includes us. We must engage, we must enlist our bodies in the work which has always been done by the biosphere as a whole. We must lend a hand.

—Joan Halifax & Marty Peale

Introduction

The ecological crisis I describe has informed my professional and personal life over a period of twenty-five years. As a parent homeschooling her children while deeply engaged with critical pedagogy as a post-secondary student, I synthesized my studies by connecting feminism, ecology, and Buddhism. I came to an intellectual understanding of my experience in the world through feminist theory and discovering that both nature and women have been devalued in patriarchal societies I began to explore the relationship between my body and nature. I chose to develop my capacity for relationship through spiritual practice and, over time, developed an educational philosophy and practice that integrated body, mind and spirit in an ecological context. As an activist and educator I am encouraged by the holistic models that have developed as a result of the work of Freire, Dewey, hooks, Giroux, Montessori, Steiner and many others. However I have found that people consistently ignore the critical importance of our membership in the natural world to how we think, how we feel, and how we experience ourselves as something greater than our bodies and minds. It is for this reason that - my research focuses on the connection between people and nature; and why I participate in the Institute for Body, Mind and Spirit at Lesley University.

As a professional in the field of environmental education, I work with others to create a container for transformative learning that develops an ecological consciousness. I direct the Audubon Expedition Institute (AEI) at Lesley University, a program of:

higher education that fosters ecological awareness and personal and societal transformation through immersion in a variety of environments and cultures, critical reflection, and experiential learning communities. As learners, we awaken to a deeper sense of participation within the web of life and engage in lifelong ecological and social justice and responsible global citizenship (2002, p.9).

We offer the opportunity to profoundly connect with the Earth and with each other physically, psychologically and spiritually. Staff, faculty and students create collaborative circles where we explore these relationships in the context of our own practice, assess the effectiveness of our curriculum and explore the structures that support or constrain our ability to engage in transformative education.

As I participated in green politics and environmental education, I gained a significant understanding of the ecological health (or lack thereof) of the planet. Despite this knowledge and subsequent behavior changes, I do not believe that I, or others, have managed to effect the changes necessary to sustain a healthy planet, or at least a planet where life (including human life) is diverse and thriving. Theologian and leading environmental thinker Thomas Berry and physicist Brian Swimme (1994) offer us a cosmology—the Universe Story—that names our current era as a transition from the Cenozoic to the Ecozoic Era. If we are to successfully make this transition as a species I believe we need to integrate body, mind and spirit in an ecological context that leads to changes in psychology, education and economics; in the healing arts; and in our spiritual practices.

According to Drs. Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson (2000), seventy to ninety percent of the people in the world share a concern about the health of the environment (p.140). I believe that in the United States a significant and growing percentage of the population agrees that there is an ecological crisis and that changes in behavior are necessary if we are to preserve the well-being of the Earth as a whole and humanity in particular.

The magnitude of the concern leading to the needed changes in behavior by those of us whose lifestyles are contributing to the deterioration of the environment is related to how deeply we experience ourselves as part of nature (Schultz, 2000). My work rests on the assumption that profound experiences of interdependence with the natural world increase people's commitments to moving away from behaviors that contribute to the environmental degradation affecting both human and other-than-human communities. For example, through experiences of interdependence in nature, some people discover an affinity for water and develop an activist approach that has both local and global implications. Others notice that songbirds are disappearing in their own backyards; are moved to learn more; and in so doing, discover how the loss of bird habitat in South America is connected to trade issues, to the displacement of indigenous peoples. I believe the more people nurture their relationship with the Earth, the more they will be motivated to develop (or deepen) personal practices that increase their ability to live equitably within the means of nature.

Context: Ecological Crisis

Each year there are fewer songbirds waking me up on early spring mornings. The farmer up the road has discovered that the fertility of his Maine soil is declining because of coal burning plants in Ohio, and I find it difficult to afford food that is not contaminated with herbicides and pesticides. I now have friends whose illnesses include 'environmental sensitivities,' and detoxing no longer refers only to alcoholics. Each time I make a purchase I wonder if I am supporting a sweatshop or a "free" trade zone, or participating in the creation of a chemical wasteland in someone's backyard. A description of how such a

situation has come about and what people are doing about it provides the context for becoming more deeply connected to the earth and the rationale for inquiring into how to develop that deeper relationship.

What's Happening?

In 1974, systems and policy analysts Donella Meadows, Jorgen Randers and Dennis Meadows published research on possible future scenarios based on population growth and resource use. At that time, it seemed possible to recognize the relationship between a finite system—the Earth— and resource use, and to develop sustainable human economies without serious economic decline. Thirty years later, in the second edition of the publication -, the authors (2004) claim the human population is in “overshoot” and the actions needed now are ones that will only minimize, rather than avoid, the results of economic decline. According to these researchers, the conditions that produce overshoot are growth, acceleration, and rapid change; some form of limit or barrier beyond which the system may not safely go; and a delay or mistake in the perceptions and the responses that strive to keep the system within its limits (p.1). The authors believe that all of these conditions exist today.

Worldwide economic expansion and population growth have exploded and according to environmental analyst Lester Brown (2001), “the sevenfold growth in global output of goods and services since 1950 dwarfs anything in history” (p.19). In the past, the economies of industrialized countries grew one or two percent a year. Since the nineteen nineties, some developing countries are growing at the rate of seven percent a year (Brown, 2001, p.20). Growth, acceleration and rapid change characterize the global economy. What is the limit beyond which the system may not go?

All economic activities depend on the Earth’s resources. Everything on the planet (except sunshine and the occasional meteor) comes from the Earth and eventually returns to it. “Nature supplies material requirements for life, absorbs our wastes, and provides life-support services such as climate stabilization” (Wackernagel & Reese, 1996, p.8). In other words, like any other animal, humans have a habitat (the earth); and that habitat has a carrying capacity—the maximum population (of all beings) it can sustain indefinitely. Populations must act within the constraints of the system or perish. Since people are part of the earth system, this means not using resources at a faster rate than they can be renewed or replaced, and being careful not to poison the system with our waste.

There is growing scientific data that supports the conclusion “that humanity’s collective demands first surpassed the earth’s regenerative capacity around 1980” (Brown, 2003, p. 4), and that this consumption is resulting in economic decline. Environmental analyst Lester Brown (2001) writes:

Evidence that the economy is in conflict with the earth’s natural systems can be seen in the daily news reports of collapsing fisheries, shrinking forests, eroding soils, deteriorating rangeland, expanding deserts, rising carbon dioxide (CO2) levels, falling water tables, rising temperatures, more destructive storms, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, dying coral reefs, and disappearing species.

These trends, which mark an increasingly stressed relationship between the economy and the earth's ecosystem, are taking a growing economic toll. (p.4)

Furthermore, that economic toll is not shared equally within, nor among, nations. As the global economy grows, so do the inequities. Indigenous peoples, people of color and other oppressed groups are at greater risk from environmental hazards and do not have equal access to the decision-making processes that insure a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and (Fernandes, 2001). The global economic system—focused only on a bottom line divorced from people or place—has forced a shift “from subsistence to cash-crop agriculture, the loss of common land, and government policies that ... have all helped bankrupt millions of peasants [driving] them from their land—sometimes into slavery” (Bales, 1999, p.13).

Mathis Wackernagel's (1996) research on ecological footprints—using data gathered by the United Nations—makes the case that if the more than six billion people living on earth shared the standard of living (and the methods for obtaining that standard) experienced in industrialized countries, we would need at least three more Earths to provide sufficient resources. Since in industrialized nations, “endless economic growth driven by unbridled consumption has been elevated to the status of a modern religion,” and industrialized nations are rapidly developing new congregations in an “emerging global middle class” without regard to establishing ecologically sustainable economies, it seems we will need those extra planets (State of the World 2004, 5, ¶2). The average person in the U.S. uses twenty-three or more acres of land and sea to support his or her lifestyle compared to less than five acres used per person in India and China (Venetoulis et.al., 2004, p.14). It is clear that changes in consumption patterns and the economies that promote them are as important as decreasing the growth of human populations.

Despite a growing body of scientific evidence documenting the negative impact of human population and consumption on the world's ecosystems (including their human communities), it is also becoming clear that “we lack the perspectives, the cultural norms, the habits, and the institutions to cope”(p.3). Unable to stay within the limits of the system, we are satisfying the last condition of overshoot—our beliefs do not match our reality.

Why is this Happening?

If the deer herd in my backyard experienced a rapid population growth coupled with an increase in per capita consumption, most would starve within a couple of years. If they overgrazed the land, it would not regenerate in time for them to return to their previous population. Human communities are subject to this same dynamic, except that now—as a result of the rapid growth of technology, the stored energy of fossil fuels, and a disregard for human rights; some people are global grazers and the consequences of this consumption are delayed for the wealthiest nations. What made this rapid growth in population, technology, and consumption possible?

Ten thousand years ago, the agricultural revolution set the stage. As one adaptation to shrinking food sources, some people “started domesticating animals, cultivating plants, and staying in one place...The ideas of wealth, status, inheritance, trade, money, and power

were born” (Meadows, 2004, p.267) The industrial revolution is generally recognized as beginning in Great Britain in 1750 A.D. when coal replaced trees as the major source of fuel (p.269). As trees became scarce, investing in coal mines made economic sense and the infrastructure that grew around the mines required new technologies. “Machines not land became the central means of production” (p. 270).

First Great Britain, then Europe, and eventually the United States shifted economic production, from agriculture to factories. Mechanical innovations and the rapid growth of urban areas led to the formation of families and communities whose central focus were no longer the earth and its abundance. The rise of commercial capitalism and a market economy meant that wealth and status could now be obtained through profit accumulation in addition to land ownership. European-American people who had once been deeply connected to the land in their daily work were now separated from it by work in factories and urban living. This revolution in how our ancestors lived was also a revolution in how they thought.

The increasing need for the products of the earth and the subsequent destruction of forests and mined land could no longer be supported by an indigenous or organic worldview that experienced the Earth as an evolving living organism. Environmental historian Carolyn Merchant (1980) wrote that “between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the image of an organic cosmos with a living female earth at its center gave way to a mechanistic worldview in which nature was reconstructed as dead and passive, to be dominated and controlled by humans”(p.xvi). This new worldview was based on the metaphor of the machine. The Earth was perceived as a collection of parts and in industrialized societies, the idea that the Earth had capacities related to its wholeness was lost—as a mechanism it was now only the sum of its parts.

As the practice of science uncovered progressively smaller units of matter, the ability to apprehend nature as a whole was devalued. The knowledge of the earth available through intuitive (or non-rational) embodied experience, or through recognition of process and interrelationships (systems thinking) did not fit into the reductionist paradigm created by the developing sciences. According to author Linda Kohanov (2003), a specialist in Equine Experiential Learning and Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy:

Vast nuances of information arise from behavior, emotional import, intent, and more subtle energetic exchanges, qualities so grossly downplayed in postindustrial society that people are losing their ability to function fully and authentically. (xxx)

The loss of knowledge through intuition and/or embodied experience, the scientific emphasis on reason, and the development of technologies that allowed people to spend less and less time outdoors, have resulted in industrialized and post-industrialized societies where people act as if they are not part of nature or subject to its principles.

This disconnection between our bodies and the world is particularly evident in the increasing rates of obesity and degenerative diseases in countries that have applied a mechanistic worldview to agriculture. In her book *Real Food*, Nina Planck (2006) writes, “The so-called diseases of civilization are caused by the foods of civilization. More

accurately, the diseases of industrialization are caused by the foods of industrialization.” In these societies our human behavior provides clear evidence of how alienated people are from the natural world. We pollute the air we breathe and the water we drink, and destroy the soil that grows our food. Yet we continue to seek solutions that do not recognize that people are natural systems embedded in a larger system. We do not seem to recognize the natural restraints of that system, and I think this is because we do not consciously experience ourselves as part of nature.

What Can We Do?

A shift in worldview is necessary to bring industrialized societies into ecological balance. In her list of the ten leverage points that create systemic change, activist and scholar Donella Meadows (1997) said that the most effective leverage point is also the most difficult--the mindset or paradigm out of which the system arises. (I use the words ‘paradigm’ and ‘worldview’ synonymously as the belief structure out of which each of us operates.) Since “the 12 percent of the world living in North America and Western Europe account for 60 percent of global private consumer spending” (Signposts, 2004), a change from the mechanistic, dualistic worldview that is predominant in the United States could mitigate the effects of overshoot through the development of sustainable human economies. William D. Ruckelshaus, twice Director of the Environmental Protection Agency and later Chairman of the Board of the World Resources Institute asks:

Can we move nations and people in the direction of sustainability? Such a move would be a modification of society comparable in scale to only two other changes: the Agricultural Revolution of the late Neolithic and the Industrial Revolution of the past two centuries. Those revolutions were gradual, spontaneous, and largely unconscious. This one will have to a fully conscious operation, guided by the best foresight that science can provide...If we actually do it, the undertaking will be absolutely unique in humanity's stay on the Earth. (Meadows, Randers & Meadows, 2004, p.265)

There is a conscious revolution (a sustainability revolution) happening worldwide. Quantum physicists are coming together with molecular biologists, integral philosophers, architects, engineers and community leaders to design sustainable human systems guided by ecological principles. Since 1990, thousands of these innovators have gathered at the yearly Bioneers(1) conference) to share their experiences. Whether this revolution will be successful—will result in sustainable communities—is not yet known. If it succeeds, I believe that like the agricultural and industrial revolutions, this sustainability revolution will result in a change in our worldview. We need to consciously seek this change if we are to respond effectively to the ecological crisis now upon us.

A Participatory Worldview

What worldview will emerge as sustainability becomes the driving force for our communities? A mechanistic worldview focuses on objects while a participatory worldview emphasizes process and relationship (Capra, 1996; deQuincey, 2002; Fisher, 2002; Heron, 2003; Reason & Bradbury 1997; Skrbina, 2001). The former is characterized

by separation and the latter by interdependence. It makes sense that developing a participatory worldview will help us transition out of the Industrial period and into the sustainability period.

A participatory worldview recognizes that “our world is co-created both by the given cosmos and by how we apprehend it and make choices within it” (Heron, 2001, p. 333). Since the 1970’s, discoveries in neurobiology support the theory that “cognition...is not a representation of an independently existing world, but rather a continual bringing forth of a world through the process of living” (Capra, 1996, p.267). Peter Reason (1998), a practitioner of participatory action research and co-operative inquiry, summarizes the ontology of a participatory worldview as a subjective-objective reality comprised of

a given cosmos, a primordial reality, in which the mind actively participates. Mind and the given cosmos are engaged in a cocreative dance, so that what emerges as reality is the fruit of an interaction of the given cosmos and the way mind engages with it. (p.44)

According to ecopsychologists, cognitive scientists, some indigenous peoples and mystics, the cognitive interaction between our embodied selves and the context in which we are embedded is intelligent, responsive and interdependent (Capra, 1996, p.269). As conscious beings made of the sun, water, air and earth, we participate as co-creators in an alive, intelligent universe.

Knowledge evolves as interplay—a dialogue—between matter and mind, human and other, the stars and the grasses. Restoring a conscious participation in this dance could expand our capacity to make decisions that serve the whole.

In his doctoral dissertation on participatory worldview, David Skrbina (2001) also calls for a different worldview at this time. His philosophical exploration of participation, an exchange that is co-creative, as a key aspect of a participatory worldview provides a foundation for understanding how reciprocity, inter-subjectivity and communion are not only possible, but offer the potential for fundamental change. In his final chapter, Skrbina concludes:

The means by which participation is physically embodied is in the manifold forms, structures and systems of the universe. From the noetic perspective, it represents a panpsychic vision of mind, of mind as immanent in all levels of being.(2) Thus participation is the unifying factor of a Participatory Reality. In this sense participation is the single most fundamental fact of existence. It underlies being and becoming, mind and matter (p.332).

Skrbina offers an in-depth discussion of the history of the idea that all matter has consciousness and he situates his theory of hylonoism (all matter is alive) as an interpretation of participatory philosophy. His study is informed by the work of anthropologists, social scientists, physicists, and philosophers. According to Skrbina (2001), the idea that matter has consciousness is the basis for a participatory worldview that is fundamentally interactive and provides the foundation for a participatory epistemology that makes real the connection between self and other. Restoring a conscious

connection between people and nature or fostering a participatory worldview “places us back in relation with the living world—and we note that to be in relation means that we live with the rest of creation as relatives, with all the rights and obligations that implies” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p.4). According to researchers Bradbury and Reason (1997), a participatory worldview is an embodied, cognitive experience that “locates the practical response to human problems in its necessary wider, spiritual context” (p.11).

How Might a Participatory Worldview Help?

Psychologist P. Wesley Schultz (2000) studied research on the relationship between environmental issues and pro-environmental behavior for thirty years and began to define a “broad social-cognitive theory for environmental concern” (p.91). He identified three types of environmental concern that motivate pro-environmental behavior: egoistic (concern for self first), social-altruistic (includes concern for other people), and biospheric (includes concern for all living things) (p.392). Schultz believes that “the types of environmental concerns people develop are associated with the degree to which they view themselves as interconnected with nature” (p.392).

According to Schultz (2000), people with each type or level of concern can intervene positively in the system that is creating environmental degradation and social injustice. For example, at the egoistic level a person can ride a bike to work because in addition to reducing pollution and a reliance on oil, riding a bike increases personal health and saves money. At the social-altruistic level, moral principles and a desire to increase the welfare of the collective can stimulate grassroots activism against institutions, such as the World Trade Organization or the U.S. government, that are perceived to be engaged in activities that create social injustice and environmental degradation. Biospheric concern includes consideration of the more than human world as expressed in the following words of environmental activist John Seed (1988):

There and then I was gripped with an intense, profound realization of the depth of the bonds that connect us to the Earth, how deep are our feelings for these connections. I knew then that I was no longer acting on behalf of myself or my human ideas, but on behalf of the Earth...on behalf of my larger self, that I was literally part of the rainforest defending itself (p.66).

I believe this biospheric concern needs to be developed by more people of the western world so that we are acting on behalf of something larger than ourselves, and that developing a biospheric concern is enhanced by the felt experience of interdependence expressed above by John Seed. Using Peter Reason’s more poetic language, another way to describe this development of biospheric concern is the recovery of “the grace of embeddedness in the natural world” (Reason, 2004, p.18). Recovering the grace of embeddedness restores to consciousness the relationship between self and other, between me and the plants and animals with which I live, and makes communication possible with beings that don’t speak the language(s) of humans. I believe that this grace of embeddedness in the natural world nurtures a participatory worldview and expands the human capacity to act in service to the whole. John Seed’s actions were not for him or other humans; he became the rainforest acting for itself.

Author Tom Harmer (2003) writes, “The earth is always speaking to us, tellin’ us how to live, how to be on her side. Most of it falls on deaf ears. I’m just tryin’ to learn how to listen” (p.172). It seems clear that to make the shift to a participatory worldview, to feel a biospheric concern and recover the grace of embeddedness—to learn how to listen—requires the development of an ecological consciousness. By this I mean not only a knowledge of the relationships among living organisms, but a deeply felt awareness of interdependence arising out of personal experience of those relationships.

Ecological Consciousness

The recognition that many people are disconnected from nature is not new, nor is the idea that restoring that connection might contribute to our personal and planetary health. In the United States, some people date the beginning of the American environmental movement to 1845 when Henry David Thoreau moved to Walden Pond (Environmental Movement Timeline, 2005). Thoreau’s decision to live a simpler life is seen as an attempt to restore connection and further develop his ecological consciousness. Many years later, the industrialized society to which Thoreau was responding has grown, as has the recognition that our western lifestyle has created an ecologically illiterate population disconnected from nature. I believe that the environmental education movement in the United States is an insufficient response to this illiteracy, and that a transformative model of education is necessary at this time if we are to develop the participatory worldview I believe is essential to ecological consciousness. The transformative education I envision includes what psychotherapist Andy Fisher (2002) calls the project of ecopsychology, a historical undertaking comprised of four tasks that are specific to this moment in time (p.6). Fisher describes these four tasks as:

- Psychological: To acknowledge and better understand the human-nature relationship as a relationship;
- Philosophical: To place psyche (soul, anima, mind) back into the (natural) world;
- Practical: To develop therapeutic and recollective practices toward an ecological society;
- Critical: to engage in ecopsychologically based criticism (2002, p.7-16).

The four tasks of ecopsychology provide a framework or map of what we can do to restore ecological consciousness.

Looking at lifestyle decisions that people in the United States are still making even though many environmental crises have been brought to our attention, it seems clear that the thirty plus years of environmental education in the U.S. is an insufficient response to the crisis we now face. According to the Report Assessing Environmental Education in the United States and the implementation of the National Environmental Education Act of 1990:

Environmental education is a learning process that increases people’s knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address these challenges, and

fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action (p.3).

Although the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has been actively promoting and developing non-formal and formal approaches to develop this literacy since 1971, a 2004 summary of ten years of research by the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) and leading U.S. consumer market research and trends company Roper Starch found that widespread environmental illiteracy persists. According to the research summary by former NEETF president Kevin Coyle (2004)

Just 32% of Americans have a basic awareness of environmental topics

All but 20% are heavily influenced by incorrect or outdated environmental myths

Just 12% can pass a basic quiz on awareness of energy topics (p.8)

Despite this illiteracy, the 1990 Environmental Education Act, and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2015), the Bush White House recommended cutting all support for environmental education in 2005.

Though public education in the United States has not yet implemented environmental education as a core discipline in the education of its citizenry, educators in both non-formal and formal settings have developed curriculums and programs, standards for excellence, and teacher trainings (www.eelink.net). However, like many of the authors cited earlier (Bales; 1999; Brown, 2003; Gardner, Assadourian & Sarin, 2004; Meadows, Randers & Meadows, 2004), I don't believe these efforts are sufficient to meet the challenges of population growth and increasing consumption. In addition, "environmental education is at risk of becoming an instrument of dominant state policies that...continue to distract people from the goal of developing an ecological conscience rooted in connection to the land" (Gruenewald, 2003, p.29). As a result, environmental education could have the effect of continuing to maintain the status quo instead of transforming worldviews. As evidence mounts in support of overshoot and a resulting economic decline, it seems prudent to look beyond mainstream educational methods for solutions.

Developing a participatory worldview and biospheric concern requires education that is transformative. Transformative education changes perceptions and actions at a fundamental level, at the level where we form our values and beliefs. In distinguishing between education that conditions people to conform to an accepted worldview and education that is transformative, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) quotes Richard Shaull:

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (p.16).

The reality we are experiencing in 2005—a Western culture so disconnected from nature that the consequences are planetary—compels a creative, participative, and transformative response. Transformative learning in this context means discovering the beliefs and assumptions energizing that alienation, developing the methods for changing those beliefs, and constructing a new worldview.

I am making the case that healing our disconnection from the Earth will positively affect industrialized human behavior towards a more sustainable future. In the discussion that follows I name disciplines and philosophies that explore this connection—deep ecology and ecopsychology—and concepts such as biophilia, intersubjectivity and reciprocity that attempt to describe a felt relationship between the human and other than human world. Like environmental education, these ideas and disciplines have taken shape since the 1960's and 70's as a response to the growing ecological crisis. Each of them speaks to the development of an ecological consciousness.

I agree with the way Gregory Smith & Dilafruz Williams (1999) differentiate ecological education from mainstream environmental education. Smith and Williams define the first principle of ecological education as the “development of personal affinity with the earth through practical experiences out-of-doors and through the practice of an ethic of care” (p.7). Similarly, Pulitzer Prize winning author and biologist E.O. Wilson (1993) uses the term ‘biophilia’ to describe this affinity. He defines biophilia as “the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms” p.1). Other terms—biospheric concern (Schultz, 2000), mutual reciprocity (Schauffler, 2003); empathic resonance, intersubjectivity (de Quincey, 2005) and interbeing (Hahn, 1998)—also describe this experience of the interrelatedness or interdependence that is part of developing the ecological consciousness necessary to a participatory worldview.

In her study of ecological conversions of a person “turning to earth,” Marina Schauffler (2003) names reciprocity as one of the key elements of becoming reconnected “with the ecological whole” (p. 6). The experience of reciprocity awakens empathy and this “empathic understanding confers on each being the status of a valued subject, a creature of intrinsic worth rather than an incidental accessory or backdrop” (p. 93). This idea that all beings have intrinsic worth is a major emphasis of the deep ecology movement (Sessions, 1995), a response to the ecological crisis that removes humans from the center of concern and acknowledges the spiritual component in the experience of interdependence.

Ecopsychology has developed as a response to the loss of a conscious experience of interdependence. As a practice, it explores “the basic shifts in our patterns of identity and relationship that occur when we include our connection to the web of life around us as essential to human well-being” (Fisher, 2002, p. 4).

Fisher defines recollective practices as “activities that aim more directly at recalling how our human psyches are embedded in and nurtured by the larger psyche of nature and at relearning the essentially human art of revering, giving back to, and maintaining reciprocal relations with an animate natural world” (p.13). These practices allow us to experience ourselves in relationship physically, psychologically and spiritually.

James Swan (2000), one of the first environmental psychologists, describes five paths to developing nature kinship, ecological consciousness and ecological advocacy: 1) becoming well-informed; 2) developing a concern for personal and public health; 3) seeking personal health and fitness; 4) nurturing a sense of social justice; and 5) paying attention to emotional/spiritual experiences (p. xxiv-xxviii). Environmental education in the United States has tended to take an instrumentalist approach, focusing on “some form of conventional literacy [and] when this happens, the importance of experience, perception, and the development of empathetic connection is marginalized” (Gruenewald, 2003, p.34). Experiences of embeddedness and interdependence are the emotional/spiritual experiences in Swan’s fifth path. This path makes possible, or at least enriches, all the other paths. “Emotions...make possible the evaluative experience of self and world, and therefore are the very precondition of moral perception, of being able to ‘see’ a situation morally before deliberating rationally about it” (Thompson, 1999, p.16).

Environmental education has not created the changes in understanding and behavior that are necessary to respond to what is happening to the ecosystems on which we depend and of which we are a part. I believe that experiential education models that lead to the development of ecological consciousness—the project of ecopsychology—are necessary to creating the felt connection to nature that results in the types of concern that motivate pro-environmental behavior.

Awakening to an Interdependent Nature

Ecological education is a transformative learning model that develops ecological consciousness through direct experience with places, people and cultures. According to education professors Gregory A. Smith & Dilafruz R. Williams (1998) the following principles guide this educational experience:

- *Development of personal affinity with the earth through practical experiences out-of-doors and through the practice of an ethic of care.*
- *Grounding learning in a sense of place through the study of knowledge possessed by local elders and the investigation of surrounding natural and human communities.*
- *Induction of students into an experience of community that counters the press toward individualism that is dominant in contemporary social and economic experiences.*
- *Acquisition of practical skills needed to regenerate human and natural environments.*
- *Introduction to occupational alternatives that contribute to the preservation of local cultures and the natural environment.*
- *Preparation for work as activists able to negotiate local, regional, and national governmental structures in an effort to adopt policies that support social justice and ecological sustainability*

- *Critique of cultural assumptions upon which modern industrial civilization has been built, exploring in particular how they have contributed to the exploitation of the natural world and human populations (p. 7).*

Using these principles as a guide to develop environmental education experiences addresses the psychological, philosophical, practical and critical tasks of ecopsychology thus developing the ecological consciousness that is a critical component of a participatory worldview. The education is experiential by necessity (how else can one come into a felt relationship with place?) and as participants experience an embodied relationship with the whole of their environment their level of concern changes and with it their behavior.

Engaging consciously in the creative transformation of a mechanized, industrial worldview to a participatory worldview at a societal level requires an understanding of the need for such a change and the capacity to do it. The earth is currently speaking to us through a changing climate and compromised ecosystems. Some of us are listening and changing—whether we have the capacity to make it a revolution on the scale of the agricultural and industrial revolutions will depend on how we respond to the coming challenges as educators and citizens. This response must be an integrated approach to the whole of our experience—to our embeddedness in nature as bodies, minds and spirits.

The Peace of Wild Things

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come in to the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and I am free.*

- Wendell Berry

End Notes

(1). Founded in 1990, Bioneers is a nonprofit organization that promotes practical environmental solutions and innovative social strategies for restoring the Earth and communities. www.bioneers.org

(2). In other words in terms of consciousness, mind is everywhere

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Remembering the Collective Body

Dicki Johnson

A Dynamic Understanding of Attunement and Healing

Home: Late Fall, 2006: A circle of stones remains, unmoved, at the threshold of my home. Offspring of the earth's union with the sea, the collection is varied in size, texture, patterns and color. They were waiting for me last summer in the shore's low tide outer perimeter: The lifetime of these stones has primarily been one of immersion, under the sea, within larger rocks. Here at home, they remind me of the hidden. I notice today that the unmoved have gathered, into their original circle of kind, the fallen pine needles of surrounding trees.

Incorporation, Nature's Body and Voice and Voice Internalized

East Hampton, N.Y., 1960: The room itself feels like a fount of light, shaped by glass walls whose pale blue draping shroud then reveal the surrounding landscape. With silent reverence, we anticipate the familiar music, the prelude to our shared ritual; Nature's voices amplified around us, we sit, a circle of bubbles inside a huge bell which sings the songs of the wind, of the sea and of the birds. Moments earlier, whispering and giggling girls wearing sneakers and shorts, we moved toward a chest of drawers, Pandora's box (we remember that only "Hope" was left in that box).

Our voices stilled now, we open the drawer, anticipating the simple silk garments that assist in our transformation: Goddesses.

I loved that metamorphosis, which seemed to begin when I held the silk tunic in my hands. The world became still and warm, my friends became sisters who shared a secret with me. Like the fairies and elves of nature imagined, we entered the realm of inspired music, truth and beauty. Here in this place we were both heroic Amazons and diaphanous winged creatures, changing, with the music, like the many faces of love.

Here we held the hands of Athena and Aphrodite in our graceful walk through the midsummer's forest. Here in Nature's garden, no fear, anger or hate darkened our innocent hearts, no judgment or competitive spirit interrupted the rhythmic beating of our collective heart: Actualizing a vision I'd read about, or remembered from some place, I was ennobled yet humbled, peaceful yet joyful. Running the chase of the wind, swimming the dynamic sea's ebb and flow, circling and entwining, we girls were the flower maidens, nymphs, fauns, satyrs, and graces of Dionysus, the Bacchae, and of Botticelli.

Communing with Nature: Her rhythm, her secrets, her promises, was our birthright. The light, which we experienced in our personal awakenings, we understood to be the twinkling of the greater reality to which we all belonged. We little girls, danced, assuming truths, which the physical frame or brain independently, could not access. These truths could never be translated verbally. I don't remember talking about our shared experience. Were there any words to describe the musical inspiration or the streaming of soul light, which ennobled our bodies with spiritual grace? Here was a place to honor our affiliation to all of nature's

life forms, to our ancestors and to our progeny. Here was one of the temples of Isadora Duncan, where I received, as a child, the gifts of her legacy. Home: 2006: I return frequently to this memory; it flows through my veins, it moves my bones, it inspires my creative heart, and assists in my ability to aspire, to hope. My meandering path has taken me to places where man has turned away or has been taken from the light of communion. It is in these darkened rooms of despair that I have experienced the indomitable nature of the human spirit: Life's continuum, past flowing to future. I see a hand digging into the earth's memory of "Belief", pulling out a victorious fist full of life, which is then offered up to heavens with renewed "Hope".

Affiliation: Transforming Mob to Flock

Boston State Hospital, MA, 1980: I observe the collective: Mentally retarded men and women housed together because of a common affliction. Slow moving and thinking, they have been isolated from the social and intellectual fast lane. Somewhere, later on, I learned that the oldest meaning of "affliction" includes: "a vision or spiritual sight that follows upon a time of darkness and torment." I think of the hand digging into the earth.

The most intellectually "bright" of the group insists on disconnection from his peers, aspiring to be part of the staff collective, mimicking word phrases and gestures of those heroes. Judgment: Who decided that people should be grouped according to their afflictions, disabilities, torment, and pain rather than for their strengths, their ability, their inspiration, and their joy? As a young woman, an Expressive Therapies intern imbued with the memory of the Garden, I understood that light and dark exist in us all. And...in nature there is no judgment. It occurs to me that gazing into the mirror created by relationship, one will see reflected back the profane or the sacred; the task at hand would be to help my "afflicted" charges to access the sacred in each other. I remember the girls in my Duncan circle, or more accurately, I don't remember them. My memory is of the transformed collective created by our shared relationship to Nature's rhythm. That bond is deeper than any man-made distinction which segregates and falsely restricts: the rich from the poor, the black from the white, the ambulatory from the sedentary, the leaders from the followers, the old from the young, the male and the female. That rhythm moves through us all, and as we respond to it collectively, the "Mob" of egocentric isolates is transformed to a "Flock" of beautiful beings experiencing themselves as one organism.

I am back inside the bell. Sacred voices long lost have been reclaimed as we sit, encircled by the institutional walls. The "affliction" has taken on its oldest meaning, as a selectively mute, profoundly retarded man remembers his song. Holding on to the perimeter of a parachute, we are able to circumambulate without holding hands, moving like an embodied mandala, which calms our collective body. The visual circle ripples, wave like, in its repetitive path. We focus on the stillness we encircle, and experience the creation of, or reconnection with, something greater than "I" or "Them." The sounds which are amplified in this stillness, are the sounds of our feet stepping in unison. And then the voice emerges from deep inside the bell: The voice of the sacred remembered. The man made mute by his oppressor (a world which ripped him from the vortex of life's rhythm) begins to sing, to the beats of our step, in perfect Latin, the Bach/Gounod "Ave Maria".

Surrender

Affiliation and Solitude

Home, 2006: After an intense reconnection with memory, I am drawn out again by the visual distractions in my room. Two photos which I have placed together because of their stunning similarity, and a painting of a mother/child team, challenged by the blowing wind, hanging their laundry. The photos, of individual offerings, are my husband and my son each with plates of fruit. The painting, created by a young woman friend, is one of her last; a brain tumor brings her to the end of her life. It is autumn, and I'm thinking how grateful I am for the seasons, with their cyclic changes, and their promised returns. I think of choices I've made. I think of the life cycle. I surmise: All life forms have in common a beginning and an ending. The living of one's life is the passage which lies between. The length of the passage varies from person to person, from life form to life form. Choices we make determine the types of relationships we will form with the natural environment, with the people around us, and with ourselves. One of those choices involves surrender or resistance to this flow of life. I think of driving a car on an icy surface, surrendering to the skid's path rather than braking. In body work forcing resistant muscles always yields more intense resistance. Surrendering involves trust in the rhythm of nature that envelops us. Resistance is fighting that rhythm. The choice affects how we perceive and consequently care for our bodies, our peers, our families, and our world.

Isadora Duncan expressed a theory of continuous movement that included sensitivity to the literal and metaphorical flow of energy into and out of the body. In search of movements expressive of the human spirit, her technique: glorifies natural movement, sources rhythmic and emotional links fundamental to all life forms, and traces dance to its sacred roots using mythological archetypes and ritual. My understanding of this theory came through my childhood embodiment of it, not through the words written about it. I have reminded myself of that every time I have been tempted to teach with words rather than actions.

Empathy, Intuition and Socialization

Center Studio, Boston, MA: 1987: The garden, the visual symphony, is composed of flowers, whose tempos of entrance and exit vary with their colors. Blossomings appear random as they are rarely in unison. Yet do they not all respond to the same underlying rhythm in their self determined unfolding?

The former patients of "deinstitutionalized" Boston State Hospital now reside in various community residences. The weeds and wild flowers have now moved in to share territory with the cultivated specimens. Center Studio is a microcosm of this merger; here we find oasis, as we source our similarities rather than differences. DMR (Department of Mental Retardation) is looking for activity based socialization programs for their "clients"; many of them are sent to Center Studio. I have gained a reputation as one who will work with the improbable. My students are all superlative: too young, too old, too aggressive, too sedentary, too deaf, too blind, too fearful, too fearless. In this place I will, also, begin to carry on Isadora Duncan's legacy as I invite children to become part of the heritage, dancing her choreographies. In time, the two populations and respective programs become

one. Children, tunic-ed, cross the threshold into the dance space, as the deaf, mentally retarded adults exit. They understand and acknowledge their connection as they pass the torch: the shared room, the music, and the light. Outsiders question the “appropriateness” of letting little children, the rose buds, be exposed to the “Mentally defective”, the weeds. I wonder if they believe that what is hidden does not exist. (We play “ Peek-a-Boo” with babies to contradict this misconception.) Before children learn to judge and qualify beauty, they understand that all life forms are “One,” ebbing and flowing, rising and falling, opening and closing.

I notice that many children experience a loss of this innocence, and a dampening of their intuition and empathy, around the age of four years. Socialization is responsible. It obscures their vision, and their clear affinity to the “One” that they are; they look for the differences that define “ugly.” They stop looking inward for the answers, waiting to be told what to do, how to think. Fortunately, the memory of that innocence is held and hidden in our bodies. Our affiliation is stronger than this socialization and can be reclaimed. It is inclusive rather than exclusive.

Integration of Voice and Movement

The gestures and steps, the physical architecture of each Duncan dance, I remembered from my childhood. Closing my eyes, I envision the movements. I hear the music and lyrics sung by my teacher. “ Step, step, stop..and run,run,run, and turn around. Left and right and turn on your left foot.....”: Bach’s Little Fugue. The lyrics, simple present tense words, ease our bodies into synchrony with the music’s rhythm. I recall, with precision, each choreography, as I sing the lyrics. Simultaneously singing and dancing, I feel a sense of integration, within myself, with the music. Here is a nugget: I am able to recall all of these dances, which have lain dormant in my body for many years, by listening to the music. This reminds me of what I understand free association to be. Music triggers the return of the lyrics, and the lyrics move my body to dance the steps which they describe. I assume that this process is not subjective, but has a neurological basis. Assuming the neurology for retrieval and learning, I include the integration of present tense lyrics and movements in my evolving theoretical framework. I continue to search for “One way”: If my dance treatment protocols were determined by the varied disabilities of my students, I would be lost in the number of variations. So I attempt at one simple foundation based upon my evolving assumptions:

- 1) A beginning circle , a consistent ritual of affiliative movement gestures with accompanied lyrics,
- 2) A series of interactive dance etudes which encourage the exploration of relationships to the social and physical environments, and
- 3) A soothing ending circle which mirrors, in part, the beginning. This architecture is circular. It cycles between contained and open space. The peer dynamics it describes are safety and risk taking.

Transformation and Resiliency

Home, 2006: I am often asked the question: “What do you do?” I long for a simple title, which would summarize the fusion of roles I assume in my work. I am not quite a dancer, nor a therapist, nor a teacher, nor a director, nor a musician, nor a trauma specialist, nor an inspirational leader. At this point in my career, it is impossible to introduce myself with one simple, two lined business card: One name and one title. My understanding of the deep and primitive affinity in all life forms comes from my experiences in many worlds. From each world I have gained a title, and each title gives me entry into associative venues. I see myself sometimes, akin to a chameleon. I have the capacity to change the color of my skin. Skin deep is my title. The heart inside beats the same song regardless. At Center Studio and, later, in my work at day care centers, I wore the skin of “dance teacher”. My “clients” became my “students; Group therapy became community dance. I understood that I was a guide, a catalyst, who assisted the isolated in their process of remembering and reincorporating. The vehicle was dance, the process was therapeutic. I entered other rooms with more facility wearing the skin of Expressive therapist, musician, teacher, trauma specialist, or mother. My early relationship to Nature and to music provided me with the foundation necessary to feel comfortable wearing clothes of different colors. My relationship to the changing yet constant physical and social world provides the fruit for my work content.

Jimmy and Ricky, best friends and profoundly retarded young men with Cerebral Palsy, come to mind. Their twisted, “quiet hands” were frozen in spiraled knots. They taught me about the power of “Belief” as, inspired to reach out and touch each others hands ,rhythmically to beautiful music, their paralyzed arms moved toward each other, unfolding. The energy of aspiration does exist; my physical body reaching for something is undaunted if assisted by emotion. So, if I extend my arm, and think of something I really want or believe in, and put that energy into my reaching arm, that arm will not falter in its reach. I recall the descriptive phrases of many teachers past: “Move into the Reach” “Emotional desire will lift you up”. That which moves us from the heart is stronger than any movement initiated by the musculature or skeleton.

Attachment and Relationship

At Risk Children

My First Dance Program at a Full Time Day Care Center, Inner City, Boston, MA.

1988: The circle now becomes a huge nest; I am the mother bird attempting to feed the many eager and opened mouths. My hungry charges instinctively push and tumble over one another, in their singular drive toward nourishment. Biologically-induced tunnel vision lead them to me, their foster mother; the food they seek: sustained, responsive, consistent and supportive response, is filled with the necessary ingredients for attachment; attachment is necessary for relationship building. Each of these little birds is in need of their own maternal reflector, and I become the mirror to be shared by ten. These little birds are not yet three years old. I formulate that their initial peer experience is competitive, in this huge shared nest. How could it be otherwise? Since their hatchings, they have spent most of their

waking hours, seeking 1:1 attention from the full time caregiver who replaces their biological mothers. Her arms are not big enough to hold them all: Premature introduction to turn taking. Her impossible job is underpaid, undervalued. I want to help. I hypothesize the following: A cooperative, harmonious experience of the peer group is vital for full time day care children. This could neutralize their primary experience of peer competition. The visceral experience of a cooperative social environment will be internalized, even if it is not yet cognitively understood. So I sing to all that will listen, “Let us mirror smiles, songs and the gestures of affiliation . Let us sound the gong of nature remembered, the birthright of all her children”.

Home, 2006: I look around today’s group circle, which is composed of ten, two-year-old children and ten adults. The parents form a sparkling necklace, which wraps around the collective neck of the children. The children meander in and out of the ritual provided by the familiar Rainbowdance songs and gestures; periodically, in stillness, they stop to gaze at ,and listen to ,the adult collective. Voices and arms rising and falling, rhythmically, like the sun. Each moment of connection seems full of wonder and pride for the children: Rites of passage; tradition making; community building. Unusual, and seldom routine in contemporary social interaction, is this circle of children with their parents. I think of how rarely children observe, and later mimic, their adult collective engaged in actions intended toward harmony.

Acute Trauma, Archetypes and Repetition

Ankara, Turkey: 1999: Earthquakes here have left thousands of children homeless; the sky still wraps around them, the sun continues to rise and set, but the cracking and shaking of the ground represents an unpredicted tempo change; The Turks tell me that the earthquakes are to them, what snowstorms are to us. Part of nature’s ebb and flow, they do not kill. Man’s creations are the killers: buildings, roads, walls, which create edges of resistance to Nature’s flow. Their children are afraid. They watch the birds fly away. Their sense of safety and trust, relationships with dependable people, places, and things, has been shattered. Routine is resisted. They fear walking in their villages, going to school, and sleeping at night. Mother Nature has revealed her dark side: Betrayal, abandonment, severed attachment, isolation.

As part of a team commissioned by UNICEF to develop an intervention for these Turkish children, I was invited to bring my circles of gesture and song to the world of acute trauma. We envisioned an expressive multi modal intervention, which included CBT, rhythm and movement, art, psychodrama, and cooperative games (Macy. Macy. Gross & Brighton, 2003). Our collaboration, CBI, will be implemented in the Turkish schools by local healers. This intervention will assist Turkey’s children in remembering peace, expressing their narratives, and regaining a sense of hope; past, present, and future, the remembered experience of life’s continuum: a circle, rather than a severed line.

This is new. Can I train people to intuit, to tap into the light source? Is there a formula, with steps to follow, that will encourage access? I am challenged to hold true to my belief: This kind of knowledge is gained through experience, not through reading words that describe it. I listen to my body as I observe: Our intervention’s evolving framework

has a circadian rhythm to it. Like the daily evolving and dissolving of light to dark to light, our structure, CBI, follows an action/ rest cycling: The familiar, the dependable, the affiliative circles, like watering holes in the desert, frame the narrative, central activity. From and to, the comfort of home one ventures out into the wilderness in search of completion: relationship making, story telling, exploration, mastery. The light of dawn, of safety, of home, internalized, becomes the ship which carries him forward, through unpredictable waters. Belief transforms to Hope. Dark will resolve to light. Home awaits, at dusk. These metaphors sit well for me. They illustrate the conceptual circle as symbolic of that which is constant: Like the predictable sun that rises every morning, or the spring board from which we jump, daily, into an erratic physical and emotional sea. I'm thinking that resiliency must have something to do with the strength of our memory of that safe place, and the firmness of our belief that another will come.

The foundation for the basic circle formula will have to be so accessible, that cultural adaptations or deviations will enhance, not diminish, its purpose: While in circle, participants should feel as if they are simultaneously rocking and, being rocked in, a huge cradle. Attunement: that blissful rhythmic moment when all are moved by and moving to the same tempo; when action and reaction are evolving and dissolving, opening and closing, rising and falling, with out memory or anticipation. The experience of safety can only be assured in the "present moment." Breath flows in a circle from within to without, the continuum of dynamic reception to expression. The formula that wraps around this huge cradle of containment has a nice ring to it. It qualifies components necessary for attunement in movement/song circles; it also nicely rebuilds for trauma survivors, the assumptions which have been shattered. *SIMPLE- REPETITIVE—HARMONIOUS*. *Simple* movements and songs are easily mastered, boosting individual and collective self esteem. Each gesture/song is *repeated* in patterns of four with four beats to each phrase. Music creates patterns, and patterns by definition, repeat; What repeats is dependable. Three times feels to me like a completed act, and the forth time, a new beginning. When harmony in relationship is achieved, the sense of isolation is reduced. This communion may be experienced in solitude while listening to music, or in affiliation while singing or moving with others to a common rhythm. This basic formula is laced with integrative and mirroring elements that enhance the sense of affiliation with, and attachment to, the self, the physical, social, and spiritual landscape. Gestures affirm humility, trust, and offering: Nurturing and nourishing simultaneously the spirit and the collective. Circumambulation is meditative and grounding. A shifting of visual focus from upward to outward encourages the visceral experience of spirit and substance.

"Place your hands gently upon your heart; feel the rise and fall of your chest, the life within you and around you. Open to the sky, filling with light. Bring that light gently to your heart...Gather, the circle of friends around you...Back to your heart with offering hands that extend out...and turn down, transforming that light and watering the earth...and rises to open the sky....." This repeated movement sequence, the "Gesture Dance," as it came to be called in the context of the CBI Opening Circle, was the granddaughter of the Boston State Hospital bell and the Day Care bird's nest. She is mistaken for the "Dervish" by a

Turkish participant, as he dances with her. I feel the hum of an archetype flowing through me; time spent immersed in constancy returns us all to the same water source.

Reclaiming Ancestral Songs and Healing Circles

Kathmandu, Nepal: 2005: “Circles of Sudanese child soldiers open their arms to the sky. From a distance their elders admonish them for participating in this “new religion brought by Americans.” Muslim religious leaders fear that we are teaching their children to pray to the Sun. The drumming and singing rituals which moved ancestral communities, have been ripped from the fabric of daily life.” Reports from the field. Our 2003 CBI trainees and interventionists, an ethnically eclectic group of 28, victims of civil war and torture are grouped together because of their common affliction. They have traveled from Afghanistan, Indonesia, Sudan, Burundi, Sri Lanka, and Eritrea, to share with us their successes and the concerns of their elders. I think of the Turkish man who experienced the “Dervish” in “opening” his arms “to the sun.” I think of the Sudanese elder, standing alone, watching the repetitive moving circle of children. My impulse is to welcome him into the circle. I sense his sadness, I imagine the lost traditions. If my “Gesture Dance” has some archetypal components, could it not move the body of this elder to recall his own cultural equivalent? The true cultural adaptation of this work reclaims lost ancestral songs and healing circles; the “new religion brought by the Americans” preaches a song of return: return to tradition, to circles of song and dance, to community, to the wisdom of the elders, and to Nature. These tribal cultures, aspiring toward the greener grass (Astro-turf?) of the modern world, need only to be reminded of the wealth of their own gardens.

Home 2006: I’m thinking of my reticence toward research. I acknowledge my disability to translate viscerally what I am told or shown. I figured this out years ago in dance classes: trying to interpret, with grace, movement sequences illustrated by teachers, was extremely difficult. On the other hand, closing my eyes and moving to inspired music, produced a very different dancer. A ballet teacher who’d known me for many years as a student in his class, offered me a role in his ballet only after we danced together at a party. He remarked at the difference between the ballet class student and the party dancer. Improvising versus the reading of music to play it, creates a similar discrepancy: Right versus left brain processing. This discrepancy applies to my research phobia. I have been afraid that the observation of, the reading about, ritual, movement and song, might disable me. Just like in dance class. Submitting to some aspect of Nature’s rhythm is necessary for attunement, for the participation in the enveloping experience of “Present Tense,” for example, the process of giving birth, or of climbing a mountain. At the end of the journey, as one reaches the summit of the mountain, or the newborn takes his first breath, the participant becomes an observer. Internal becomes external. Balance requires that both exist in dynamic continuum: Ebb and flow, rise and fall, in and out. So, having been inside for so long, I knew it was time to step out and observe, to do the research. What I learned was validating rather than the anticipated, disabling. I found that what I called “my” formula, pre existed me, by at least five thousand years. One example could be found in the dance of Kwan Yin, the Japanese Holy Mother of Compassion. Reading about the sacred and the anthropological, enabled me to view the elemental components of my ritual circles, as well as the work of Isadora Duncan through the lens of the archetype. A cross time, culture and

religion, I found the repetition of the following community building elements: circumambulation; movement chants with patterns of four beats and four repetitions; the physical and symbolic heart as the source of action and emotion; dynamic focal shifting of emphasis between the individual and the collective and consistent gestures which were viscerally symbolic of aspiration, nurturance and nourishment.

Transformation

Destructive to Constructive, Empowerment Over Threat

Jakarta, Indonesia: 2005: Tsunami. The sea circle swells. The earth body holds its breath. The pulse, of slow filling and silence, is cacophony to the animals: Climbing up and out, they anticipate the fishbowl which will soon replace their land. From mountains and trees they will observe the floating dead. They wonder why the humans do not follow them.

The survivors, victims of war and water, sit before me. The weight of their collective loss fills the room like smoke. Their stories of death, of bearing witness, and of survival draw me into the fishbowl. I see my dead family float by. It is too early to share these stories. I feel that we are all starting to drown. We begin again, this time with music, dance, and play. We remember the dry earth, the nourishment of laughter, the cradle of song.

These young Psychology students from the university in ACEH are the locals chosen to help the Indonesian children reclaim some sense of safety, calm, and empowerment. Eighty percent of their villages are lost. Afflicted, the body of their land dismembered, they seemed to remember wholeness in their ritual offerings of welcome, to us, the American visitors. The smoke lifts, color returns to faces which had appeared, to me, as black and white. They giggle at themselves. They are once again the children that Tsunami took away. I watch their dance. I listen to their song: chant like harmonics which accompany line dances composed of flipping palms, hands that cross the heart and tap the body, prayer like kneeling and rising, body spins, gathering gestures, and chalice like offerings. The chalice spills its nectar into my dream tonight. I see the ACEH-nese dances transformed from lines of welcome to circles of empowerment. Their movements appear to me as elemental, nature's dance of survival: trees and mountains offer safety. Wings empower them with flight. Waves have the capacity to end or to initiate life. Tomorrow I will offer to them my adaptation. Tomorrow they will mirror each other with fluttering wings and swaying branches. They will feel the wind around them as they rhythmically shake the parachute. Their prayer like kneeling and rising will become the great wave that has overwhelmed them. They will laugh at my American body attempting toward Indonesian movement. This laughter will accompany the embodiment of flight and safety. Their empowered collective body will spiral out of a circular wave into its archetypal serpentine path, which is symbolic of the continuum of life and death. They will reclaim their hope as they viscerally experience the transformation of death to life.

Harmonic Resonance

Home, 2006: Returning to work with deaf children, I have come full circle. I remember the most basic, that which connects us all without judgment: Nature's rhythm. I seem to

have gotten a bit lost as the world around me has grown. Back inside, we move our bodies and voices up and down repeating the octave pattern until all are part of the song. The song does not change. It sounds the same in every language and with every affliction. I am harmonizing, the third note of the chord, as I sing “Rock”. A deaf girl stands beside me as we both hold scarf enshrouded dolls in our arms. The music wraps around us both as she hums the very same note.

Summary

Theoretical Framework Circles

The circle is symbolic of integration. Integrating emotion, spirit, cognition, and the physical is what we seek in the healing process. The physical circle is inclusive and equitable. Moving in a circular pattern is grounding and calming. Experiencing the continuum of life, the movement of the breath into and out of the body, the cycles of the moon and the tides, of birth, death and the spiritual return, is the metaphysical, symbolic circle. Encircling, the group contains stillness. Focus upon the contained stillness is collectively calming. Encircled, the individual experiences the boundaries of safety and inclusion, as inside and outside are defined. Visceral incorporation translates to the emotional body. As all life forms circle and spiral to a rhythm, participation in ritual circles, by dancing, singing and commemorating, encourages relationship to the biological and ancestral universe.

Incorporation

Nature’s Body and Voice

Internalized Nature is the original designer. We understand harmony as we experience the inherent unity of all life forms. We know of truth and beauty as they mirror her original models. She provides, in her all encompassing acceptance, safety. When we sever our attachment to Nature, we experience a disconnection from our own bodies as well. We feel isolated and look for ugliness in ourselves and in the world around us. Our modern world, which places value upon technology, has helped us to forsake Nature. Reclaiming our bodies and understanding literally and symbolically how they are linked to the body of Nature is necessary for physical, emotional, social, and global healing. Here is an example of the visceral experience of Nature’s Body: We imagine the body to be as a landscape. With the arms extended, we experience the horizon. Above is spirit, the heavens. Below is substance, the earth. Lightness and heaviness exist in our visual and kinesthetic focus above and below. Our palms extend from our hearts physically and symbolically to express, through gesture, our relationship with the world around us. Spirally around us, the Wind, the great Breath, sustains and supports the development of our muted voices. We are never alone, remembering our place in Nature.

Affiliation

Transforming Mob to Flock

A group of individuals, sharing and moving through the same environmental space, experience themselves, perceptually, as connected or isolated. This perception determines the manner in which they relate to the space and to each other. Birds in flight provide the metaphor for understanding this concept. Individuals in a Flock are attuned to one another, moving together with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic awareness. The Mob is composed of individuals who have no sensorial connection to each other.

Surrender

Affiliation and Solitude

The affiliation solitude paradigm is one of dynamic continuum. It refers to the most basic of all rhythms, the circadian rhythm, to which all life forms respond: Action-Rest-Action. Linear, calendar time works against this basic rhythm, against our biology, leaving “Rest” out of the sequence. Disease occurs, physically, socially and emotionally when the continuum is forsaken. Balance is achieved as the individual moves his focus between the external environment and the internal landscape. In affiliation, one joins and experiences; in solitude, one reflects upon the affiliative experience, selecting and internalizing components of that experience. This social dynamic may be experienced through the action rest continuum as follows:

- 1) The individual may affiliate (dancing, playing, interacting with others) during the action phase; solitude would occur, in this dynamic, during the rest phase.
- 2) The individual may experience solitude during the action phase, moving alone, at his own contemplative pace. Affiliation in this dynamic experience, would occur during the rest phase, as in traditional group “sharing.” Solitude, experienced as part of this vital continuum, must be distinguished from Isolation, which is defined as the state in which life forms are no longer vital.

Integration of Voice and Movement

The combining of descriptive present tense lyrics which rhythmic movement or gesture may have neurological, educational, and psychological advantages. Language is acquired more readily when expressed rhythmically. Using the analogy of the hologram, a multi-sensory experience will be recalled when cued by any of its components. For example, the integrated experience of moving in a circular pattern, holding onto the edge of a parachute with a group of peers, who all step, to a decided rhythm, singing: “Marching, marching, marching, marching”, will be remembered in the future by:

- 1) Hearing the song,
- 2) stepping to that beat, or
- 3) Holding the edge of a parachute.

Attunement may also be achieved as the voice and movements are integrated. Attunement contributes to the understanding of nonverbal cues and the appropriate responses to those cues. This is important developmentally and in terms of safety seeking and threat detection. Transformation and Resiliency The resilient human being is one who has a rich internal reservoir of creatively generated solutions. The creative process involves internal accessing and outward expressing. Transformation is a creative act, regardless of the format: Adults acquire and assume various roles in relation to the world around them. Children create changing stories as they play. As we continue to develop our creative minds, we are fueling our internalized reservoir of possibilities. When listening to music, visualization occurs in the mind's eye. Facing opposition or threat, this resilient mind remembers past empowerment or mastery. This memory fuels the confidence needed to overcome future oppression. Resiliency is an internal process which is supported externally: Belief carried forward from achievement in the past creating hope for future success. The use of tools which are transformational assist children in maintaining their alert and creative minds. One example of such a tool is a simple piece of silk fabric. Fabric is easily transformed as it can be twisted, compacted, and shaped. It flows like a river, covers like a roof, hides like a scared rabbit, and can be worn as a hat, cape, or wings.

Attachment and Relationship

At Risk Children

Developmentally, attachment refers to the special bond formed in the infant, mother (primary caregiver) relationship. Globally, it is the capacity to form relationships. Positive attachment (sustained, responsive, consistent and supportive) provides the initial experience of security and safety. Children who know this safety feel the competence necessary to explore and make relationships to their world. In this dyadic relationship, the mother is the mirroring self object; she directly regulates the infant's overt behavior and covert physiology. Disruption in attachment bonds contribute to imbalances in regulation of affect. There is a high relationship between disordered attachment and increased risk for violence and aggressive behaviors. These "At Risk" children have low self esteem, lack social empathy, and are unable to regulate their impulses. Aggressive behaviors which begin in preschool, are often symptoms of disordered attachment, and must be addressed in preschool. Disruptive behaviors remain stable over time and magnified, manifest as adolescent violence. As the number of infants attending full time day care programs increases, the opportunity for dyadic relationship building decreases. In the best of programs, these infants share a caregiver with three other infants. In the worst, they may share with twenty. This initial and competitive peer experience for these children may be the blueprint for future relationships. Peers become opponents rather than allies. Engaging in activities intended toward harmony may provide these children with an internalized social alternative. Body movements are children's most familiar means of expression and can be utilized to access collective expression. The richness of this expression will be amplified and validated if shared with the adult community.

Rainbowdance©, my program for preschool children, encourages this experience of collective harmony. The beginning ritual circle establishes a sense of containment, safety

and empowerment as the children repeat weekly, a sequence of gesture accompanied songs which are easily mastered. The repetition creates trust and dependability. The mastery boosts self esteem. As the children work in circles, their movements are mirrored by their peers, creating a sense of affiliation, and decreases the sense of isolation which often accompanies early trauma or disordered attachment. The positive experience of moving together, rhythmically lulled by familiar music, contributes to the developing resource base from which children seek responses to social or emotional conflict. Dynamically moving between affiliation and solitude, the children are relating through dance and play then retreating to contemplate and internalize these interactions. The trusting peer group develops the competency needed to venture out into the world as explorers and as friends. The gross motor component of Rainbowdance© provides children with the symbolic journey into the world of Nature and relationship as they dance the movements of horses, lions and rabbits, and care for the vulnerable baby birds.

Following this adventure, children wind down to listen to a soothing story, which provides a smooth transition into the Ending Circle lullaby. Symbolically, children care for babies in the final segment, modeling the care they have received or aspire to receive. This posture promotes the reciprocity of giving and receiving. It encourages the growth of an empowered and self nurturing child.

Acute Trauma, Archetypes and Repetition

The trauma narrative must be expressed. It cannot be forced out. It can not be exorcized. The empowered survivor will share his story after the danger has passed, in his safe place. Here, he will understand his survival; he will clarify his resources. One of his greatest resources is his peer group. Without a clear and determined safety ritual established, the trauma narrative will be prematurely forced to surface. This is the problem with many acute trauma interventions. A safety ritual established at the beginning of an intervention encourages peers to understand their collective as a resource. Acute trauma, like a perceptual knife, severs our psychic life line to the world and to the assumptions we held as basic: 1) I am worthy, 2) I am not alone, and 3) The world is dependable and will keep me safe. Experiencing safety is the necessary first step toward rebuilding these shattered assumptions and providing a foundation for psychological healing and reincorporation. A circle ritual designed to create safety and stability includes the following elements: 1) *Simple* movements accompanied by present tense lyrics integrating body and voice. Simplicity encourages mastery, which in turn, boosts self esteem. 2) *Attunement*, which gives participants the experience of moving harmoniously to a common rhythm. This minimizes the sense of isolation exaggerated by the traumatic event. 3) *Repetitive* sequences and patterns which create a sense of dependability. Musical tempos of 4:4 timing provide dependable rhythmic patterns. This format wrapped around archetypal content further encourages incorporation as participants experience their connections to each other, to their ancestors, and to the natural world.

Reclaiming Ancestral Songs and Healing Circles

Community healing rituals contain archetypal elements which may, in modern cultures, be forgotten. They can, however, be remembered. Providing the safety for communities to reclaim their ancestral circles of song and dance is salutogenic. Archetypal elements which has surfaced in my beginning circle rituals are as follows:

- 1) A movement pattern of circumambulation for meditation and grounding
- 2) Movement/chant in 4:4 timing repeated 4 times (“Hail Mary”)
- 3) The heart as physical/symbolic orientation: Breath flow, emotion
- 4) Alternating focus: Individual (whole) to group (individual as component)
- 5) Gathering/watering/planting movements symbolic of Nourishment
- 6) Soothing movements symbolic of Nurturance
- 7) Upward visual focus/physical aspiration: internal or spiritual processing.

Sharing my circle rituals with cultural communities has given me the opportunity to help them remember. As they experience the familiar, they are encouraged to reclaim their own forgotten songs and dances.

Transformation

Destructive to Constructive: Empowerment Over Threat

Traumatic events overwhelm survivors with a sense of impotence. They have become victims of forces which they were unable to control. The visceral symbolic experience of overwhelming, becoming, or controlling the oppressor may transform the perception of self from victim to empowered survivor. This transformation may also catalyze the creations which are born from what has been destroyed. In the case of the 2005 Tsunami, survivors reclaimed their sense of safety, in their dance of trees, birds, and mountains. They experienced empowerment as they took on the movements of the destructive forces of the wind and the sea. These movements, repeated in sequences of four, became the content for ritual safety circles.

Harmonic Resonance

The metaphorical and physical “lost voice” may be found. Neurological impairment, manifested as deafness, pulls the voice inward; external forces such as religious, emotional, or social oppression press upon the chest until the voice crashes in. Reclaiming voice establishes the individual’s lost expression of joy and relationship. Two or more people singing together are able to vibrate to the same tone under the proper conditions. Many repetitions of sung octaves may be one of these conditions. Tapping and vibrating the chest may encourage the release of a withheld voice. Varied notes, tones, tempos and intervals between notes evoke emotional states as the voice expresses them outward. When voices are attuned to one another, a gratifying sense of connection is achieved. It is possible for every individual, regardless of affliction, to find his voice and to resonate with the songs

of the world. A world full of voices intended toward harmony will be a world that remembers Hope.

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Clearing a Space: A Centering Method for Enhancing Receptivity and Presence for the Classroom

Joan Klagsburn

Editor's Note: "Clearing a Space: A Centering Method for Enhancing Receptivity and Presence in the Classroom," describes the history and application of Clearing A Space, "a five to ten minute induction into a state of reduced stress and enhanced receptivity." As a focusing tool, "Clearing a Space," is a short, effective centering tool that allows students to acknowledge and put aside their personal burdens, stressors and worries of the moment to better attend to the subject matter at hand.

Our body and mind are not two and not one. If you think your body and mind are two, that is wrong. If you think that they are one, that is also wrong. Our body and mind are both two and one."

—Shunryu Suzuki, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind How Stress Interferes with Receptivity to Learning

The educational experience is comprised of two aspects: teaching and learning. Although one might be tempted to view these aspects as one that is active (teaching) and one that is passive (learning), in truth, both are active. For good teaching to occur, the teacher needs to be competent and passionate about her topic and to have well-organized and relevant teaching materials. She must be present and connected to what she is teaching. Similarly, for real learning to occur, the student must not only be present in body, mind and in spirit, but must also have some readiness and intention to learn.

Students come to school under the burden of a large number of stressors. Undergraduates must deal with the intensity of a relatively unstructured campus life, their own adolescent dramas, and the issues of separating from parents and re-inventing themselves as young adults. Graduate students may face a continuation of those stressors from their undergraduate years, plus additional ones. Some commute long distances, often in the evening, to get to and from school; many are engaged in school activities as they raise families or search for life partners; most are concerned about the financial pressures of being a student. For any student, attendant stresses often mean that while they may be physically present in class, it is difficult for them to be fully present intellectually and emotionally.

High stress levels are a direct impediment to a person's ability to learn effectively. Students need to be taught methods of dealing with the stressors that keep them from being fully present in class. Many teachers understand how to achieve a sense of presence when stressed themselves, but few of them are well-versed in helping students to get into a state of receptivity at the beginning of a class. In my experience, and from the clinical experiences and research that my colleagues and I have done, (Grindler Katonah, 1999; Klagsbrun, 1999; Klagsbrun et al, 2006) Clearing A Space is an effective and original method for rapid stress reduction. I propose that the Clearing A Space method could be an explicit part of any teaching/learning curriculum, and would offer both teachers and students the opportunity to become more active and effective participants in the educational experience.

What is Clearing A Space?

Clearing A Space is five to ten minute induction into a state of reduced stress and enhanced receptivity. It differs from other stress-reduction methods in that it is a process that explicitly names and places aside each person's list of current stressors. It is both a means of becoming aware of one's stress load, and reducing it at the same time. Clearing A Space uses the metaphor of searching inside oneself, and allowing whatever obstacles one finds to feeling "fine or all clear" to be noted, tagged, separated from the self, and placed at the right distance away. Whether a student (or teacher) feels anxious, fearful, angry, scattered, fatigued, preoccupied or distracted, making some time to identify what is "between me and feeling fine or ready to be in class," and then "setting these issues aside" enables each person to be more present and receptive for the learning at hand.

Clearing A Space invites students to connect with themselves just as they are, in the privacy of their own minds and hearts. It invites each person to take an inventory of what is between her and feeling present and ready for class, and to then find a sense of what she would be like if all of those impediments to feeling good were removed. It is a way to resurrect a sense of well-being and presence, both of which enhance one's capacity for effective learning.

The Origins of Clearing a Space

Clearing A Space is the first step in a process called Focusing. In the 1960s, Eugene Gendlin, a philosopher, and Carl Rogers, a psychologist, carried out research which explored the question: "Why is some therapy successful in helping people make significant changes in their lives, and why is some therapy unsuccessful?" (Gendlin, 1981). They looked at variables such as the therapist's qualities of empathy, as well as the effect of particular approaches to therapy. To their surprise, what they discovered was that the factor that most accurately predicted success in therapy had nothing to do with either the qualities of the therapist, or the type of therapy being used. Rather, the most accurate predictor involved the client's capacity to be connected to his or her inner process.

Clients who were successful—who achieved significant positive change from their therapies—kept in touch with their inner process as they were talking. They did not spend time talking about something but from it. In recorded sessions, it was observed that these clients often spoke haltingly and tentatively, and seemed to be groping their way to an internal sense of what they were feeling in the moment. They intuitively knew when they had the right word or image or sentence to describe that feeling, because their bodies let go and relaxed when they found a satisfactory way to characterize it. These clients were the ones who got better in therapy over a year's time.

Gendlin studied how these clients connected to their inner felt sense. He then turned this naturally occurring process into a six-step method he named Focusing. He chose the name 'Focusing' because, like the lens of a camera, this process clarifies what is at first vague and unclear in the body by symbolizing it with a word, phrase, or image. Although the original intent of his Focusing method was to help people succeed in therapy, it soon became apparent that the Focusing method could also be useful in the fields of education, the expressive arts, theology, business and healthcare. Since Focusing is a generic skill, it can be utilized whenever a deeper and more personal understanding is sought.

As he continued to refine the Focusing system, Gendlin noticed that when practitioners initially engaged in naming their current issues, the Focusing process that followed was deeper and more effective. Eventually he incorporated a systematic way of recognizing and cataloging the stressors or issues of the moment, without becoming consumed by them. He called this preliminary step Clearing A Space.

Focusing, Clearing a Space and Relaxation

There is some research demonstrating that the inner bodily attention an individual develops through Focusing helps the body to relax (Gendlin, 1961; Bernick 1969; Gendlin, 1999). This makes sense since we carry situations in our body as physical tension that is specific to each psychological issue—such as tightness in the stomach about one issue, shallow breathing and constriction about another, and tight shoulders about a third . When we try to turn our attention away from the problems, often the body retains the stress, tension, or agitation. Placing the generalized feeling of agitation or malaise or anger aside in one fell swoop doesn't usually work well. However, with Clearing A Space, we attend to how the body is carrying each stressor or problem, and then mentally place “all about that one” aside. This specificity allows us to relax the specific bodily tightness or constriction attached to a specific issue. The end result is usually a more relaxed and peaceful mind-body system.

Ways that Clearing a Space is Different from Other Contemplative Practices

There are some similarities between Clearing A Space and other contemplative practices such as the relaxation response and meditation. All three methods lead to a calming of the sympathetic system, and all involve turning inward and using silence as part of their practice.. However, there are some interesting differences with Clearing A Space. First, instead of giving only bare attention to the stressor, as one does in meditation, in Clearing A Space one directs one's attention fully to a concern or difficulty, and then observes how the body is carrying that issue.

Imagery usually does not play a significant role in meditation. It is, however, an integral element of Clearing A Space. It can be creatively by each person as a unique way to characterize and become empowered to place each stressful concern outside the body.

Clearing A Space also has a relational dimension. This contrasts with relaxation and meditation, which are generally used as solo practices. Whether it is the teacher-student relationship that is improved (through the teacher's voice getting connected to the reduction in stress), or whether it is contact with another student (creating a sense of intimacy and connectedness), there is a communal benefit that comes from the relational aspect of this process. The class becomes engaged in a unified way, and shares a common practice.

What Happens During Clearing a Space

The important aspects of this easily taught process are:

We create a “frame” which has as its basic assumption that feeling “OK” is our natural state. The assumption is that our lives have presented us with a number of obstacles that currently block our ability to “feel OK”.

We learn how to have a relationship with our “issues.”

We attempt to treat ourselves with an attitude of self-acceptance and kindness. This is not a forced acceptance of what feels unacceptable—it is simply an acknowledgement of whatever is there. It’s as if we are saying “hello” to our issues and making a space for them.

We give a name to whatever we are sensing inside that is contributing to feeling stressed or tense or preoccupied. This might be the name of a recognizable issue such as frustration with my boss about not giving me a raise, which I know is connected to a tight and contracted feeling in my chest, or an unknown something that is unclear but distinctly felt in the body, i.e. a knot of dread in the pit of my stomach that I don’t yet understand. Either way, we are empowered with a tool for identifying those sensations that are not yet symbolized through words.

We put each of these issues at the right distance away, outside the body, thus creating a sense of mastery. Some people use imagery to place the issues away— such as wrapping them up like a package and placing them next to where one is sitting; or placing them in boats and sending them out to sea or finding a spot where each one belongs. One student reported that her first issue was being given to a close friend who held it lovingly; a second issue was placed in a large see-through container by her side; and a third problem had to be sent to Kansas, hundreds of miles away.

Interestingly, the intelligence of the body/mind seems to know how and where each issue needs to be placed so that one gets respite from it. In this process, you are neither abandoning your problems nor confronting them, but merely parking them at a comfortable distance in order to be present for the task at hand (i.e. being present in class).

We discover our background sense. In addition to the inventory that comes from the body’s experience of what it is carrying in the moment, we are asked to identify a background sense—that familiar quality that has become like the wallpaper we don’t even see any more — that is there, coloring our whole experience. A background sense might be feeling driven, or sad, or pressured, or unprepared, or bored, or disconnected, or racing, or exhausted. The background sense might also be positive, such as feeling excited, or eager, or content. By discovering this background sense, we get a more global sense of how we are feeling.

Finally we take a minute or two to dwell in the cleared or clearer space. We enable ourselves to experience what it would be like without all those tangles that are connected to being stressed or tense or distracted or scattered. This is an important moment—we get a glimpse of what it would be like to experience ourselves without those familiar concerns and weighty issues. Without those burdens, most people report feeling lighter, less weighed down, more how they are at their best. They describe this feeling variously as feeling calm, or spacious, or finding a bigger perspective, or getting connected to their aliveness and energy. They can often sense their inherent *healthiness*. This experience is often felt as freeing and empowering. In a classroom environment, tapping into these feelings before turning attention to learning can vitalize the learning environment.

How to Use Clearing a Space as Part of your Curriculum

There are two ways that Clearing A Space can be utilized at the start of a class. In one way, the teacher begins the class by taking the students through the protocol. Students work silently within themselves, giving themselves some needed silence and guidance to name

and clear out the issues weighing on them or if they are in a positive place, to spend time reviewing what has contributed to their feeling so good. When the teacher leads the exercise, the tone of voice and acceptance and permission given can create a positive relationship and a sense from the students that their full selves are welcome in the class. The teacher is then experienced as validating them as they are, as well as offering something of value that assists students in making the transition from their busy lives into the classroom environment.

The second way to incorporate Clearing A Space into your class involves students finding a partner and taking turns reading each other the protocol. In this alternative model, students can choose to keep their issues silent or if they feel safe and comfortable with their fellow student, could say out loud what was in their way of being fully present for class that day. When a student shares with a fellow student, either by following the process out loud or in silence, there is a bond and an intimacy that has many benefits: it reduces the sense of isolation which many students face; it creates the possibility of new friendships; and it reduces stress by feeling that your situation is held and validated by a peer, and as a result it often increases mood. Having someone hold the space while you do this personal and inner reflection can also allow you to go deeper in clearing out the difficulties because it taps into the power of human connection.

The following are instructions for either the teacher or the students to read. If the peer method is being used, instead of pausing for the prescribed amount of time, the partners can give each other a signal, such as lifting a finger, to indicate that they are ready for the next instruction.

1. When you are ready, you might want to close your eyes, get comfortable in your chair, let yourself to take a few slow breaths, and then allow your awareness to gently come into the center of your body. (PAUSE 10 seconds) Ask yourself, “How am I feeling on the inside right now?” (PAUSE 5 seconds) or, if that doesn’t work, ask “What’s in the way of feeling fine today?” (PAUSE 5 seconds) Don’t answer, but let what comes in your body do the answering. Take your time and wait for a felt sense of a concern to form. (PAUSE 10 seconds) If, however, you’re feeling all fine today, just stay with that good feeling.
2. Now see if there is a word, a phrase, or an image that captures the quality of how one of the concerns or good feeling feels in your body. (PAUSE 5 seconds) Say the word, phrase, or image back to yourself, and check to see if it fits the sense you have there exactly.
3. Now give this concern your accepting, friendly attention for a few moments (PAUSE 5 seconds), but then put it aside for a while by imagining that you are placing it outside of your body, in a safe place. Sometimes it helps to imagine that you’re sitting on a park bench, and each concern can be wrapped up like a package, and placed on the park bench next to you. (PAUSE 10 seconds)
4. Notice if you feel a little lighter or clearer inside without that one. (PAUSE)
5. Now again, bring your attention inside and ask, “Except for that, am I feeling fine?” (PAUSE 5 seconds) Wait and see if something else wants your attention next.
6. If something else comes up, wait for a felt sense of that concern to form (PAUSE 10 seconds), and see if a word, phrase, or image captures the quality of how this

- concern feels in your body. (PAUSE 5 seconds) And then, after spending a little time with it, place it outside your body in a safe place as well. (PAUSE 10 seconds) Notice if you feel a little lighter or clearer inside without that one. (PAUSE)
7. Now, in addition to those issues and concerns, most of us have a background sense – always feeling a little anxious, or sad, or harried, or tense – see if you can find a background sense that’s there for you today, and place that out as well. (PAUSE 10 seconds)
 8. Now bring your attention back inside your body and you might find that there is a clearer space there. (PAUSE 5 seconds) Welcome this space and allow yourself to rest in it (PAUSE 5 seconds). There’s nothing to do – just allow yourself to be. Some people find that this is a place where you can notice that you are not your problems, even though you have them. You are much larger. (PAUSE 10 seconds) See if a word or an image captures how it feels in the clear or clearer space. (PAUSE 10 seconds) Say this word or phrase back to yourself and see if it is a good fit. You might want to spend a little time with it. (PAUSE 5 seconds).
 9. Now, turn your attention back to the class that is about to begin (PAUSE 5 seconds). See if you can find an intention for yourself in relation to the class material, perhaps something you want to either learn or share, or a question you may have.

Benefits of Clearing a Space

There are many advantages to teachers and students when using this mind/body tool. First, Clearing A Space connects mind/body and spirit – the process is physical (works with the body), mental (works with meaning), and spiritual (creates a broader perspective). It also connects both sides of the brain. As Le Doux put it (1998), “[Focusing] seems to be the process of putting feelings into words that enable the left and right brains to become integrated, ... linking the right brain ‘felt sense’ and the left brain’s verbal account. These links may be important because they allow the maximum information to flow freely between the two hemispheres”.

Clearing A Space releases bodily tension. Usually our concerns and issues are clumped together like a ball of yarn so that we feel a mass of worry or a general sense of sadness or tension. The different stressors or problems easily can become enmeshed with each other and then they seem to weigh us down more. When named and separated, strand by strand, however, each concern gets our full attention, and then when removed we can feel a lightening in its absence.

Clearing A Space invites us to treat ourselves with compassion. One of the tenets of Focusing is to greet whatever emerges with friendliness, gentleness, and respect. While critical and judgmental attitudes close off lines of communication, a welcoming attitude allows us to hear from parts of ourselves that have been previously inaccessible.

Clearing A Space often elicits a deep sense of well-being in the body. After having cleared a space, students and teachers often discover an inner sense of well-being. Having set aside current stressors, we can more easily connect to a positive core identity. This cleared space is usually more than a neutral space of merely being all right; it often seems to open onto a wider spiritual experience. Many students report feeling calm, spacious, at peace, and in harmony with themselves.

Clearing a Space is transferable to a variety of other circumstances the student may face. In addition to increasing presence in the classroom, it can be utilized for stress reduction when preparing to study, write a paper, give a presentation, or deal with personal problems.

Finally, in my experience, students deeply appreciate the 10 minutes to collect and center themselves, and are so much more present that the “lost time “ of teaching is made up by their increased attentiveness and engagement with the class material. One measure I have for the effectiveness of this tool is punctuality. I have asked students who arrive late to please wait outside the class until the Clearing A Space time is complete so as not to disturb the others. Rarely does anyone arrive late! And if by chance I forget to start class with it, I am reminded to stop and help them clear a space. In my evaluations each year, students mention how helpful Clearing A Space was at the start of class. They report that it helps them with the transition to school or from one class to another. Getting themselves physically to class doesn’t assure that students are truly present. This short and effective method seems to help them ready themselves for a more productive learning experience.

Conclusion

Clearing A Space is a short and efficient centering process. It can be accomplished when students are guided to connect briefly with their issues, to bring attention into themselves in a silent way, to separate one concern or problem from another so they are not held in a confused clump, and to set the whole of each issue aside for a while. This process, whether done as a whole class or in pairs, brings a bodily relief and a sense of becoming more centered. Through this process we realize that while we each have certain issues that are weighing on us, we can observe and tag them and place them aside. The process of observing them creates the awareness that we are not our problems, and allows us to perceive that essential part of ourselves who is separate from our problems.. This connection to an unburdened or larger self typically creates a sense of inner calm or peace.

Clearing A Space also frees up attention for the class. The students and teacher have attended to themselves in a caring compassionate way, and placed aside their burdens of the day. They are then more ready to bring attention to the class material and to be more engaged in the learning process.

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Authentic Movement as a Meditative Practice

Vivien Marcow-Speiser and Michael Franklin

Editor's Note: "Authentic Movement as a Meditative Practice," examines the form of authentic movement as a "disciplined practice of moving, witnessing and talking about the experience between moving and witnessing that is articulated, conscious, and embodied." This article examines the form of authentic movement as a meditative practice and will describe the author's understanding of this form and the customs and nuances of that understanding.

This article will examine the form of Authentic Movement as a meditative practice. Both authors address the intersection between Authentic Movement and meditation by addressing areas of overlap and integration. Entering into the practice of Authentic Movement is conceptualized as moving into an experience of tabula rasa. The American Heritage Dictionary (1979) defines tabula rasa as "the mind before it received the impressions gained from experience." That open and potentiated state of being allows for the unfolding and experiencing of all that is possible and evolves out of the simplicity of the relationship between mover/s and witness/es and the embodied understanding that comes from that subjective inter-relationship. Authentic Movement then is a disciplined practice of moving, witnessing and talking about the experience between moving and witnessing that is articulated, conscious, and embodied. Janet Adler (2002) describes this as "the conscious development of relationships between the moving self and the inner witness, between the individual body and the collective body, between the self and the Divine" (p. xix).

Meditation here is considered in terms of ways of making the mind full of the moment while cultivating the witness function of the inner observer (Franklin, 1999). Both Authentic Movement and meditation make skillful use of mindfulness and witnessing by tracking various qualities of movement within the body-mind-spirit connection.

The Form of Authentic Movement

The form of Authentic Movement practiced by Marcow-Speiser has evolved since the early 1980's out of the seminal work of Janet Adler. This developing work has also been influenced by Mary Starks Whitehouse whose collected essays are found in Pallaro (1999). Janet Adler (2002) is viewed widely as the "keeper" of the form and the sacred nature and commitment of her work has influenced the practice of the form. She believes that: "The discipline is always continuing to evolve because of each person who enters it and because of each teacher who offers from her own developing perspective" (p. xix).

Entering into the realm of Authentic Movement is to enter into the realm of the great unknown. It is not possible to predict what will emerge as the mover/s begin to move in the presence of the witness/es. Moving into the empty space in the practice of Authentic Movement is like moving into the space of infinite possibility and as such contains the potentiality of all human experiencing. It is not possible to know what will happen in this

in-between realm that exists between mover/s and witness/es. Authentic Movement can only occur in the presence of another. The mover, likely moving with eyes closed, is always moving in relationship to at least one witness. This dynamic of the witness moves the practice into an in-between realm, where personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal elements are brought into play.

Authentic Movement skillfully integrates the practice of moving and witnessing. Movers are invited to move with eyes closed following their inner impulses and associations. Witnesses watch with eyes open and respond to the mover/s movement by following their own internal flow of impulses and associations in response to the movement. After movers finish moving for a specified and agreed upon time frame, movers share their thoughts and feelings and witnesses respond.

Both mover and witness are tasked with following the flow of their impulses and associations. As mover, the movement emanates from a variety of sources. Sometimes the movement comes from the personal body narrative, sometimes from sensation, sometimes from a place that is known and can be named, and sometimes from a place beyond words. For some movers, moving into the Authentic Movement space involves a process of surrendering into the movement. Oftentimes this process of surrender means letting go of resistance, distracting thoughts, feelings, sensations or issues that surface and need to be acknowledged and brought to conscious awareness, so that the channels of attention are cleared. Sometimes moving into Authentic Movement means not moving at all. What is not clear at the time often becomes illuminated when mover/s and witness/es share.

There are various rituals for beginning and ending the Authentic Movement session. Ideally Authentic Movement takes place in an empty room with as little distraction as possible. Moving with eyes closed is sometimes unpredictable and as much as possible the ideal space should contain very few other materials so that movers are not tempted to engage with extraneous physical objects or clutter.

Generally, witnesses sit or stand around the edges of the circle, symbolically holding and marking the movement space and generally movers move into the empty space between mover/s and witness/es. Sometimes movers and witnesses sit or stand together in the circle establishing eye contact before the movement starts. Sometimes they reach their arms out to each other to signal their readiness to begin the process. Generally, all participants view the empty space between them before moving begins. Sometimes the movement begins from a stationary position and sometimes from a walking circle. Before the movement begins, an agreed upon time for moving is established. In the case of a group, an agreed upon number of witnesses are decided upon. When there is more than one witness participating in a session there becomes a “circle” of witnesses and when there is more than one mover there becomes a “circle” of movers. Before the movement starts in the case of a group, the group decides whether there will be an open or closed circle. In an open group session, movers may alternate between moving and witnessing so that they can move in and out and join the witnessing circle when they have finished moving. In a closed circle, the group decides on a fixed number of movers or witnesses and members elect whether they will move or witness in the session.

For purposes of safety all participants know that they can open their eyes at any time and that they can stop moving and freely join the witness circle. When the time is up a chime or bell is often used to signal the end of the session.

The mover/s are encouraged to try to make eye contact with their witness/es before they begin and when they emerge from moving. When mover/s and witness/es follow this form there is an interweaving of a connection that is tangible, repetitive and predictable. Generally transition time takes place before mover/s and witness/es begin to verbally process their experience. Sometimes participants draw or journal their experience prior to talking about it. All of these ritualistic elements are clearly articulated and agreed upon prior to the commencement of the session. They provide for safety continuity between sessions and containment of the otherwise uncontainable unknown potential of what can occur in the experience.

Authentic Movement as a Meditation Practice

Authentic Movement has many contemplative aspects that are similar to traditional meditative practices. For example the invitation to become mindfully embodied and also subjectively reflective fosters contemplative awareness characteristic of both disciplines. In Authentic Movement, the practice of non-judgmental awareness of the community of movers builds personal and interpersonal somatic attention (Avstreich, 2006). Awareness, which is a form of attention and focus (Trungpa, 1996), is an essential part of the witness function in meditative practice and also in other art forms such as Authentic Movement. Bringing awareness to the quality and kind of experience alive within the body and one's community invites a wakeful presence to manifest around internal and external stimulus-response loops. These loops can originate from social exchanges, neurobiological urges, or cognitive processes such as memories or sensory based perceptions (Hannaford, 1995). A goal of Authentic Movement is to teach conscious participation as an observer or witness and to thoughtfully engage in the unfolding of these reflective and reflexive cycles. When these body-based cycles are listened to, contemplated, and completed, the result can yield an integrated body, mind, and spirit connection for the practitioner. When somatic messages, such as pain are ignored illness can result. Over time, Authentic Movement invites the mover and witness to no longer discount the intelligence alive in the body that is seeking recognition and to listen to these somatic and sensory-based communications.

Attempting to authentically move in the presence of a witness supports the radical gesture of "just being" in the present moment. The invitation exists for that which wants to move to move. Once engaged in this process of authentic motion, the possibility to receive the wisdom generated from the process and carefully consider its guiding message is set in motion. Mindfulness practice (making the mind full of the fleeting moment) allows for wisdom to emerge from the self awareness generated from these ordinary moment to moment experiences.

The Witness in Meditation

Authentic Movement synergistically divides and skillfully utilizes the two roles of mover and witness. The connection to sitting meditation practice is significant. In meditation,

what is moving in the mind or body is also simultaneously witnessed by the one engaged in the practice. In Authentic Movement, the mover is also seen by another member of the group serving as witness. In sitting meditation the goal is to become the witness of the thinking mind. The witness function in meditation is a vast topic that elucidates the very heart of sitting and Authentic Movement practice. Ancient scriptural texts such as the Upanishads (Prabhavananda and Manchester, 1975), and the Yoga Sutras of Pantanjali (Feuerstein, 1989) beautifully articulate the presence of the inner Witness, the inner knower beyond ego identity. The Sanskrit word *Atman*, which both identifies and stands for this inner Witness presence, is referred to here and in many texts as the Self. *The Upanishads* is a rich, ancient text that instructs the practitioner on the knowledge and the cultivation of the Self or inner witness (Prabhavananda and Manchester, 1975). With insightful transparency and elusive language, portions of the *Upanishads* try to convey this indefinable subject.

Among the many scriptural texts of *Kashmir Shaivism* that address the creative manifestation of movement is the *Spanda-Karikas* (Singh, 1980). Known as the doctrine or stanzas on vibration, the *Spanda Karikas* explicate the understanding that we literally are the universe contemplating itself. Every movement and manifestation within the universe originates ebbs and flows from one ultimate source, which in *Kashmir Shaivism*, is the *Spanda* principle. *Spanda*, in Sanskrit literally means “throb” and is therefore the initial movement that begins and supports all creation into its many forms and endless cycles of expansion and contraction (Singh, 1980).

Mindfulness practice, which is a form of meditation, is about trying to openly and skillfully engage in the present moment and observe the Spanda phenomenon behind thoughts and sensations. By staying focused on the here and now moment to moment between “indulging and repressing” thoughts we learn to suspend the judgments that are so easily attached to the contents of the mind (Chodron, 1997, p 16). Creating space within the mind to gently receive and hold, rather than grasp whatever thoughts arise is a significant goal of this approach to meditation. Meditation then is about mixing space with the movement of our thoughts, as if providing vast territory for an agitated animal (Trungpa, 1976). Trungpa describes mindfulness as an aspect of meditation that observes and recognizes diverse qualities of experience. Awareness, the other side of the equation, is about the direct discovery of mindfulness (p. 49). He also says that “awareness is the willingness not to cling to the discoveries of mindfulness, and mindfulness is just precision; things are what they are” (p. 50).

The discipline to receive and allow what is without altering meaning is a key component of both meditation and Authentic Movement. Observing our thoughts wherever they travel without contracting around them redefines our relationship with the movements of the discursive mind (Muktananda, 1991). This is the ultimate goal of meditation: to make the mind full of the moving moment while nonjudgmentally witnessing the fluctuations of the thinking mind. Authentic Movement engages and enlarges this quality of attention by merging this presence with motion while being witnessed by another as well as the self.

Similar to the orientation of the phenomenological researcher (Creswell, 1998), witnessing in Authentic Movement requires a suspension of judgment and projection (Betensky, 2001). While movers are observed, the responsible witness notices what comes alive internally, owns the received information, and when appropriate after the movement sequence has stopped, speaks to the mover from this place of felt observation and connection (Pallaro, 1999). When to speak, how to speak, and what to say to the mover is a practice in itself. A careful inventory of forming thoughts that are about to be offered to another helps to solidify clear speech that is void of self indulgent projections or tedious questioning.

Clarity of intention is essential if the quality of exchange is to contain meaningful information. As the mover is seen by the witness, the invitation also exists for the witness to see him or herself in the act of observing another. This entire practice of witnessing then moves on a continuum from conscious witnessing to Witness Consciousness (Franklin, 1999). Witness Consciousness is understandably often confused with conscious witnessing. The great teachers and adept contemplatives tell us that in deep states of meditation the ego self dissolves and merges into the expansive eternal soul or Atman Self which is the sacred territory of Witness consciousness. Witness consciousness is the ultimate goal, conscious witnessing is how we practice our way to that goal.

Like meditation, Authentic Movement is a disciplined practice. As in meditation, both mover and witness are tracking (not too tight or rigid and not too loose or unfettered) the flow of their own inner thoughts and impulses. In meditation the meditator observes the flow of inner sensation and thought. In both practices there is an exploration of witnessing the unfolding of inner experiences to wherever they will lead.

In meditation, awareness and attention are utilized for coming back into the present moment. In Authentic Movement there is an effort to follow the dominant impulse. There are levels of complexity in the pulls and tugs of consciousness. Within these pulling and tugging sensations there is one theme, or feeling, or sensation, known or unknown that reverberates longest and loudest. Following this thread wherever it will lead refers to following the dominant impulse. It might just be a starting point for something else to occur but it is a starting point for the evolution of what comes next.

This process is akin to the practice of Clearing a Space described in the Focusing work of Eugene Gendlin (1981). For the witness, as for the meditator, the flow of consciousness is contained in the still body or moving body. The still body allows for an entrainment of following the rise and fall of breath and whatever practice the meditator follows for returning to the body and to the breath. In Authentic Movement this concept can be thought of as “ballooning” that occurs in those moments when the witness has disconnected from the mover and needs to bring themselves back into the present. In effect, ballooning is a kind of drifting into an inward space of losing connection to what is going on in the moment. In the body’s constant homeostatic flow from moment to moment there is a “spacing in” and a “spacing out” that occurs that is very functional. In relaxation this beginning of “spacing out” can lead to a non ordinary state of consciousness and in that state of consciousness it is more difficult to be truly present for the mover/s. Therefore the

need to keep the “balloon” from drifting out into space and need to pull it, and oneself back into the present. A successful “ballooning” strategy can be to focus at that moment on the mover/s and to notice carefully what is happening in that moment in the movement so that one can precisely discuss and demonstrate what one was thinking, feeling and experiencing when the mover did something very specific. Similarly when one feels oneself “ballooning” as a mover one can sometimes pause in that moment to simply pay attention to what is happening at that moment before moving on.

Suspending Judgment and Owning the Projection

Authentic Movement is meditation in motion. One of the functions of both Authentic Movement and meditation is to bring into awareness that which is inside and outside of the body. This awareness is cultivated with an evolving posture of witnessed and, ideally, suspended judgment. The form, practice and discipline of Authentic Movement cultivates an open mind and body rather than a focus on judgment. What happens is what happens, there are no pre-determined outcomes or objectives. The goal is the simple staying with whatever happens between mover/s and witness/es and bringing that embodied experiencing to consciousness by talking together about what has happened.

As a witness, it is extremely important to allow the mover/s to speak first. As the mover/s speak first it is possible for the witness to understand better what the mover/s experience. To hear this and filter it through what one’s own experience was at that time helps to cultivate an understanding of personal projections. When offering verbal or artistic feedback to the witness it is important to remember the dictum to do no harm so that one chooses words or expressions with conscious intent. Responsibly acknowledging and holding personal projections fosters compassionate attention and therefore minimizes the possibility of projective harm. There is a delicate balance as one engages in this practice. It is possible that the exchanges between witness and mover can become contaminated with confused observations that came up in the space between mover/s and witness/es. Therefore, it is important to not dilute that significance. It helps to always return to the movement so that one can say something like “when I saw you bending over like this, and I mirror back the movement. I felt that I wanted to reach over and hold your head.” And that might leave the mover free to respond, as has happened, that “at that moment I felt a hand holding my head and I knew that I was no longer alone in my pain.”

Conclusion

As we begin to unravel the threads of any Authentic Movement session we notice that everything that has happened to anyone present—mover or witness—is part of the larger community of movers. Whatever anyone brings into the group belongs to the group. Sometimes it is not even one’s own autobiographical story that one is moving but rather a larger collective narrative. And much as the individual human body is always moving into or out of or towards a state of internal homeostasis so too the group, the collective body and mind, is moving into or out of or towards homeostasis. This practice of Authentic Movement allows the distractions that prevent homeostasis to become noticed and eventually addressed. And in so doing one is taking one’s place in what Mary Oliver calls

the “family of things” or calling one’s spirit home. Jean Houston(2000) describes this process as follows:

By harnessing our individual purpose to a vision of the possible collective future, we pull ourselves out of the mire of stasis and into tomorrow. Our spirits are called home, and we find heart for the next stage of our evolutionary journey (p.43).

Authentic Movement is a meditative practice. One can only practice this form in the attentive process of another so that one can experience the enormous privilege of calling oneself into an attentiveness and receptivity to whatever unfolds. This non-judgmental form is an attempt to bring to a conscious articulation that which does come into being between witness/es and mover/s. Each time one enters into this form there is the potential for experiencing a gratitude for whatever does emerge into consciousness. Authentic Movement allows one to travel into the present moment, diving deep and surfacing, moving away from and back to the present moment over and over again. It reminds us that what happens to you, happens for me, that we are all connected, that the cries of joy and anguish of the human spirit are universal cries and that together, as in the model of the meditative mind, we can hold and witness whatever surfaces.

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"Mr. Rickey, I've Got Two Cheeks"

Nathaniel Mays

The Body, Mind and Spirit of Jackie Robinson

Editor's Note: "Mr. Rickey, I've Got Two Cheeks': The Body, Mind, and Spirit of Jackie Robinson," recounts the story of Jackie Robinson, who "had to maintain his composure (spirit) while under the microscope of a society that was divided on matters of race. Somehow, this giant of a man was able to synchronize his body, mind, and spirit in such a way as to usher in a new era in baseball and society."

Getting a quality education is costly. Anyone paying attention to what's going on in the world of education can tell you this. They will also tell you that, in the long run, the benefits of a good education far outweigh the costs. There are also those unexpected educational moments that, by one's own admission, are priceless—the kind of life-impacting experiences that remind you that there is more to life and education than the material benefits and power and prestige that some seek. Even when you think you know something, you can find yourself amazed at new information that unexpectedly lands on your lap. To my surprise, I found myself the beneficiary of one of these special experiences in life, as a result of a trip that I made to a store near my home.

About two years ago, I was in a discount store in my neighborhood. While there, I noticed a section of the store with DVDs of old television shows and movies for one dollar. Having an appreciation for history, and I suppose, a good bargain, I bought a few of the DVDs and took them home. Little did I know that it would be two years before I would get a chance to see the DVDs. Moreover, I had no clue that one of the them, "The Jackie Robinson Story" a 1950 docudrama starring Robinson who plays himself, Ruby Dee and others (DIGIVIEW Productions), would provide me with insights into a part of American history that I had only heard about. I didn't expect that watching Robinson tell his own story would cause me to reflect on what higher education, and society at large, could be today, if we dared take the selfless approach to work and life that Robinson took.

The movie starts with Jackie as a boy of about 9 years old showing up at a baseball practice for boys, all white but for him, in his hometown. The two men who were there hitting balls to the boys, to test their skills in fielding the baseball, heard this high-pitched voice call out, "Hit me one Mister!" One of the men, thinking that the boy would not be able to handle the ball, hit one to him and was surprised to see how well the boy could field the ball. Impressed with the boy's ability to field the ball, the man hit another ball to him with the same result. Unlike the other boys fielding balls, little Jackie was fielding balls barehanded. The man was so impressed with Jackie that he gave Jackie an old, beat-up, baseball glove to keep. Although the glove was not new, little Jackie ran home to show his mother the glove with an excitement that would cause one to think that he had been given a brand new glove.

Next, the movie moves quickly through the years and focuses on Jackie's junior college athletic career. This is where the real Jackie Robinson comes into the picture. He was a handsome, clean-cut, and articulate young man. One scene shows his mother sewing the letters of his school on the back of a sweater. When he realizes that they were arranged incorrectly, Jackie, in a respectful tone, politely explains to his mother that, the way she had the letters arranged, no one would know whom he would be jumping for at the track meet that he would participate in the next day. Jackie was referring to a track meet that his older brother (Mack) had participated in, in which Mack had set the junior college long jump record. This was my second look into Jackie's spirit. He spoke with such respect and pride of his brother's accomplishments. You could feel the genuine appreciation of his brother's accomplishments.

Jackie later attends UCLA where he continued his exciting athletic career. It is clear that his real focus, as a student, is to get a job as a coach at a school somewhere. The movie shows Jackie contemplating dropping out of college, thinking that a college degree wouldn't help him, a "colored man," get a job. Even in the face of this unfortunate thought, Jackie had a very good spirit about himself. When asked by one of his white colleagues if he had gotten any answers from the high schools that he had sent letters to (applying for coaching jobs) Jackie replied, "Three. The first school didn't want me for a coach. The second school didn't want me for a coach. (Jackie laughs) The third school, they just didn't want me." In the face of his rejection, Jackie never seemed to express any negative emotions towards the social system that was keeping him from his dream job of coaching.

After a stint in the Army, Jackie played for a negro-league baseball team, where he continued to demonstrate how gifted he was athletically. It was during this time that he was being scouted by the Brooklyn Dodgers. At this point in the movie, I was introduced to the Jackie Robinson that history speaks most about, the Jackie Robinson who would break the racial divide and become the first person of color to play big-league baseball.

Interestingly, current popular history talks about his being the first person of color to play big-league baseball in a matter-of-fact way. Hindsight, of course, tells us that there was nothing inevitable or matter-of-fact about his entry onto the field of U.S. baseball at the time. That is, Jackie Robinson was offered, by Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers, the chance to be the first "colored" baseball player in the big-leagues. He accepted that opportunity and had a great career in baseball. This one-dollar DVD provides insight into the remarkable human spirit that was behind Jackie's success.

At one point in the movie, a representative from the Dodgers approaches Jackie and informs him that Branch Rickey, President of the Dodgers, wanted to meet with him. Jackie was asked if he could get away for a day to meet Mr. Rickey and he replied that he could. Jackie was told to meet the gentleman at the train station that night but failed to show up thinking that the whole incident was nothing more than a joke. When the man later appeared at Jackie's hotel room and questioned why he didn't show up, Jackie realized that he really was a representative from the Dodgers.

Jackie made the trip to New York. When Jackie was asked if he knew why he had been brought there, he said that he was under the impression that Brooklyn was starting a

“colored” baseball team. When he learned that Brooklyn was interested in him playing for the Brooklyn organization he couldn’t believe it. Branch Rickey informed Jackie that he wanted good players who could help Brooklyn win pennants. Rickey then began asking Jackie a series of questions, the answers to which would focus attention on Jackie’s body, mind, and spirit. It was clear that Branch Rickey believed that Jackie had the athletic ability to do well on the baseball field. However, to be the first person of color in big-league baseball was going to require more than athletic ability, if the experiment was going to be successful.

“We’re tackling something big here Jackie. If we fail, no one will try again for twenty years. But if we succeed—(a voice from another person in the room interjects ‘If we succeed, Brooklyn will win a pennant’)—yeah, that too. But we are dealing with rights here. The rights of any American to play baseball . . . What do you think Jackie?” Jackie responds, “Well, I can try.” “Think you’ve got guts enough to play the game, no matter what happens? They’ll shout insults at you. They’ll come in spikes first. They’ll throw at your head.” Jackie responds, “They’ve been throwing at my head for a long time Mr. Rickey.”

Rickey continues, “Suppose I collide with you at second base and when I get up I say you, you dirty black so and so. What do you do?” Jackie asks, “Mr. Rickey, do you want a ball player who’s afraid to fight back?” Rickey responds, “I want a ball player with guts enough not to fight back! You’ve got to do this job with base hits, stolen bases, and fielding ground balls Jackie! Nothing else! Now, I’m playing with you in the World Series and I’m hotheaded. I want to win this game no matter what. So, I go into you spikes first. You jab the ball into to my ribs and the umpire says out. I flare! All I can see is your black face. That black face right over me. So, I hall off and punch you in the cheek. What do you do?” Jackie looks at Rickey very patiently and says, “Mr. Rickey, I’ve got two cheeks.” Rickey looks him in the face and says “Good!”

After a series of other questions about his role with the Negro League team that he was playing for, Jackie is told that he would receive a contract to play for Brooklyn before he left that day. Rickey also informs him that he should not sign it right away. The next question that Rickey put to Jackie was “Is your mother living?” Jackie said “Yes, Sir. She’s in California.” Rickey encouraged Jackie to “Call her up. Ask her advice . . . And, Jackie, remember one thing, no matter what happens on the ball field, you can’t fight back. That’s going to be the hard part. You can’t fight back.”

This purposeful meeting marks the beginning of the historic integration of major-league baseball. Although it may be hard to believe, baseball as we have come to know it today would not be what it is, without Rickey’s foresight and Jackie’s ability to align his body, mind, and spirit to face this awesome challenge. Without this meeting, there would be no Henry Aaron, Willie Mays, Roberto Clemente, Pedro Martinez, David Ortiz, Manny Rivera, Joe Morgan, Alex Rodriguez, Daisuke Matsuzaka, Ken Griffey, Jr., or other minority big-league players, coaches or managers today. Baseball as we know it, could have been very different.

So, why have I gone to great length to recount the story of Jackie Robinson? What's the point? The point is that to meet the challenge that life presented to him successfully, Jackie Robinson had to align his body, mind, and spirit. He had to be prepared to deal with people who would attempt to harm him physically (his body), yet not fight back. He had to listen to slurs and insults (mind) and remember not to return insult for insult. He had to maintain his composure (spirit) while under the microscope of a society that was divided on matters of race. Somehow, this giant of a man was able to synchronize his body, mind, and spirit in such a way as to usher in a new era in baseball and society.

The history of African-Americans is filled with stories of individuals who were, like Jackie, the first in their disciplines. Robinson's motivation, like many of the others, was a love for what he wanted to do (play baseball). In accepting Rickey's invitation to integrate big league baseball, Robinson also shouldered the burden of other African-American baseball players. In the spirit of those who had gone before him, and many who followed him as active participants in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, Jackie had to practice a non-violent response to the slurs and abuse that he faced, if other African-Americans were going to be allowed to play big league baseball. It is easy to conjecture that Jackie's Christian upbringing was partly responsible for his willingness to "turn the other cheek". I don't believe it was. I think that Jackie's response to Rickey about having two cheeks was an acknowledgment of religious influence, not a religious statement. I believe that Jackie's ability not to respond, in kind, to the negativity that he faced was motivated by a sense of social responsibility, not religion. Robinson was a competitor! Under normal circumstances, defending his honor was not out of the question for Jackie. This is what makes his accomplishment even more meaningful. Jackie was able to set aside his personal, instinctive, desire to defend himself in order to give others a chance to play in the big leagues.

Beyond baseball, this \$1 DVD caused me to wonder what our society would be like today without the determination of Jackie Robinson and others like him. It also caused me to question what higher education in America would be like if people felt comfortable thinking about how their actions would impact others, and not just how they could benefit. What would higher education be like if people thought about the greater good and not just about themselves? What if teaching and learning, and not careers, money, and power were the primary focus of what we do in higher education? What if people had guts enough not to fight back?

Having worked in higher education for nearly twenty years now, I have had many opportunities to witness the negative impact that "fighting back" has on members of educational communities. There seems to be something instinctive about our desire to defend ourselves when we feel under attack. This was the gist of Jackie's question "Do you want a ball player who is afraid to fight back?" The thought being that the player would look weak. And, as we know, nobody likes to look weak or vulnerable. Yet, we have also seen, and Rickey clearly communicated, that it takes more control not to respond negatively when one is under attack than it does power to defend one's self.

As I watched this movie over and over, I couldn't help but think about the many social encounters that take place daily on college and university campuses (student-to-student, student-to-faculty or staff, parents-to-administrators, etc.). Admittedly, there are people who make wonderfully positive contributions to higher education and who have mastered the art of selflessness. They have touched the lives of those that they come in contact with in very positive ways. I've been the beneficiary of the spirit of how some of these people have approached their work. I would even go as far as to say that I am where I am professionally because so many people have willingly given of themselves to nurture my journey through higher education.

Just as certain as I have seen the good that some contribute to higher education, in my career, I've seen many unfortunate things happen that have had a negative impact on the experiences of many people connected to higher education. I've seen minor situations spin out of control because individuals were concerned more about how they were being disrespected than about the logic of their arguments. Often, people get so entrenched in their emotions that they refuse to consider that their position on an issue could be wrong or distorted. It is also the case that some people know that their positions are wrong, yet their need to be right does not allow them to admit that they are wrong.

During my time in higher education, I've seen supervisors blame their staffs for their own shortcomings. I've seen colleagues engage in games of one-up-manship in order to find favor in the eyes of harsh supervisors. I have known brilliant, yet overly proud, members of faculty and staff who have made unfair decisions that impact students, simply because they were "rubbed" the wrong way by a student. I've dealt with highly emotional parents who have gone to great lengths to get what they want out of a university, simply because their professional status made them feel entitled. I've seen students who have disrespected their peers, faculty, and staff simply because they wanted their way. I've seen too much pain, frustration, and suffering for unnecessary reasons on college and university campuses.

Everyone says that they are working toward the same goal of a successful academic and social experience for students that will allow students to leave the institution and make positive contributions to society. Yet, in the heat of daily competition in higher education and life, our instincts cause us to want to strike back when we feel under attack. We seem to live, from day to day, on those momentary victories that fighting back provides us.

But, what if we had the strength in body, mind, and spirit to take Rickey's advice and not fight back? What if we could convince ourselves that we, like Jackie Robinson, also have two cheeks? What if . . . ?

Reference

The Jackie Robinson Story, [DVD], DIGIVIEW PRODUCTIONS, LLC, 2004 (original publication date: 1950)

Creative Arts as Companion Therapy in Cancer Treatment

Marion Nesbit and Susan DeCristofaro

A Patient Partnership

Editor's Note: In their joint article, "A Partnership in Creative Arts and Healing" Nesbit and Decristofaro "document the formation of a community partnership between Lesley University and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in the creation of a hospital-based arts and healing program." The article features the journey of the late Lesley alumna M.L. O'Connor, whose vision and passion for the use of creative arts in her own healing process served as catalysts for development of the program, and whose values and beliefs served as the tenets of its foundation. "In M.L.'s vision of the hospital-based arts program the patients were engaged, each in his or her own creative process, expressing fears, fantasies, and hopes through their poems or drawings in ways for whatever reason, they could not through vocal expression."

The purpose of this article is to document the formation of a partnership between faculty and staff of Lesley University and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, a Harvard University affiliated research hospital, to pioneer a graduate student and patient's vision toward creation of a hospital-based arts and healing program. The article features the journey of the late Lesley alumna M.L. O'Connor, whose insight and passion for the use of creative arts in her own healing process served as catalysts for development of the program, and whose values and beliefs served as the tenets of its foundation. The article chronicles both highlights and struggles of situating an arts-based individualized program in a hospital environment and underscores the importance of the partnership in a process that continues to unfold toward gaining recognition for patients' personal expression through creative arts as a value-added supplement to medically based treatment.

Ten-year anniversaries can reveal important characteristics about a relationship. On reaching a decade, the relationship has survived its nascent years of discovery and positioning for visibility, and yet it is still in its youth with a promise of many years ahead to strengthen the connection and explore possibilities. This article celebrates one such anniversary of the tenth year of the Creative Arts Program situated at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (DFCI) and honors a relationship between two institutions by retelling the story about the tenacity and wisdom of the individual who connected them.

While many partnerships are forged out of shared need or mutual benefit, it was more serendipity than strategic planning that led to the unique partnership between DFCI, an internationally reputed hospital and research institute specializing in the treatment of cancer patients and the Independent Study Degree Program (INDS) of Lesley University. INDS is a renowned graduate program in which extraordinary adults, driven by humanitarian values, construct unique programs of academic study. The connection came through a graduate student named Mary Louise McMahon O'Connor, herself a cancer patient, who planned an academic program rooted in Jungian theory, a belief in the power

of expressive arts, and a desire to help cancer patients move through the pain and angst of illness. Her integrative master's thesis became the starting point for the DFCI Creative Arts Program.

Mary Louise O'Connor, or ML as she preferred, was a gifted poet, artist, dancer and humorist, and a pioneer who would not let her vision be clouded by others' doubts. With the realization that painting and writing poetry corresponded with a positive change in the course of her illness, she imagined a cancer infusion clinic where patients like herself could similarly benefit from expressing themselves through the arts. ML conceived of herself as a choreographer of a program in which individuals could dabble or delve deeply into a mode of artistic expression as she walked among them, tambourine in hand, facilitating their process with a generous and loving spirit.

In ML's vision of the hospital-based arts program, patients were engaged, each in his or her own creative process. They expressed fears, fantasies, and hope through their poems or drawings in ways that, for whatever reason, they could not through vocal expression. For ML, participation could be in writing a poem while waiting in the chemotherapy suite or in listening to music following surgery. ML was resolute that participation in any visual or performing art benefited patients and would help them find meaning and relief from stressful circumstances. In her own words, "Discovering and expressing what images and ideas appeal to us is a path to our own deeper worlds, and connections to what inspires the human spirit." ML wanted individuals who had cancer to be present in their bodies and to have the opportunity to use art to "take deeper notice of what images...words or pictures come to mind—that might assist healing".

Inspired by Carl Jung's psychology and spirituality, ML posited that individuals have common archetypes and forces of creativity within that can be tapped as reservoirs of healing. Describing her experience of illness as inhabiting the inner and underworld, ML decided to experiment with Jung's ideas by exploring her dreams, drawing and painting images that emerged, and writing about her reflections in a journal.

ML created poetry to communicate images that surfaced from her reflections. ML wrote, "...as a poet, I spiral around and play with facts, impressions, dreams. Just as researchers investigate through microscopes, making notes of what they find, I inspect and translate into sound and rhythm the nuance of under, inner, and over sides of things" (O'Connor, 1997, p.5). She was the first to say she was "not a doctor" as she attempted to support the medical interventions of surgery, radiation, and immunotherapy by participation. Like Katz (1993) and Kabat-Zinn (1990) she believed healing was a process toward connection and balance, and that the arts were a means for her to achieve a wholeness that she could not obtain through medical treatment alone.

ML remarked that her Irish heritage provided a gene for poetic expression, and she saw her ability to create a poem as an invaluable gift that even the disease could not take away. ML was not afraid of the darker depths of her spirituality, brought on by the fear and tightness of panic she felt as sickness seeped up through her in the chemotherapy room or when she waited in the hallway outside the operating room, within which her life would open

vulnerably to the unknown waiting below the melanoma. During the worst of times, she cherished her private time with God and practiced her belief in the power of prayer.

One poem, *Cathedral*, expresses her spirituality and thoughts poignantly in what she referred to as “a deep signature of her soul”:

*Once we built cathedrals, and
lived assured of alignment and of worship
of duty in a place, where
one still hears
resonance of stone
unleashed by bleeding hands, the visions
satyrs, saints, projections of the medieval
god heads hovering
not far from the grids we build
atop decaying streets.
As disenfranchised pilgrims
we climb from city squalls
into vaulting worlds
of stained glass mystery
seduced by tabernacles flame
we lay desire down
in the quiet shade of a dark Madonna's face.*

*Stone eyes lock on fumbling lips,
leaving judgments and words to us, saints
stay in the listening silence
as immobile offspring
of all our foundered gods.*

*We seek sanctuary
though we know Akhenaton was mistaken
to worship the sun
as were all pharaohs and kings
who believed in
sustenance from image.*

*Ishtar, Osiris, Atum
left residues in dreams
Ninto, Baal, Zeus
carving gold wrapped icons*

*charted imagings of search
 the artists of Lascaux, the Sistine Chapel
 the architects of Knuf's Pyramid,
 New Grange, Stonehenge
 all reaching to touch the spirit maker, if
 there ever was
 or is
 such industry, still*

*We seek sanctuary
 plumb the white horizon altars wishing
 for worthier chalice
 fashioned for some reason from this time
 a gold from which to drink believing
 tending is a lasting good we make.*

*Despair paints tears that do not fall
 genuflecting in aisles of slanted light
 we become like carvings
 shaped through time
 peopling the altars
 objects of art
 momentarily alive
 in the flicker of a candle.
 (1998, first draft 1995)*

Artistic creations that ML called “soul speech” brought her insights and emotional release, leading to strength in the midst of chaos and inner peace. In her thesis literature review, ML credited many writers whose work influenced her thinking. She spoke about a Jungian-inspired inquiry into the archetypes of Ariadne and Inanna, and the biblical Job, and how much she gained by Nouwen’s sense that “...words must emerge and awaken the deepest longing of the human heart” (1990, p.56). She loved the poetry of Joyce and waded in the writings of Hillman (e.g., 1989), among others, in search of meaning or wisdom to unlock her “predicament”. She learned about societal context for individual suffering from Frankl (2002), particularly resonating with *Man’s Search for Meaning*, and about the juxtaposition of suffering and possibilities for personal gain from reading the work of physician Siegel (1990) and a fellow cancer traveler.

ML drew from eastern wisdom the belief that she, rather than her disease or pain, ruled her body and that creative movements replenished her energy. She appreciated the expression of life force in Asian art and, from that perspective, she approached her out-of-balance predicament as an artist’s blending of art in life. Inspired by reading From the *Mustard*

Seed Garden Manual of Painting (Sze, 1977), she strove to find “the balance of disharmonies inside the harmony of nature” and recognized that it was important

(n)ot to be unmindful of the full import of dire diagnosis,...to be aware of the patterns of our being, and gently compassionate toward learned coping strategies ...living one's life being the artist of one's life—we dab into the ink, we swish the brush of our bodies, move the line across the page, make the shape and so use and strengthen the ch'i (sic)—(O'Connor, 1998, p 126)

Encouraged by how interdisciplinary readings in the humanities and social sciences validated her powerful personal experiences, ML convinced her faculty committee that she could take her arts and healing ideas to others at DFCI. Since there was no formal administrative connection between Dana-Farber and Lesley University and she had her own contacts as a result of her patient provider relationships, ML chose to operate from a framework of personal encounter and set out to see what doors she could open at DFCI to transform her vision of the hospital-based healing environment into reality. Her faculty team had become aware that a cancer patient's sense of time has an urgency about it and, thus, supported ML's unconventional approach to initiate her creative arts ideas. With her medical prognosis, there was not the luxury of time for crossing bureaucratic bridges.

Because of her mostly favorable personal experiences with western medical clinical staff, she was puzzled as to why something so harmless as inviting a patient to draw or write a poem rather than just to “pass time” would raise concern or caution. She reported to her faculty committee that while she believed her efforts were clearly value-added and the patients she met affirmed that the art experiences helped them, some staff led her to believe the contrary. ML grew frustrated by references to art as “superfluous” rather than a means for healing.

With the pressure of limited life expectancy, ML redirected her energy toward completing her master's thesis to root her ideas in theory and evidence-based practice so the scientific community would pay attention. Additionally, she became clear that she needed to consolidate her program development efforts in order to conserve her limited physical energy. She explored ways to educate staff and gain support for her ideas whenever she visited DFCI for medical treatment. She approached physicians, nurses, and staff she knew for their support. Later she recruited employees who were artists themselves.

Not surprising to anyone who knew her, ML succeeded in recruiting one of her doctors to sponsor her cause of using the arts as a healing tool, and he responded by leading her to the clinical oncology nurse at the Blum Family Resource Center. While pursuing research on her melanoma condition and options for treatment, the oncology nurse had responded compassionately as one who understood her journey and appreciated her creative ideas. Responsible for running the Blum Center, a repository of information located behind the information desk on the first floor at DFCI, the nurse became the DFCI “mover and shaker” who succeeded in formalizing ML's program and shoring its foundation during the early years.

Sadly, it was not long before ML headed back to DFCI to investigate a lump on her neck, only to learn that the cancer had resurfaced as an advanced Stage IV malignant melanoma.

ML was given a life expectancy of 24 months. Nevertheless, she called her INDS faculty to say that she did not want to give up and, contrary to medical advice, planned to pursue her thesis writing in full force.

ML completed her master's degree during the same semester that she applied for admission to doctoral studies. The INDS faculty committee encouraged her to use the master's work as a springboard to doctoral study and to stay at DFCI for her doctoral field placement to hone her integrative art and healing ideas. To provide continuity, ML asked her INDS faculty chair to continue as doctoral faculty. She also asked a renowned Jungian analyst to join her committee, and the two became her field-based doctoral faculty. Strategically, ML maintained the Lesley University and DFCI connection, strengthening the professional relationship through establishing a significant doctoral internship.

The path of doctoral studies was mired by ML's experience of refractory disease, which led to her enduring more trials, painful side effects, and toxicities of experimental research. Still, she worked indefatigably to realize the relationship between scholarship and practice in fulfillment of her personal dream to help others heal through the arts. At one point, ML attributed remission of metastatic disease to colorful and vigorous drawings of her dying liver. Her DFCI research fellow was surprised to notice the medically inexplicable change and acknowledged that, at the least, making art kept her focused and appeared to improve the quality of her life.

Even the language ML used to approach her treatment embraced the power of the arts. Her lifeline lay in a vaccine that, in her words, could "paint a target" on her cancer cells and prompt her immune system to fight back. For ML, the arts were not only for aesthetics; they were a base of personal power and a mode of communication.

ML's doctoral work coincided with facing her own challenges with the end stage disease, and the persistent threat of dying gave her the impetus that she needed to step up the pace of her work without yielding to tempting diversions. She was a student faced with a literal deadline. Her dissertation abstract captures her ideology, context, and purpose:

This work examines the nature of the unconscious and conscious connection, right and left brain hemispheric function, and body-mind unity as background for understanding personal creative process and its impact on healing. This work was accomplished in the underworld of my own disease process. Scholarship and art are used to meld language and image to what is a verifiable healing process. This work is intended as background and enrichment for medical and health caregivers and most particularly for other persons similarly challenged.

Few graduate students excel in multiple aspects of scholarship and practice; ML was one who did. She capably read hundreds of sources in eastern and western philosophy, psychology, religion, art history, mind-body medicine, and expressive arts therapy; and, she lived out her beliefs and values as she painted, wrote poetry, and danced unhesitatingly in Isadora Duncan fashion as the spirit moved her.

With advancing disease, ML knew her energy would ebb. She hastened to use her intelligent, soft-spoken manner to succeed in engaging patients and converting medical staff one by one, encouraging each to dabble in the arts alongside her, in a group, or in a private space—wherever most comfortable.

In her final weeks, ML chose deliberately to exhaust her energy at DFCI to help patients get beyond their pathology, infuse their spirits into artwork, and display their uniqueness through artistic creations in celebration of living.

In her life, ML used creative expression as an extension of self. By example, she covered her emotional pain in public by wrapping a gorgeous scarf to disguise her neck tumor. Typical of her dramatic persona, she made an entrance into a room by accentuating style and not pathology. In preparation for her funeral, she fashioned a decorative box for her remains to be placed on the altar at her memorial service with a request that the congregation acknowledge her gift back to God. For ML, beauty was in both the expressive process and the creative product, even at death.

During the final week of her life, ML called three “treasured mentors” to her bedside to discuss the implications of her doctoral work, especially as it related to the creative arts. In addition to her DFCI and Lesley mentors, ML entreated her field-based mentor and author Shaun McNiff to join her final gathering. Fully aware that death drew nigh on that day during the last week in August, ML regally held court in her home, as ocean breezes blew in the window and water lapped on the seawall of the Atlantic coast. *She had designed the scene for her penultimate act.*

While a Rockport bedroom hardly seemed a likely location for formalizing a Lesley and DFCI partnership, no one could have dissuaded ML from her mission. She assigned places for her “guests” immediately next to the bed so that she would not have to raise her voice or exert herself unduly, and proceeded with her carefully constructed agenda. Indeed, with the presence of one of her adult children as her familial witness, ML’s intense focus made those in attendance aware that this was not a meeting for social conversation or intellectual discussion, but rather for focused program planning. In an unforgettable blend of aesthetics and purpose, ML clearly reiterated her vision and beseeched the three mentors to carry forth her work. All three honored ML with a covenant, formalizing the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Creative Arts Program.

With humor and style, and no doubt with satisfaction of the birth of her program, ML died a few days later on Labor Day, author of a dissertation completed three days before and after bidding farewell to her six children, siblings, and mother.

In her honor, the DFCI held a posthumous doctoral award ceremony, with the DFCI President, representatives of ML’s medical team, members of the Lesley University academe in attendance, ML’s mother, and her six children. Memorial speakers noted ML’s contributions to DFCI as patient and activist, and announced the birth of the DFCI program focusing on creative arts as companion cancer therapy, with ML attributed status as founder. The three mentors who had been at her bedside, present again in the graduation audience, became the founding members of the advisory board: Susan DeCristofaro, Shaun McNiff, and Marion Nesbit.

Pioneering a patient's vision proved life transforming, not only for patients but for others involved, as well. The Creative Arts Program at DFCI is now flourishing, supported by an advisory board comprised of 8 members who share ML's values and continue to sustain and develop her ideas. The program now has a staff artist, visiting artists, volunteers, and provides student internships. Program offerings have expanded beyond poetry and visual arts to include drama, music lessons, and creative writing, and—in tribute to ML's playful wit—a HumorUs Healers clown program.

The co-authors, introduced by ML in the roles of her INDS graduate faculty and DFCI oncology nurse, have grown as colleagues into friends, united by ML's spirit that continues to pervade their work together. The Lesley University and DFCI connection increased when Shaun McNiff returned to Lesley as University Professor. Ten years of considerable efforts to form a niche in a teaching hospital have led to offerings only imagined ten years ago. The members of the advisory board believe that ML would be pleased to realize that the Jimmy Fund auditorium would see the production of WIT featuring DFCI patients, staff, and physicians as actors. She would delight in noticing the art group at the Blum Resource Center table, sharing stories of their cancer and healing experiences as they created boxes. ML would stop to listen to the melodic movement from a cellist funded by a grant and happily join a group of dancers learning line dances in a private medical conference room. Surely she would laugh out loud to see her beloved nurse, recently graduated from hospital clown training, romping in her clown get-up with both child and adult patient populations.

No doubt ML would be thrilled to see how the original 3 founders now carry the hospital and academe partnership forward in lively advisory meetings of a cross-section of DFCI medical and administrative staff intermingling with faculty representatives from 3 colleges and universities. She would recognize that the program legacy was extended through education of interns, public exposure during Arts Week, and in national and international presentations. And, she would sigh relief knowing that there is financial support through donations from grantors, art show sales, and other fundraising efforts.

Most of all, we would like to believe that ML would be touched by participants' smiles, notes of gratitude, and proud displays in the DFCI showcase of products the patients and families exhibit proudly. She would be reassured that her Creative Arts Program is growing to the benefit of its participants and be impressed by the sustaining commitment of the partnership to take her values and ideas out into the world for the benefit of others.

End Notes

- (1) *ML O'Connor's comments later served as text in the Creative Arts as Companion Cancer Therapy program brochure.*

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A Needle in the Head is Worth Two in the Back

Jana van der Veer

A Journey into Japanese Traditional Medicine

Editor's Note: In her article, "A Needle in the Head is Worth Two in the Back: A Journey into Japanese Traditional Medicine," Jana describes her reluctant foray into the world of Japanese medicine, after a rainbow of antibiotics have failed to cure her of an indeterminable illness. She discovers a mind-body connection that changes her perspective on life and will inform everything she does in the future. In this extract from the article, she says, "I'm twenty-four years old, and this is the first time I've heard about the mind-body connection in terms of health and healing. Over the next year, I undergo a radical change in my attitudes toward my body and my illness."

"No needles," I say to the receptionist in Japanese. "This is not an acupuncture appointment." I'd specified this when I made the appointment as well. I was referred to the clinic, which specialized in Japanese traditional medicine, by my writing group leader, Colleen. Her husband is a doctor, or *sensei*, here.

The receptionist gives me a strange look and asks me to step behind the curtain to the left. I put my clothes into a small locker and change into a white cotton Johnny with tiny blue flowers.

I have no idea what to expect. I have come here out of desperation. Over the last four months, I've been in and out of doctors' offices and hospitals, being treated with a rainbow collection of pills and powders and diagnostic tests that have found nothing conclusive. What started off as some sort of intestinal glitch brought on by tainted food or water from a trip to Indonesia has left me feeling permanently depressed, weak and exhausted – and my entire digestive system is now out of whack. I have to plan what foods I eat and in what combination to avoid nasty consequences. I always, no matter where I'm going, need to know where a bathroom can be found.

I've been fortunate; up to this point in my life, I've never had an illness that a brief run of antibiotics couldn't fix. But now, added to the difficulty of navigating a foreign health care system in a language in which I'm only moderately fluent is the deep-seated feeling of panic at my utter inability to improve my condition.

My immune system is so depleted, in fact, that I recently came down with a case of shingles, commonly called "adult chicken pox." The chicken pox I remember from childhood, however, consisted of itchy spots made bearable by Mom, chicken soup, and Sesame Street. That illness bears no relation to the blistering rash that felt like broken glass embedded in my skin and a bone-deep achiness as though I'd pulled every muscle in my right side.

Colleen convinced me to come here only after much resistance on my part. “Don’t they do acupuncture? I really hate needles. I mean, really hate. I used to kick the doctor when he came to give me my shots.”

“They do acupuncture there, but they don’t have to. They can do other things, too, like shiatsu and moxibustion.” Seeing the expression on my face, Colleen handed me her husband’s card. “Look, please, just go. You need to go. It’s the only thing that will help you at this point. What do you want, more pills?”

So now I’m here, and my hands are sweating, and I’m fidgeting in my seat, unlike the Japanese patients, who sit impassively waiting their turn. *What am I doing here? This is a mistake. Maybe I should just get up and go.* Before I can bolt, a young woman in a loose blue cotton jacket and pants calls my name from the doorway to the inner sanctum. She smiles encouragingly as I walk slowly toward her, with the same feeling in the pit of my stomach that I get at the dentist when I know that drills will be involved.

“No needles,” I tell her.

She just smiles and leads me to a low table-like bed in a curtained-off area. “Lie down on your back, please. The doctor will be with you shortly.”

I lie down, and only then does it occur to me that I never specified the name of the doctor I wanted to see. Colleen called me that morning, though, with cheery encouraging words about the treatment, and saying she would tell her husband I would be there today. I focus on that, and on taking deep breaths to calm my pounding heart. *This is ridiculous. It’s not a torture session, for heaven’s sake. He even speaks English, so you can tell him exactly what you’ve been going through.*

A small, neat man with graying hair and beard steps through the curtain. Light glints off his round glasses so I can’t see his eyes. His hand is loosely cupped at his side.

He approaches the bed and raises his hand. Before I can blink –

There’s a needle in my head.

It’s stuck just below the hairline, slipped in so quickly I didn’t even feel it. But still –

There’s a needle in my head!

I break out in a clammy sweat. It’s all I can do not to jump off the bed and run out the door.

“Er – “ I say.

“Be quiet,” the sensei says. “Stay still.”

“But –“

The nurse in the blue uniform comes up on the other side of the bed. “Let the sensei examine you. He is a very great doctor. It is rare for the head of the clinic to see a new patient himself.”

He’s not even the right doctor! This isn’t Colleen’s husband. He’s not the head of the clinic.

The *sensei*'s eyes are closed as he moves his outstretched hands slowly down my body, not touching it, but hovering a few inches above it, from the top of my head, along my arms and torso, and down my legs to my feet.

"He is feeling where you are sick," the nurse says.

"Well, I can tell you what happened..." I've never met a doctor who didn't want you to tell him your symptoms.

"Be quiet," the *sensei* says. After a few moments, he opens his eyes and looks at me critically. His hands have come to rest over my lower right abdomen. "Your main problem is here."

"Yes, that's right!" I am surprised. This is what I've been trying to tell all the doctors I've seen so far, but they've all said that it was impossible, that it was higher up, or that it was stomach trouble, or just a virus that wouldn't go away. But that is the exact spot where the pain originated and has been bothering me for weeks.

The *sensei* moves his hand up my right side. "You have illness here."

"Yes." My shingles, gone now except for a few red spots, invisible under the Johnny.

He looks at me, cockling his head. "You should stop carrying your bag over your left shoulder all the time."

"Er – okay."

"Tell me how this happened."

I start to tell him, but I am distracted by the fact that *there is a needle in my head*. It doesn't hurt, but I can feel it jumping under the skin as I talk. I start to wonder how many other needles will be jabbed into me without my consent – I mean, hadn't I been clear about the no-needles thing?

"Your Japanese isn't very good." The *sensei* interrupts my thoughts. "How long have you been in Japan?" "About a year."

He frowns. "Your Japanese should be better than this by now."

I am too shocked to protest. I've never in my life met a rude Japanese person. I realize my Japanese is far from perfect, but I know it's better than many foreigners', and usually any effort to speak the language is greeted with a smile and a *Nihongo ga jozu desu, ne!* ("Your Japanese is very good, isn't it!"). I want to snap that I don't usually have to remember proper Japanese *while a needle is sticking out of my head*, but something tells me that won't go over well.

He says something to the nurse that I can't understand, and she makes some notes on a clipboard. He turns and takes the needle out of my head, and again it's so quick that I can't even feel it. He leaves without a good-bye. All I can feel is intense relief.

"Can I go now?" I ask the nurse.

"No, wait a few minutes, please." She swishes out and shuts the curtain behind her.

More than a few minutes pass; I start to get impatient. I'm about to get up and go anyway, when another man comes in. He is dressed in a blue cotton jacket and trousers like the nurse. His black hair is a little long and ragged, like he needs a cut. He pulls up a low stool to the end of the bed and smiles a quiet, gentle smile.

"Hello, my name is Kadoya," He says in English. "How are you?"

I prop myself up on my elbows and glare at him. "I've been better."

He nods, still smiling. "That is why you are here. We will do your treatment now."

"No needles," I say firmly.

"Okay."

I flop back down, still wary but willing to try. I am tired of being sick and exhausted all the time. I've always been ridiculously healthy, and the past four months have been deeply unsettling. I feel like my body has suddenly become my enemy, and I am at its mercy.

"We will try some *shiatsu*. Do you know what that is?"

"Not really. A kind of massage, right?" He smiles.

"A little bit like that. Turn over, please."

That doesn't sound too bad. Kadoya-*sensei's* hands are strong but gentle as they apply pressure to various points of my legs and lower back. He explains what he is doing, something about "triangular relationship theory" and how different pressure points are connected to various organs in the body, but as the tension slowly drains from my body, I find it hard to follow.

It's not totally relaxing, though. Sometimes he presses so hard that I wince. I'm sure I'll have bruises everywhere. "Too much?" he asks.

"Just a little." I don't want to be a total wimp.

It's not until I'm back on the street, a little dazed, with instructions to rest, eat healthy food, and drink lots of water, that I realize Kadoya-*sensei* isn't Colleen's husband, either. Their last name is Watanabe. That's okay, though. I liked Kadoya-*sensei*. I liked his calm manner, and the fact that he actually listened to me and didn't use needles. More importantly, I feel better than I have in months.

Thus begins my odyssey into the world of traditional Japanese medicine. I meet with Kadoya-*sensei* weekly. He does *shiatsu* and cupping (putting heated round tea-cups upside down on my back to withdraw toxins) and moxibustion (burning special herbs on my skin – not as painful as it sounds). After a few weeks, he says casually that the treatment would be much more effective with acupuncture. Will I allow him to try it? If I don't like it, he will take the needles out. He shows me the needles – they are, indeed, about as thin as a hair – and I agree to try it.

I never learn to like it, and in fact break out in a sweat each time he starts the treatment, but I learn to tolerate it. He is very gentle, twisting the needles in slowly and then removing them, so I don't have to lie for long periods with needles sticking out of me, a thought that

gives me the willies. The needles go into my back, so I don't even see them. Usually, I don't feel a thing, except an occasional sharp twinge that *Kadoya-sensei* assures me indicates a breakthrough. I feel relaxed and sleepy after the sessions, and my health improves. It will take time to fully recover, *Kadoya-sensei* says.

Colleen is at first indignant when I tell her I am seeing another doctor, not her husband, but I tell her it was a mix-up, and it would make waves to ask to see a different doctor now. She has lived in Japan long enough to know this is the truth, and that making waves, or causing *Kadoya-sensei* any loss of face, would reflect badly on her husband as well as me. I eventually do see her husband, *Watanabe-sensei*, when *Kadoya-sensei* goes on vacation, and I am profoundly glad for the twist of fate that brought me to *Kadoya-sensei* instead. I find *Watanabe-sensei*'s manner jarring, from his hearty jocularity to the way he quickly jerks the needles in and out of my back. I'm sure he's a good doctor, and I know from conversations overheard at the clinic that he is popular with the patients, but by the time *Kadoya-sensei* returns I vow that next time I will take a vacation from treatments rather than see anyone else.

Kadoya-sensei and I eventually become friends, and even after my treatment is completed, I continue to see him. He teaches me many things, from where the pressure points are in various areas of the body, to meditation and yoga. I'm twenty-four years old, and this is the first time I've heard about the mind-body connection in terms of health and healing. Over the next year, I undergo a radical change in my attitudes toward my body and my illness.

I no longer feel like my body is my sneaky enemy, ready to attack me with mysterious and incurable symptoms at any moment. I begin to feel grateful to my illness, for providing the impetus to discover a whole other way of being, and for giving me the opportunity to learn so many new things.

By the time I leave Japan and *Kadoya-sensei* behind, it's hard for me to remember that there was a time when I thought antibiotics were the answer to everything, or that I was terrified of acupuncture, or that I believed my mind and body were completely separate entities at war with each other. I am astonished and humbled by the gift I have received, nothing less than the gift of reclaiming my physical and mental health, and the tools to consciously improve both over a lifetime.

Institute for Body, Mind and Spirituality Conference, March 2007 Buki Papillon

On March 30, 2007, the Institute for Body, Mind and Spirituality (IBMS) at Lesley University hosted the “Innovations in Research, Practice and Pedagogy” symposium in the Porter Exchange Building. The seminar began with a welcome address by Dr. Susan H. Gere, Director of IBMS.

The program moderator, Dr. Joan Klagsbrun, Director of the Wellspring Center for Life Enhancement and an adjunct faculty member, thanked the presenters, faculty mentors, and Yishiuan Chin, GSASS Director of Planning and Special Projects, for their work towards making the symposium a reality. She then introduced the panel. Dr. Jared Kass, Professor of Counseling and Psychology, began the keynote presentation, by quoting from the poem, “On the Pulse of Morning,” by Maya Angelou, followed by a moment of centering and contemplation in which attendees relaxed and participated in a deep breathing exercise.

Professor Kass’ presentation focused on the question: How can we speak of something so seemingly naïve and abstract as spirituality, in a world where every major culture in all historical periods, elitism, racism, patriarchalism, greed, and a need to dominate through violence, has created throughout history, a “chain of pain?” He quoted James Joyce, who has described history as “a nightmare from which humanity is trying to awake.” “Young adults can be taught to learn proactively, and to develop recourses for resilience through contemplative practices,” Kass said. “These practices can anchor them in a peaceful aspect of themselves, in a neutral educational environment, without commitment to any religion.” He concluded that the human behavioral response style holds the key to peaceful coexistence.

The panel’s response to Professor Kass’ presentation was varied and addressed almost every aspect of body/ mind studies.

Dr. Nathaniel Mays, Dean of Student Life and Academic Development, responded by relating the spiritual core mentioned by Professor Kass to self-awareness. “I think in the final analysis, spiritual maturity is a matter of the individual having ownership of whatever they profess or believe or practice. Ownership is the key to maturation,” Dr. Mays said. Dean Mays then went on to tell the story of his own spiritual maturation and the process of eventually owning the Baptist tradition he had been given, while eschewing what he called “holy or spiritual arrogance.”

Dr. Sat Bir Khalsa, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, disagreed with Dr. Kass with regards to the “chain of pain.” He posited that spirituality and religion do not overlap much, and that the degree of overlap depends on how much of spirituality a religion has, in terms of the use of things like repetitive prayers and chants, for example. Dr. Khalsa mentioned a study of performance anxiety involving yoga practitioners versus

non-yoga practitioners, which showed that cognitive and physiological techniques can lead to quasi-spiritual states of consciousness.

Dr. Cheryl Giles, the Francis Greenwood Peabody Professor of the Practice in Pastoral Care and Counseling at Harvard Divinity School, spoke next. She emphasized Professor Kass' recognition of the need for true connection and focused on the fact that most students who are beginning as pastoral counselors, struggle with difficulties, unless they are able to grapple with their own spiritual issues and develop their own spiritual journey. Wholeness, she said, is the ability to let go of our divided selves. The price for living a divided life is high. Without embarking on an inner journey, we are left with toxic feelings that affect our places/ ways of work. This is the process of spiritual maturation.

Karen Estrella, Assistant Professor of Expressive Therapies, continued the panel response, with a reference to "20th Century Pleasures," by Robert Hass. She focused on "The light that shines out of the primary act of imagination." Professor Estrella talked about eliciting the development of the imaginative capacity in the process of healing, and the ability to act on one's images, through expressive therapies. She mentioned a women's inter-faith book group which she founded, and which has become a vehicle for social change. The book group visited Avila, and Professor Estrella was inspired, during that visit, to write a poem titled "The Storks of Avila," in which she describes the storks they saw, as looking "regal," unlike the "the fairytale deliverers we're used to." In similar manner, the men and women all standing along the walled city were not all *that they appear to be either. As the storks took off, she asked, via her poem:*

*"What birth within us
have they heralded?
What purge?
With whom shall we walk arm in arm?"*

For the group, a moment had been captured and experienced together, and, according to Professor Estrella, those actions all began as acts of the imagination, as images motivated by will, images that captured dreams. She concluded that expressive therapies help people recognize images that get them up in the morning, and that "Music, art, and poetry bring some people closer to their 'god' and enable them to grow inwardly and outwardly. Dr. Nicholas Covino, President of the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, discussed emotional maturation in terms of the way in which children are parented. "Affect is regulated not by the child but in relation to the world," he said. "Parents who disengage, lead children to disconnect." He talked about his own personal journey through a church tradition that had no place for certain "others," and had unusual practices about sexuality and family. A disconnect happened and he turned to psychology. He however, remained spiritual and needed something to be part of. He came to the conclusion that it is comforting to separate religion from spirituality, but questions the possibility of successfully achieving that separation. He leaves the audience with the following questions: who is responsible for change in the church? Is it possible to have a spiritual life independent of a church or organization? Can one raise a spiritual life apart from that?

The first set of presentations followed, and included individual and group presentations, as well as workshops, all running as concurrent sessions. There were a total of thirty-three workshops, each of which addressed aspects of the body, mind and spirit connection. One of the first presentations, by Sohrob E. Nabatian, was titled “Presence as a Catalyst of Transformation in Sufi Metaphysics and Psychotherapy.” Sohrob compared the functional quality of mirroring and presence in Sufi Theology and client-centered psychotherapy. He speculated that the holistic and integral approaches of Sufism connect the clinical tool of empathy with an inherent function of all of creation. “It checks the reductionistic tendencies of clinical psychotherapy,” he said. “The client becomes the face of God.” Hadass Harel’s presentation, “Spirit and Form: An Encounter with Embodied Imagery of the Divine in Hindu India,” visually invited participants into her research. Hadass shared slide shows of Indian sacred imagery which she has been documenting for about twenty years. She asked attendees to think about the question, “Can meaning and spirit travel, via art, beyond the particular confines and dialectics of culture?” Donna C. Owens and Tonya Ferraro presented “What I Think About Me: Assessment of Self-Concept in Adolescent Girls.” The workshop offered preliminary findings in a study designed to construct a creative self-concept tool for use with adolescent girls. They discussed the new phenomenon of “MySpace” and other social networking websites. One of the adolescents participating in the study was quoted as saying, “It is great to have friends you don’t see, because then you don’t get to make an idiot of yourself around them.” Some of the other topics presented were: “Decision-Making Around Ethical Dilemmas in the Elementary School Principalship,” presented by Jennifer DeChiara, “Group facilitation Using Fairytales and Expressive Therapies,” by Lourdes F. Braches-Tabar, “Yoga Psychology Applied to Eating Disorders,” by Anna Renno dos Mares Guia (Divya Jyoti), and “Out In the Convent: The Spirituality and Wellness of Catholic Lesbian Nuns,” presented by Robin N. Tanner.

A networking “tote” lunch followed the morning presentations, and provided an opportunity for faculty mentors, student presenters and attendees to gather around shared topics of interest. Themed tables included;

- 1) Religious Experience, Spiritual Practice and the Body,
- 2) Education,
- 3) Medicine, Wellness, Health and Being.

At the “Community and Culturally Oriented Practices” table, Dr. Eleanor Roffman, Professor of Counseling and Psychology and a faculty mentor, led an animated discussion on consequences of the deportation of “returnees,” members of Cambodian culture street gangs, most of whom are American, culturally and linguistically to Cambodia by the INS. Afternoon presentations included such topics as: “Connecting Body, Mind and Spirituality: Simultaneous Recovery for Women with Trauma Histories and Substance Abuse,” by Dee P. Genetti; “Imagistic Exchange: Communication through imagery in the Mother/Daughter Relationship” by David S. Stein; “Water Rituals” by Sadada Jackson, “A Mind-Body Intervention to Enhance Quality of Life in Women with Breast Cancer,” presented by Lauren P. Summers with Joan Klagsburn; and “The Social Nervous System

and its Correlates to Community Based Art Therapy,” presented by Michael Franklin, to name a few.

Conference attendees and participants had an overwhelmingly positive response to the symposium:

“This event is so inspirational and applicable,” said Erin Blache, a Counseling Psychology graduate student. “This is the reason I came to Lesley in the first place. There need to be more programs like this.”

Konrad Craig, a professor visiting from Flinders University of Adelaide, who specializes in Crisis and Trauma Interventions, said the program was “fantastic” and that “there are so many diverse ranges of arts mixing with science and research, at a level that is not common within a research facility. It is great that Lesley University is bridging that gap,” he added. Donna Sodia found the symposium to be very educational and to have a great variety and cross-section of people.

The symposium was organized by the Institute for Body, Mind and Spirituality, and cosponsored by the Ph.D. Expressive Therapies, and the Ph.D. program in Educational Studies of Lesley University, as well as “Pluralistic Wellness” at the Harvard Divinity School, and the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology

Spiritual Maturation: A Developmental Resource for Resilience, Well-Being, and Peace¹

Jared D. Kass

*There is a true yearning to respond to
The singing River and the wise Rock.
So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew,
The African, the Native American, the Sioux,
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek,
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik,
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,
The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher.
They hear. They all hear
The speaking of the Tree...*

*Come to me,
Here beside the River.
Plant yourself beside the River.*

—Maya Angelou, “On the Pulse of Morning”

In his novel *Ulysses*, James Joyce described history as a nightmare from which we are trying to awake (Joyce, 1914, 1961). Each of us knows what he meant. Human culture is ensnared in a vast, traumatic, trans-generational chain of pain (Kass, 2008). This nightmare is so pervasive, and so profound, that we often doubt the goodness and sanctity of human nature. How can it be—during every historical period, in every major culture—that corrupt elites, patriarchy, racism, greed, and the will to dominate through violence, have played such a chilling role in human civilization...unless humanity—and perhaps life, itself—are marred by vast imperfections that call into question the existence of a transcendent God? What justification do we have, during such troubled times, to speak about a subject as seemingly naïve and abstract as spirituality?

These critiques are age-old, and the spiritual traditions speak to them. They do not avert their eyes from humanity’s chain of pain. Across the centuries, many of their teachers have suffered with us—as victims of human cruelty, fear, and ignorance. These traditions have been a constant witness to humanity’s historical nightmare. And yet, the message they have taught balances clear-headed realism with the conviction that a just and peaceful society can be achieved.

From their perspective, the chain of pain can be broken. Rather than being ruled by our traumatized emotional responses to humankind’s trans-generational tragedy, we can learn to engage in a process of spiritual maturation through which we regulate our

¹ Portions of this paper were presented as the keynote address at the conference: *Body, Mind, and Spirit: Innovations in Research, Practice, and Pedagogy*. Lesley University, March, 30, 2007.

destructive reactivity; refine our perceptions of self, others, and life; and heal the traumatic psychological wounds which perpetuate this terrible nightmare (Kass, 2008).

From this point of view, spiritual maturation is a socially-relevant learning process whose potential significance has been misunderstood by many scholars in the fields of human development, peace psychology, and behavioral health-risk prevention. As a resource for thoughtful, resilient, and pro-social responses to the chain of pain, and the inherent crises of worldly existence, spiritual maturation can play a positive role in the lives of individuals and communities.

I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to conduct research on this vital process since 1975. In this paper, I will provide a brief overview of what I have learned.

It is necessary to begin with a clarification. Spiritual maturation and participation in an organized religion are best understood as overlapping domains. For some people, they go hand-in-hand. For others, they do not. Since Theodor Adorno's post-Holocaust research on the authoritarian personality, it has been clear that participation in organized religion can be a source of racial prejudice, a style of thinking that is dogmatic and rigid, and blind submission to group norms, even when these norms shatter the ethical codes fundamental to the spiritual traditions (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, & Levinson, 1950). However, Gordon Allport's equally monumental research modified Adorno's findings.

Allport distinguished between two modes of participation in religion. An extrinsic religious orientation provides meaning primarily through social affiliation. An intrinsic religious orientation provides meaning primarily through the effort to live ethically and personal experiences of the Divine. Research by Allport and many subsequent teams have associated extrinsic religious orientation with the negative aspects of religion (Allport, 1966). Intrinsic religious orientation, on the other hand, has been associated with lack of racial prejudice, a style of thinking that is tolerant and flexible, as well as the capacity for behavior that is self-regulated, health-promoting, and pro-social (Bergin, Masters, & Richards, 1987; Kass, 2008). Thus, the positive or negative impact of religion depends on how it is taught and how it is applied (Kass, 2008).

The purpose of this paper is to further explore the process of spiritual maturation. While Allport's concept of intrinsic religiosity articulated a profound insight, it was a first step in understanding the components and methods of spiritual development. I will begin with two diagrams that summarize what I have learned through my own research, and through the research of many others in the psychology and sociology of religion.

[Figure 1](#) describes the critical role of an individual's psychospiritual worldview as a formative template for behavior. It contrasts the effects of two opposing worldviews: *insecure existential attachment* vs. *secure existential attachment*. We live in an inherently stressful world: constant change, our inevitable mortality, and the ferocious chain of pain are sources of persistent stress. But, as we know from research in cognitive therapy, the

cognitive schema through which we respond to this stress has a telling effect on our well-being and the well-being of others. Insecure existential attachment tends to amplify destructive behavior toward self and others. Seeing the world through a lens of chaos, individuals develop an agitated mind and a destructive behavioral response style. They tend to soothe themselves in harmful ways with alcohol, drugs, and dangerous behavior. They typically pass the chain of pain on to others, thus perpetuating and amplifying its effects. Secure existential attachment, however, enables an individual to respond to stress through more constructive action. Seeing the world through a lens of coherence, such individuals tend to soothe themselves by moving more deeply into their sense of attachment and connection, rather than retreating into deeper layers of isolation, fear, or despair (Kass, 2008). Secure existential attachment does not preclude self-empowering action. However, following the Talmudic precept of the sage Hillel, such action must not harm others (If I am not for myself, then who am I? If I am only for myself, than what am I?) (Kravitz & Olitzky, 1993). Through a positive self-concept that links the individual to other people and the universe, secure existential attachment promotes behavioral health and peace through resilient responses to stress and constructive responses to interpersonal conflict.

In summary, a worldview characterized by secure existential attachment provides a template for positive, pro-social behavior. Here, the insights of cognitive and existential psychotherapy have opened a useful window to conceptualize the potential value of spiritual maturation. To respond to life's ever-changing conditions with inner peace and compassion for the other, may require disciplined contemplative practice that transforms our fundamental perceptions of life, others, and self (Kass, 2008).

Most people, of course, are not completely secure or completely insecure in their existential attachment. We stand somewhere in the middle, shuttling between the two poles. It is useful to view these two poles, therefore, as a developmental continuum.

[Figure 2](#) examines *secure existential attachment* from a developmental framework. In Erikson's terminology, secure existential attachment is a developmental potential or challenge. Whether we achieve it depends on many factors. Among them, of course, is our knowledge that such a developmental achievement is possible. Here, Erikson's well-known stages of development are somewhat limiting. He was one of the first psychologists to recognize that religion could help parents instill a sense of basic *trust* in the young infant; and that religion could contribute to a sense *integrity* at the end of life (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968). The term *integrity*, however, is less descriptive and concrete than the terms he employed for earlier stages. It does not fully capture the aging person's capacity to experience trust and connection at a profound existential level. Here, it is useful to incorporate Ainsworth's understanding of trust through attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). The trusting, resilient child feels *securely attached* to others. In a related vein, Tillich, the existential philosopher and theologian, described *ontological insecurity* as a primary source of anxious, disordered adult behavior (Tillich, 1952). I would suggest that the ontologically insecure adult, who believes

existence to be chaotic and incoherent, lacks *secure existential attachment* (Kass, 2008).

We can look at the human life span as a progression of ever-widening matrices of relationship, each of which has the potential for an increased sense of attachment. We can simplify these matrices into three basic units: The family of origin, however, constructed, is the first matrix. The second unit, which I call community, includes the families and relationships we form as adults—in our homes, worksites, and neighborhoods. The third unit is the largest matrix of all: our relationship with the cosmos. When we learn how to find nourishment in our relationship with *life*, in the thick of its inherent crises, our sense of attachment can assume an existential dimension (Kass, 2008).

This dimension of attachment, Tillich recognized, requires more than an abstract belief in God. It emerges from a growing experiential awareness of personal connection to a spiritual core, a deep coherence in the life process. Tillich called this spiritual core the *ground of being* (Tillich, 1952). In Western secular culture, this existential aspect of attachment has been marginalized through the term *mysticism*. However, in the spiritual traditions that developed in the Middle East and Asia, the centrality of this idea is understood more accurately. Becoming aware of one's intrinsic attachment to life's spiritual core is a natural and necessary developmental stage in the process of spiritual maturation.

In Fowler's terminology, this perception moves us toward *universalizing* spirituality (Fowler, 1981). When we understand that every human being on this planet is related to every other person through our shared connection to life's spiritual core, we recognize why it is necessary to learn to love 'the other' as our self. This profound state of moral and spiritual awareness, central to the teachings in all spiritual traditions, is often missing in North American society, partly because we do not recognize *secure existential attachment* as a developmental possibility. Yet the capacity for *connective awareness* (the perception of intrinsic attachment between self, others, and the universe) is a developmental potential within every human being (Kass, 2001, 2008). When we treat this developmental stage as an idyllic, unrealistic concept, rather than a state of awareness that can be nurtured and achieved, we undermine our efforts to create a society that is peaceful and just.

* *

There have been three distinct stages to my research on spiritual maturation. This review will highlight central findings from each stage. In addition, it will suggest how qualitative and quantitative research methodologies can both play necessary roles in better understanding a developmental process as complex as spiritual maturation.

1. Discovering a perceptual capacity for core spiritual experience: From 1975-1980, I was fortunate to work with the psychologist Carl Rogers, a mentor who had a profound impact on my professional development. I worked with Rogers on the staff of the Person-Centered Approach Project, an extension of his work in client-centered psychotherapy

(Rogers, 1963). This project explored the process of community-building. We learned that when community facilitators help create very specific interpersonal conditions—empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard—the community members learn to treat each other with greater respect. In addition, the community becomes an environment in which individuals can become more empowered, self-expressive, and creative. As their locus of evaluation becomes more internal, they experience their own ‘inner self’ as a trustworthy source of guidance and action. In addition, we learned that these communities often develop a spiritual quality, in which many participants begin to experience a deep sense of interconnection, both with each other and with a transpersonal dimension of life (Rogers, 1980; Rogers, Bowen, Justyn, Kass, Miller, Rogers, & Wood, 1978).

As this project developed, I became curious about how participants experienced, and spoke reflexively, about their ‘inner self.’ Informally, I began to speak with participants who met many of the criteria for self-actualizing or fully-functioning people (Maslow, 1971; Rogers, 1963). Over a five year period, I spoke with approximately 40 such individuals. Analyzing the content of these discussions, I noticed an intriguing pattern. First, paradoxically, self-actualizing individuals often experienced the inner self as ‘greater than the self.’ Second, they found it difficult to describe the characteristics of the self using discursive, analytic language. Almost invariably, they resorted to metaphors. Third, and most important, their metaphors had great internal consistency. I distilled these metaphors into one central image: drawing water from a well connected to a vast underground sea (Kass, 1983, 1991).

In essence, these participants were speaking with conviction about the existence of a form of awareness that was ‘greater than themselves.’ However, they did not experience this dimension of awareness as ‘separate’ from them. It was an internal stratum to which they were intimately connected. The individual inner self was being experienced as linked to a fundamental ground of being within the person, a spiritual core. These self-reflexive perceptions seemed particularly interesting to me because they had emerged in a non-theological, non-directive context. This suggested that these ‘experiences of the spiritual core’ were part of a normal developmental growth process, rather than beliefs imparted through a theological system (Kass, 1995).

Consequently, I began to conceptualize ‘experiences of the spiritual core’ as a naturally occurring, inherent perceptual capacity of individuals. In addition, I began to view them as part of a developmental process in which individuals become increasingly self-empowered in their actions, and increasingly able to affirm the deepest aspects of their identities.

Here, I recognized an important link between spiritual awareness and the politics of personal empowerment. Though internal, spiritual awareness could affect peoples’ actions. This link suggested to me that spirituality was a subject worthy of more focused, intensive investigation, and led to the second stage of my research. Methodologically, this

first phase was qualitative and heuristic. It focused on the generation of hypotheses, rather than their proof. It served the purpose of many exploratory investigations. It provided initial evidence that I had encountered a potentially important phenomenon.

2. Measuring the protective benefits of spiritual development: During the second stage, I developed tools to test these emerging hypotheses using formal, quantitative procedures. I had begun to consider the possibility that core spiritual experiences might contribute to physical health, since it was clear from the work of Benson and Borysenko, among others, that psychological factors played a role in illness and health (Benson, 1975; Borysenko, 1989). In 1985, I began to work with Herb Benson and Joan Borysenko. This led to a formal study from 1987-1990 at Deaconess Hospital's Section on Behavioral Medicine in which I developed and validated two research questionnaires, the Inventory of Positive Psychological Attitudes (IPPA), which measures a resilient worldview, and the Index of Core Spiritual Experience (INSPIRIT), which measures experiences of the spiritual core (Kass, 1998b; Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Caudill, Zuttermeister, & Benson, 1991a; Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, & Benson, 1991b).

The study used a convenience sample of 83 medical outpatients participating in a 10-week behavioral medicine program treating stress-related medical symptoms. Patients were taught a clinically-standardized form of meditation—in Benson's terminology, *the relaxation response*—as part of a structured cognitive-behavioral learning program to reduce stress. Patients were measured at the beginning and end of treatment using three scales: a Medical Symptom Checklist, the Inventory of Positive Psychological Attitudes, and the INSPIRIT (Kass et al., 1991a; Kass et al., 1991b; Leserman, 1983).

There were three major findings. First, 26% of these patients—a surprisingly large proportion—scored high on the INSPIRIT. Thus, many reported a deeply felt connection to their spiritual core. Second, over the course of the 10-week behavioral medicine intervention, patients who scored high on the INSPIRIT scale showed the greatest increases in life purpose and satisfaction. Third, these same patients showed the greatest decreases in the average frequency of their medical symptoms. In other words, their spirituality was a 'resource for resilience.' It had helped them restore life purpose and satisfaction in the midst of a medical illness; and it had helped them gain control over the frequency of their stress-related symptoms (Kass et al., 1991b).

This study produced a fourth conclusion that I did not recognize for several years. The INSPIRIT scores in this sample did not increase during the behavioral medicine program. Those who were high on the INSPIRIT had entered this medical crisis with spiritual resources already in place. Rather than looking at spirituality as a treatment intervention, it made more sense to view it as a protective, resilience-building resource (Kass, 1995). This realization shifted my attention from hospital-based treatment programs to the creation of a university-based preventive, resilience-building program for young adults, and led to the third stage in my research.

The questionnaires developed for this study have now been used extensively by research teams and prevention programs that focus on positive psychology. The Inventory of Positive Psychological Attitudes (IPPA) has been used in a college health textbook and university-based health programs to help young adults strengthen psychological resilience and well-being (Hales, 1999). The Index of Core Spiritual Experience (INSPIRIT) has been used by hospital chaplaincy programs to help patients utilize spirituality as a resource for resilience (Easterling, Gamino, Sewell, & Stirman, 2000; VandeCreek, Ayres, & Bassham, 1995). In 2000, Lynn Kass and I developed the Spirituality and Resilience Assessment Packet (SRA) which combines the two questionnaires into a self-scoring format for use in prevention programs led by chaplains at universities and hospitals, community mental health professionals, and developmental educators (Kass & Kass, 2000).

3. Developing a self-inquiry curriculum to promote spiritual maturation: As my focus shifted to university-based, preventive, educational approaches, I began to wonder if I could combine what I had learned from my work with Rogers and Benson. Could I create classroom learning communities with a trustworthy interpersonal atmosphere, and introduce structured contemplative experiences through which students could learn to engage pro-actively in psychological and spiritual growth?

In 1987, I began to conduct an action-research project in which I developed a curriculum that introduces contemplative practice to university students. I chose to gather qualitative data for this study because I knew that the learning process of the students would be complex and multifaceted. It would be more useful to gather rich descriptions of their learning processes, rather than reduce their learning to more simplistic, quantifiable variables. Consequently, to build on my previous quantitative work, I returned to a qualitative methodology, but this time using a more formal mode of data gathering and analysis.

The curriculum revolves around a 'self-inquiry project' in which each student chooses a behavior or attitude that s/he would like to modify (Kass, 1998a, 2001, 2008). The students then begin to learn how their health-risk behavior is an attempt to cope with the anxiety and stress they feel in their lives. The students also identify the psychological worldview that drives these destructive coping behaviors. They pay particular attention to the existential dimensions of their worldview. For example, they contemplate the degree to which they feel connected to the universe and to other people at times of stress. Through this contemplation, they grow more sensitive to spiritual needs that they have not learned (or perhaps dared) to address. During the first segment of the class, they recognize that an important aspect of contemplative practice in every spiritual tradition is critical self-awareness concerning one's behavior toward self and others. Thus, the moral and ethical dimensions of contemplative practice emerge as central maturational goals.

During the second segment of the class, students explore contemplative practice as a means to elevate and refine psychological awareness. Using meditation as a central tool,

they first learn to calm the agitation of their minds and refine cognitive distortions that produce destructive patterns of action and reaction. Later, they explore how meditation and prayer can connect them to a deeply internal, core aspect of self that often proves to be a source of profound guidance and wisdom. Here, they begin to understand that contemplative practice can anchor them in a loving, compassionate, peaceful, self-transcendent dimension of themselves.

Students attending this course have been at many different stages of spiritual and personal development. Many feel completely divorced from a spiritual / religious tradition, and attend the class to learn about the potential value of spiritual development in their lives. They seek a neutral, educational environment where they can learn about these practices without feeling compelled to commit themselves to a particular religious tradition. The students have come from a variety of belief systems, including atheism, and are interested to explore these practices in a genuinely 'multifaith' learning community (Kass, 2008; Kass & Lennox, 2005).

As part of the project, students wrote weekly self-inquiry essays. These narratives became the data for my study. For those willing to participate in the research project, I devised an elaborate method for ensuring that their submissions were anonymous. This protected their identities and reduced socially-desirable responses. I gathered data from 120 students, in seven cohorts. The narrative material proved to be wonderfully illuminating, and voluminous. Each student submitted approximately 40 pages of detailed, written narratives.

In 2003, I received a grant from the Templeton Foundation to analyze and present this data in book form. I recently completed the manuscript for the book, which will be published by the University of Notre Dame Press. The title is *Contemplative Practice in University Life: Developing Meaning, Resilience, and Multifaith Community Through Spiritual and Psychological Growth* (Kass, 2008).

I cannot adequately summarize the results of this project in this brief paper. The narratives show young adults moving through a process of spiritual and psychological development. Many of the narratives are quite poignant—as we see these young adults develop healthier ways to live and cope with the difficult aspects of their lives. Some of their most important learning includes: reduction in health-risk behaviors; more resilient worldviews; the ability to engage in interpersonal conflict with less hostility; the ability to overcome their own chains of pain; an increased ability for empathy, compassion, and forgiveness for others; increased spiritual awareness; a deeper understanding of the contemplative practices and maturational goals taught by the spiritual traditions; and a deeper respect for spiritual traditions other than their own (Kass, 2008).

One of the most satisfying aspects of this project has been creating learning communities with adults from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Participants in the most recent cohort—who were not part of the research project—included a devout Muslim, an

Orthodox Jew questioning her religious upbringing, a Protestant who felt estranged from his restrictive religious upbringing, a devout Irish Catholic, a Protestant who felt strongly nurtured by her religious faith, a gay man who attended a Unitarian Universalist congregation, an American Protestant converting to Islam, and an atheist.

When teaching, I purposefully discuss the development of my Jewish spiritual identity. In addition, I discuss my detailed studies of other spiritual traditions. These discussions emphasize my receptivity to multifaith dialogue. They also clarify that it is possible for an individual to be deeply rooted in his/her own tradition, while developing genuine recognition of other traditions as meaningful paths to spiritual maturation. For me, Maimonides, the Jewish rabbi and philosopher, symbolizes this important and necessary level of understanding (Bokser, 1950; Kass, 2008; Kass & Lennox, 2005).

Each cohort of students has proven to be a rich source of learning for me as a teacher and facilitator of interfaith dialogue. I have developed what I believe to be an innovative framework. Rather than bringing people from diverse religious backgrounds together to air their differences and conflicts, it has been useful to bring them together to study the process of spiritual maturation. This objective provides a shared educational goal, in which each person's tradition can be affirmed. In this inclusive and respectful atmosphere, discussions about differences and conflicts can be approached in a positive, constructive manner. When people do not feel that their religious identities, dignity, and survival are under attack, they show a greater capacity for tolerance and compassion toward others.

In summary, the data generated in this study suggests that the process of spiritual maturation can be approached pro-actively, with a preventive orientation that helps young adults build resources for resilience and well-being. In addition, it helps them respond to stress and interpersonal conflict with less hostility and more constructive, peace-promoting actions. It would not be accurate to claim that these young adults fully experienced *secure existential attachment*. However, by experiencing some degree of this important state of mind, their worldview and behaviors began to change.

The rich multifaceted narratives from this study provide ample proof that young adults can learn to engage in a complex process of spiritual and psychological growth. In addition, the narratives offer hope that spiritual maturation is not beyond our grasp as a society. These results suggest the need for even more extensive curriculum development and research concerning contemplative practice in our educational system.

Conclusions

This paper has served three purposes. First, it has suggested how qualitative and quantitative research methodologies can be used in a complementary fashion to understand the impact and complex dynamics of spiritual maturation. Second, it has suggested a conceptual model for understanding spiritual maturation as a developmental learning process. Third, it has summarized three studies which illustrate

how the process of spiritual maturation can strengthen efforts to build a society of individuals who are psychologically resilient, and whose actions promote health, justice, and peace.

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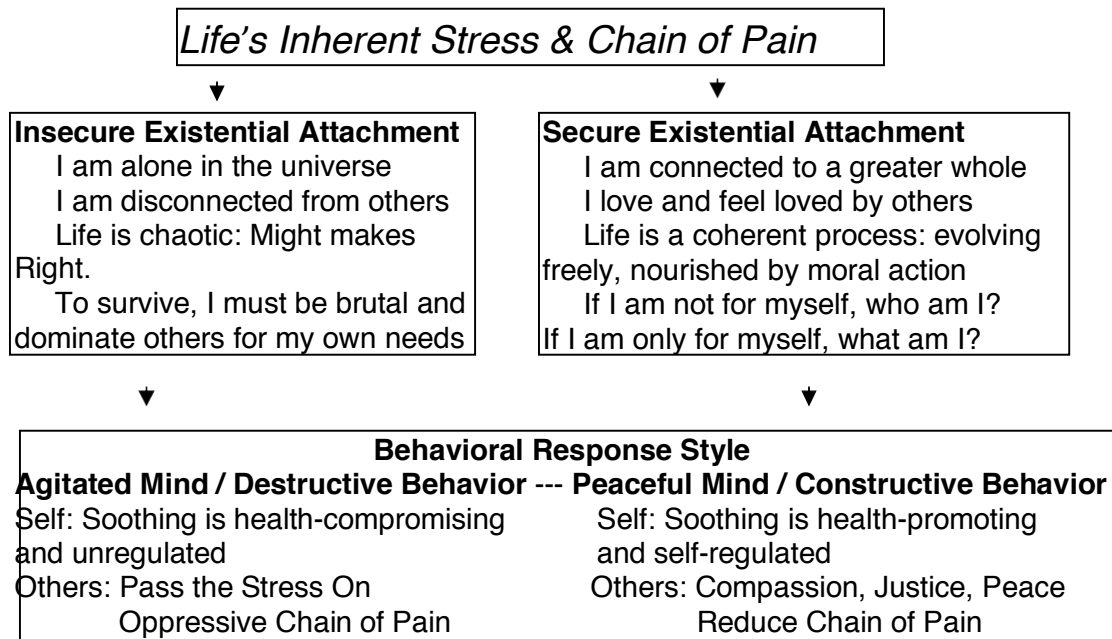


Figure 1: Psychospiritual Worldview as Template for Behavior

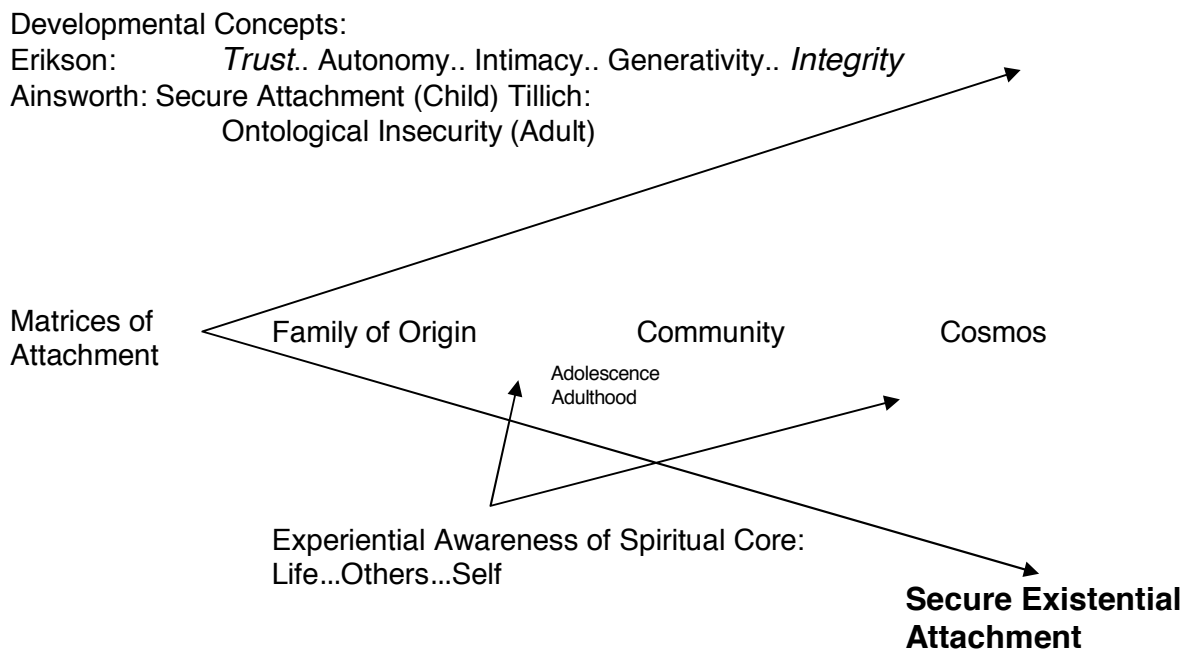


Figure 2: Secure Existential Attachment—A Developmental Potential

Awakening the Imaginal

Karen Estrella

Editor's Note: In this essay Professor Estrella explores eliciting the development of the imaginative capacity in the process of healing, and the ability to act on one's images, through expressive therapies.

First let me thank Susan Gere and Michele Forinash for bringing together IBMS and the Expressive Therapies PhD community. Thank you Yishiuan and Mandi for your support and hard work, and thank you Jared for an interesting talk, and for many years of scholarship and commitment to spiritual development as a resource for resilience, wellbeing, and peace.

I'd like to begin my remarks with reading a short paragraph from a collection of essays by the poet Robert Hass from a text called *Twentieth Century Pleasures*. He says:

It seems to me that we all live our lives in the light of primary acts of imagination, images or sets of images that get us up in the morning and move us about our days. I do not think anyone can live without one, for very long, without suffering from deadness and futility. And I think that, for most of us, those images are not only essential but dangerous because no one of them feels like the whole truth and they do not last. Either they die of themselves, dry up, are shed; or, if we are lucky, they are invisibly transformed into the next needful thing; or we act on them in a way that exposes both them and us. (p.303)

Now I don't know about how it is for you, but Hass is making it sound a whole lot easier than I think it is for me. Sure, occasionally I'm able to grab hold of that light that shines off a primary act of imagination that graces me... but more often than not, I lose track of the image that gets me up in the morning or moves me through my day. Yes, my images die, dry up, and shed—on most days, before I even get out of bed! Occasionally, very occasionally, I am able to act on my images in a way that exposes them and me—I will tell you about one of those occasions in a minute—but first I wanted to say that I think I was able to act on my images because I have come to practice a way of attending to those images that I learned because of the practice of expressive therapies. It is the very practice of playing mid-wife to these images that I think of, when I think of the practice of expressive therapy. For me, expressive therapy is about eliciting the development of the imaginative capacity in the process of healing.

Steven Levine, a Toronto-based expressive therapist, poet, and philosopher writes,

Psychological suffering is intrinsic to the human condition; in that sense psychopathology is normal. The task of therapy is not to eliminate suffering but to give a voice to it, to find a form in which it can be expressed. Expression is itself transformation; this is the message that art brings. (Levine, 1997, p. 15)

And if ever we were in need of a source of light, we are in need of one now. Jared has already explained so eloquently, the need for an antidote to our current world's chains of pain. The arts offer themselves to us as a path to wholeness.

As with nature, the arts are for many their avenue to the divine. Many people have spoken of creativity's connection to spiritual practice. Julia Cameron's work comes easily to mind—in her book *The Artist's Way*, Cameron proposes that by opening ourselves up to a creative practice we open ourselves up to divine energy.

Carl Rogers' daughter, Natalie Rogers, has developed an orientation to expressive therapy called The Creative Connection, and in this practice, she explains:

The Creative Connection describes the process of allowing one art form to influence another directly. Using various expressive arts in sequence heightens and intensifies our journey inward... By moving from art form to art form, we release the layers of inhibition that have covered our originality, discovering our uniqueness and special beauty. Like a spiral, the process plumbs the depths of our body, mind, emotions, and spirit to bring us to our center. The center or core is our essence, our wellspring of creative vitality. (Rogers, 1994, p. 43)

For many, their experience of art, music, dance, or poetry brings them directly into contact with their God, and allows them not only to have that experience of inner connection but of outer connection as well.

So what does it mean to engage the imaginal—to live with images? To act on them? I was recently on sabbatical. During my sabbatical I decided to do three things that I hoped would feed my future work as an expressive therapist. And I've come to see these things as my way of engaging the imaginal.

The first thing I did was to begin taking cello lessons. When I was ten years old I played the cello—and I was so discouraged by how heavy I thought it was in those nine blocks between the school and my house, that when we had a chance to switch instruments six months later, I asked for the smallest instrument they had. I played flute for the next thirty-seven years. Yet somewhere in the back of my heart, I think I have always nurtured a dream of being a cellist in an orchestra, and I think on some level, that dream became one of those images that got me up in the morning. I saw the sabbatical as a chance to see if I could act on the image of me becoming a cellist in the community orchestra, to see if I could fatten the image even more.

The second thing I did was to join a women's interfaith book club. I've always been a big novel reader, and I found the idea of creating interfaith dialogue through a book club compelling and inviting. I knew about the group for years before I joined, and perhaps it too had become one of those things that had captured my imagination. Perhaps somehow I had begun to see myself there, engaging in dialogues that were rich and engaging. In my own mind, the book group became a vehicle of arts for social change—I imagined us, a group of women, reading novels and bridging gaps of understanding and difference.

One of the things I was able to do with this group was to travel to Spain. A group of us from several branches of this interfaith group went to Spain in January for two weeks. While we were there we traveled to Avila, the home of the mystic Teresa of Avila. Now the town of Avila is an old world city with a walled city center, and interesting enough, the city is known for its storks. So talk about an image... between it being close to Christmas, and the story that storks mate for life, and of course our old stories of storks and babies, I felt full of images of the town—enough so that I wrote a poem entitled *The Storks of Avila* within a day of my visit. This was the kind of imagery I was used to. I felt graced by the poem that allowed me to capture and expose the image and myself, to capture and expose our group to itself. I felt a sense of wonder and holding as I shared it with my fellow travelers.

*The storks of Avila
for the Daughters of Abraham*

*In real life
they are regal
austere overseers,
tall and elegant,
the white of their bodies
in stark contrast
to the black tips
of their wings
and the deep coral
of their beaks,*

*not at all
like the fairy-tale deliverers
we're used to.*

So much is not how we imagine.

*Along the walled city
we stand, ten women,
modern and yearning,
watching old men
in berets and blue jackets
walking arm in arm
with the sun on their faces
through the gates*

*to the plaza
for a mid-morning coffee.*

*Later, at the train station
we watch as one, then two, take flight,
stunned by the effort
it appears to take,
and by the incongruity
of our lives with this place.*

*What birth within us
have they heralded?
What purge?
With whom shall we walk arm in arm?*

The last thing I did was to go to the American Art Therapy Association conference in New Orleans. The setting and the conference both seemed to act on my imagination in such a way that by the end of the conference I had decided to develop a course in Expressive Therapy and Social Action.

Like playing the cello, and joining the book group I did not believe that any of these actions had begun as acts of the imagination—I did not think of the images I carried about each action as even an image—instead I only saw them as conscious choices motivated by will, not the imaginal. It was only in preparing this talk that I came to see that Hass' images did not only mean the images I could easily imagine turning into art, but the images that capture my dreams as well.

Prior to this paper, I thought of the imaginal realm much more concretely—for example, as the storks. How I see that images act on us in many ways.

I believe the work of expressive therapies is to accompany our clients in the work of midwife-ing their images—of helping them to recognize the images that get them up in the morning, and of helping them to act on those images in a way that exposes them and us, in a way that makes the world less dead and futile, in a way that enlivens an awareness of spirit, of meaning and connection, not only to self but to others.

But this work is not only for those that suffer the psychological wounds in the clinic, I believe Hass is calling us all—to enliven our world, to allow the imaginal to awaken our spirits and to move us towards resilience, well-being, and peace.

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Developing Spiritual Maturation

Cheryl A. Giles

Claiming Our Hidden Wholeness

A Panel Response to "Spiritual Maturation: A Developmental Resource for Resilience, Well-Being, and Peace"

Editor's Note: *In this article, Dr. Giles focuses on the consequences of living a "divided life." She talks about how, these days, we all "strain under the burden of more demands and less time for living and being present to our inner journey." She describes wholeness as "the courage to let go of the divided lives that we have constructed and to open our hearts to right action which is informed by our "inner teacher," as, "the consequences of living a divided life, is inner and outer chaos." Dr. Giles affirms that an authentic life, as described by spiritual leaders from Buddha to Parker Palmer and beyond, is the courage to open our hearts to others.*

Jared Kass aptly points out in his keynote address that:

...spiritual maturation is a socially-relevant learning process whose potential significance has been misunderstood and vastly under-rated by scholars in the field of human development, peace psychology and behavioral health risk prevention." (1)

Most of us strain under the burden of more demands and less time for living and being present to our inner journey. While we race to the next class or appointment we are moving through space, careening out of control. We lack the awareness of our connection to self and others that comes with spiritual practice.

Professor Kass' research and curriculum underscores the critical need for contemplative practices in our educational system, especially in grades K-12 where the joy of learning is challenged by a host of complex issues facing teachers. We are all hungry for well-being and peace!

As a clinical psychologist with a background in theology, my experience and education in theology and psychology have prepared me to help shape the intellectual and spiritual formation of students at Harvard Divinity School. My challenge as a teacher, mentor, and learner is to prepare women and men for careers in lay and ordained ministry, teaching, and advocacy.

When students begin study in theological education and ministry, they are often at a point in their lives where they have begun to develop a personal spiritual maturity based on previous learning and practice.

Many feel called to a vocation of ministry where they are drawn to help others develop spiritual maturity: the peace, freedom and inner quiet that can accompany that maturity that

enables us to be grounded in the midst of the chaos of everyday living. However, spiritual maturation is an ongoing process of learning, practice, and growth.

My work as a professor of pastoral counseling is to teach students to be effective pastoral counselors who facilitate growth and healing in faith communities that are beset with the challenge of how to support people as they struggle with doubt, brokenness, and alienation. This search for meaning often falls to the minister or pastoral counselor who has the responsibility “to hold” the counseling process by establishing trust and safety in the relationship and “to push” the client out of his/her comfort zone to grapple with their issues. Both “holding” and “pushing” have to occur at the same time to facilitate growth. At the same time, most students who are beginning pastoral counselors struggle with their own emotional issues and vulnerability as a learner.

The process of learning to become an effective pastoral counselor is far more difficult for students until they are able to grapple with their own spiritual journey and understand how their faith is shaped by their communities of origin. While students can be taught pastoral counseling skills, the process of becoming an effective pastoral counselor rest solely on their ability to engage in reflection about their own inner journey. Parker Palmer, a Quaker, well-known teacher, writer, and spiritual leader, has written extensively about spiritual development and what he calls our “hidden wholeness.”(2)

Leading by example in an age often filled with rhetoric about the path to holiness, Palmer’s own search for wholeness transparently offers the rest of us the rare opportunity to witness what it means to be fully human as he openly explores the impact of depression, divorce, and isolation in his spiritual journey and his effort to break through destructive behaviors to a place of self-acceptance and wholeness. Perhaps Palmer’s most significant work is the retreat circles where he has mentored scholars, physicians, teachers, lawyers, religious leaders, poets, and university presidents and challenged them to live out of their “true self” and create communities of learning where wholeness is consciously nurtured in relationships.

What we learn about Palmer is that he makes no distinction between life and work, teaching by example that both require attention to the inner journey to embrace wholeness. Whether teaching, writing, or organizing, this wholeness is nurtured by relationship with the self, others, and a deep abiding faith in God. He reminds us that vocation is a gift to be received and with it comes a responsibility to self and others.

Wholeness is the courage to let go of the divided lives that we have constructed and to open our hearts to right action which is informed by our “inner teacher.” The consequences of living a divided life is inner and outer chaos. We become mired in our own fear and consequently, lose connection with others. Sam Intrator, a Professor of Education at Smith College and close friend of Parker Palmer writes:

When we break faith or live in defiance of this inner voice, we live what Parker calls a divided life. The price for living a divided life is high. We feel fraudulent and uneasy, and our spirit sinks under the burden of duplicity. Our encounters with others lack genuine authenticity, which undermines our ability to form life-giving connections.” (3)

It is not an exaggeration to say that in his humanness, Palmer is among the living saints who help us to “walk the talk” and who show us what is most important about living: that the human spirit is resilient and offers us the freedom to “claim our hidden wholeness.” This knowledge requires that we start where we are and commit ourselves to the necessary inner work that must be done. Choosing to face our fear, means making a conscious decision to accept ourselves as we are right now and to value the connections that enable us to live authentic lives. Intrator reminds us that the essence of Parker Palmer’s wisdom is relational. Fear is not experienced in isolation, but in community with others:

. . . the bloodless logic of schools, universities, hospitals, and other institutions are riddled with fear in ways that shut down our capacity at work to stay connected, creative, and engaged. When we are scared to reach out to others we are diminished... be not afraid does not mean we should not have fears--- for that is an impossible dream.... We can be afraid without needing to be our fears.” (4)

It takes courage to embark upon the inner journey. As Palmer reminds us, it is never an easy journey; but without it we are left with fear, disconnection, and selfishness that have created some of the toxic environments where we live and work.(5) Palmer’s life work bears witness that the cornerstone of an authentic life is the courage to open our hearts to others. Remarkably, this same truth was professed more than 2,500 years ago by the Buddha when he said “The wise rejoice in giving and thereby gain happiness thereafter.” (Dhammapada 177).(6) This is the process of spiritual maturation: by being present to our inner work, we become grounded and this enables us to move outward to help and connect with others. Although paradoxical, the circle we make moving from our inner journey outward to engage the world is the substance of creating wholeness and spiritual maturity. This is challenge before us all, teacher and learners alike, to commit ourselves to the work of creating healthy, sustainable communities of spiritual practice where we can claim our wholeness.

End Notes

(1) Kass, Jared D. “Spiritual Maturation: A Developmental Resource for Resilience, Well-Being, and Peace.” Conference Keynote Address at “Innovations in Research, Practice, and Pedagogy,” Institute for Mind, Body, and Spirit, Lesley University (3/30/07).

(2) Palmer, Parker J. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

(3) Intrator, Sam M. *Living The Questions: Essays Inspired By The Work and Life of Parker J. Palmer*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005, xl.

(4) Ibid, p. 2-3

(5) Palmer (2004).

(6) Dhammapada is a collection of 423 verses attributed to the Buddha that contain his essential teachings. Adapted from www.buddhanet.net on 5/1/07.

Working Creatively with Others to Transform Unjust Social Structures

Farid Esack

"Today, I want to talk about ideas of working creatively towards justice, and about how this creativity is really also a recreation and internal recreation of the self. . . I come from, and I cut my teeth in, the South African liberation struggle. I am proud of my own background, and of the role that I played in our country's liberation struggle, along with thousands and thousands of others. For many people, that liberation struggle had come to personify a successful struggle. But the idea of that liberation struggle as a successful struggle, (the owning of the world of that struggle as a successful struggle) and the internal problems that we see, in some ways reflect the larger issue that we have with embracing ideas of change, ideas of forgiveness."

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Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim, (In the name of God, the Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace).

Yesterday, I went to buy some fruit, and there was a fruit that I am not familiar with (in the United States) that I recognized in one of the shops. It was a quince. Do you know this quince? Is it a common fruit here? Not that widely? I bought one of those quince.

The fascinating thing about the quince for me was—well, it's a good fruit—but I also grew up in a society that was so basic, so desperately poor, that the quince had another important function for us. If you get to the very core of the quince, it is liquid and sticky. We would, of course, eat the quince; get to this liquid part—you have to be very careful—and put three or four of these cores in a quarter cup of water. We would let it stand for three or four days, after which, if you press it, you'll actually have glue. We could not afford glue for pasting pictures in our books at school, and this was our way of making glue.

I will talk about another fruit topic, but first, I also grew up in a society where we could never afford toothpaste. We used (I don't know if people ever remember these things, perhaps of course, in some societies they still do) ash from the wood of the fires that we made on the ground to cook food. We would use the ash to rub our teeth.

And so, on to the last fruit story, before I tell you the connection between these three things and where I am now. As a child, I also grew up scavenging... walking along curbsides, looking for discarded apple cores and rubbing it against my pants to clean it and get the sand off.

Now, when occasionally, I hear these introductions and so on about my life, I sit back from the person that introduces me and I think it's awesome. I am absolutely overawed by how far I have come in life. "God, Farid, this is amazing." But of course, at the same time, I find it utterly boring to sit and listen through, "...and he's this and he's that."

I'll be honest with you. Most of the time people ask, "Can you send us a couple of lines with which to introduce yourself?" On my computer I have one document that is called '33 words,' another document is called '106 words,' and another. That way, depending on how long an introduction I think these people want, I send those off.

A couple of years ago, I was also at Harvard delivering a series of lectures. Now, this is an inhouse thing, please, that I'm telling you now. It was my sister-in-law's birthday and I called her. I was talking to her—you know how you are on the phone, nobody else's in the room, and you don't have to observe normal social decorum and so on. (By the way, before I continue with my story, *alhamdulillah* is an expression we use in Arabic whenever we are grateful for something or 'praise be to God.') So, on that day, the 24th of November, I was talking to her. I was alone in the room on the phone, and when you are alone you do things. So I farted. And she said, "Farid, did you fart?" I said, "Yes." She said, "*Alhamdulillah*, you haven't forgotten where you come from." And so I'm always in awe, yes, it's great to know that you don't forget where you come from.

Anyway, that was just a connection between where I come from and where I am now. I promise not to do anything impolite while I'm standing and talking to you here today.

My talk here for today may as well be entitled 'ideas on forgiveness on a train of, or, on a train towards injustice'. I am always very cognizant as a South African, as a citizen of the world, as a Muslim, as the recipient of enormous injustices, both racial, and as a victim of the empire—I am always conscious of larger systemic things. At the same time, I am always conscious, also, that as a male, I wield power in relation to others. It is so easy to don the mentality of "victim."

I am black. (Oh yes, you are black, Farid, but you are brown. And in relation to darker skinned people, you also occupy a certain social space. As a black male, yes, you occupy a certain social space in relation to those "above" you. But wait, you also occupy a certain space in relation to those who are "lesser" than you.) I'm always cognizant of this.

Today, I want to talk about ideas of working creatively towards justice, and about how *this creativity is really also a recreation and internal recreation of the self*.

I come from, and I cut my teeth in, the South African liberation struggle. I am proud of my own background, and of the role that I played in our country's liberation struggle, along with thousands and thousands of others. For many people, that liberation struggle had come to personify a successful struggle. But the idea of that liberation struggle as a successful struggle, (the owning of the world of that struggle as a successful struggle) and the internal problems that we see, in some ways reflect the larger issue that we have with embracing ideas of change, ideas of forgiveness. I want to say that in our own liberation struggle, despite its valorizing and so on by people particularly on the outside, we have manifested an ability to really confront the beast, the beast of racial oppression, but at the same time not everything that we did in confronting this beast of racial oppression really does much. Not everything that we did helped much to advance our own humanity, and I will come back to some of these ideas in a moment.

During the South African liberation struggle—it was an enormously exciting struggle—I remember once attending a funeral. It was a very difficult funeral. The police didn't want the funeral to take place. If it did, they wanted it to take place in a small conservative church. The family wanted to move it to a larger, bigger church where everybody would be welcome. (By the way, for footnote purposes, the one was an Apostolic church and the other one was an Episcopal church.) During the funeral, the police stormed the church. The (excuse for) battle was the flag of the African National Congress, which was illegal to display, and which was draping the coffin. I remember us running down the street with the coffin and people running behind us and the police shooting and so on. I also remember Desmond Tutu ducking under a car as the cops were shooting all around.

I remember going to visit Auntie Ivy that night. Auntie Ivy was Ashley's mother. And it was Ashley we had buried that morning. I remember just visiting because, often when the funeral is over, it's the mother that has to sit with her grief. In the morning there were all these crowds eulogizing the fallen hero in the liberation struggle—the kind of thing you often find in Palestine. At the end of the day, after the tea, after the cameras are gone, and after all the posters of the suicide bombers have gone up on the street, it is still a broken family that has to present a certain image. As I chatted to Auntie Ivy, I was amazed at her capacity to laugh, and I asked her about it. She said that it is this capacity to combine our laughter with our tears that makes us human.

And so in the middle of all of these very exciting moments, people were engaged in many creative things inside the liberation struggle. We are deeply grateful for this and it is not just a Nelson Mandela thing. Many leaders in the liberation struggle never failed to emphasize the humanity of the people on the other side of the line. I will come back to those people on the other side of the line in a moment. We are deeply grateful for our capacity to insist on the nonracial character of our struggle—that this was not a struggle against white people. It was great that there were so many whites that were engaged in the liberation struggle. The underlying idea was that we were creating a non-racial society.

Many people of course thought that it was Nelson Mandela who came with us after his personal kind of generosity. In some ways, there is an element of unfairness which is part of people's fascination, I think, with the "big leader" story. All the problems of our world will come to an end or started when... first it was George Bush the First and George Bush the Second, and all the problems of the world will come when Hillary or Barack gets elected. If only. These are far too easy options for us. We have absolved ourselves of sin, we have no confidence in our own selves, both our culpability in all of these, and our own capacity to be agents of transformation. And so essentially, it was the liberation struggle itself that was deeply committed to this vision of creating a non-racial society, and that emphasized the idea of making sure that white people are always on board inside the liberation struggle.

Later, as the country (South Africa) understood that this new society was going to be an inclusive place, it also became part of a gender discourse—how to ensure that this whole struggle for gender justice is not a woman's struggle. In the same way that this whole

struggle for racial justice was not a black person's struggle. This later on became a very important part in how we understood the struggle for gender justice.

I want to use an analogy to point out the difficulty that we often have in how we approach change transformation in the middle of systemic injustice, and the tension created by the fact that that we need to hold a notion of forgiveness if we don't want to become mere cogs in the machinery that extends problems on an on-going basis. It's an analogy that I had used with my class recently in relation to AIDS work.

Suppose you are here at the bottom of a river one day and you see a baby floating down the river. Your immediate instinct is to rush and save the baby and hold the baby, cover the baby and care for the baby, possibly try to find out what happened and so on, but that's not immediately the most important thing. Then another baby comes down the river and yet another. You may think that the best option for you is to now set up a camp here, and build some sort of institution at the bottom of the river to catch all these babies. You might possibly have your own deep unfulfilled childhood needs and so do all of these things to also meet those needs. You could possibly get grants from different entities to look after all those babies and thereby become a bit of a media person. "*Farid Esack, you know, 'Islam and AIDS', 'the pioneer in the field of Islam and AIDS'.*" And so it becomes another 'me and my ego'.

How do we deal with the pain of pausing? Of saying, 'Wait, I must leave this space. Possibly at the time I leave this space another baby could be coming down, but I need to go up stream and find out who is throwing the babies down the river. And then I need to confront that person.' Confrontation doesn't come easily to nice people. Confrontation, when our immediate impulse is to not deal—whatever our reasons—and I'm not saying at the very personal level, because all of us are moved by deeply altruistic, deeply personal reasons for all the good that we do. If we would just reflect on the inner motives that really drive us, none of us will do any good ever. I am not saying that the fact that we are driven by inexplicable personal motives for all the good that we do does not mean that we don't act and we don't do good. I am saying that occasionally we need to ask the hard question, and to do the thing that goes against our immediate goodness. Stop and go up and see who it is and be willing to confront. But this confrontation with the other that is throwing the babies down is not always a confrontation with the external other. It is also a confrontation, an on-going confrontation, with the internal other. When Moses has a responsibility to challenge Pharaoh, for a number of different reasons which I will come to in a moment, Moses also has a responsibility to ask, 'What of Pharaoh is there inside me?'

I will now explore three aspects of the idea of working with others creatively:

Working with others was an amazing part of the liberation struggle. Years ago, I wrote *Side by Side with Others*. My major book is called *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*. The idea of working with others was a very important idea.

Here is a story I spoke about in another publication of mine. I was just fascinated by our neighbors, in the middle of this poverty (within which I grew up.) I was fascinated by how, in the middle of all of this suffering and marginalization, we still believe that only Muslims

go to paradise. Our family was utterly dependent on our Christian neighbors and neighborhoods—Mrs. Batista, a Catholic lady at the back, Auntie Katie, a New Apostolic lady on our one side, another Auntie Katie—another New Apostolic lady on the other side. In the ghettos, the other side is not ‘there.’ The other side is right here. Quite literally, our doors were right next to each other. There is a fence there but you can stand on one side and knock on the door of your neighbor. That is how the council had built our houses. Yet, in the middle of our utter dependence on our neighbors in this poverty, we still had the ideas of the other, as the other—certainly when it comes to God’s grace. So I came to understand how this otherness works in terms of the creation of a new vision for a new society, and how it works against who we really are. *The Call of Islam*, an organization that I founded, became quite active in the liberation struggle and well known for our ideas of working with non Muslims, and our endless arguments with other theologians on the ideas of working with non Muslims.

In the middle of this, we had our own hierarchy also. One day I got a call from one of the Call of Islam members. I was in Johannesburg at a huge fundraising event in Cape Town held by the United Democratic Front, which was the internal wing of the African National Congress.

There was this huge fair and the *Call of Islam* people had just arrived and found out where their booth was. The problem for us was that the (Call of Islam) booth was next to an organization that we despised—the Organization of Lesbians and Gay Activists. So, here we were in the forefront, in the face of solidarity against Apartheid, side-by-side with the other—but which other? Only the other that we can stomach, not the other that we can’t deal with at all.

Later on, years later, as I got to know more people in the *Call of Islam*, I found out that there were several people inside the *Call of Islam* who were gay themselves—this is the crime of not recognizing your own internal otherness, the crime of recognizing others as “out there.” Later on I understood the violence that you do to your own internal otherness when you don’t embrace, as a man, your own femininity, or when, as a woman, you don’t embrace your own masculinity. When you don’t embrace who you are in your own transformation of becoming all: of being created by God on an ongoing basis. So this is the first thing that I want to say about working with others. It’s an enormous struggle to not see the other out there, to look instead, at how do I forgive Pharaoh, how do I embrace Pharaoh as out there and understand that, yes, Pharaoh is out there but Pharaoh is also in here.

When you embrace Pharaoh out there it’s also part of a struggle of reconciling and embracing the Pharaoh inside here.

When we say that we need to work creatively with others, we’re really also talking about working in a way that creates, but that also requires the painful task of destruction. Sometimes it requires the destruction of systems. The new South African cannot co-exist along with Apartheid. To confront racism is not easy. To confront patriarchy is not easy. To confront homophobia is not easy. So when we say that we want to walk and work along with others, we must be hard also. We must have the willingness to confront. It’s not just

about embracing. It's not just about being nice. And I'll be honest with you, this is one of the awkward things that I feel about the liberal circle and the interfaith circles. It is so much about being nice, which is one of the reasons for the proliferation of this "airport material"—all the cuddly stuff. It's not only about all the cuddly stuff. The confrontation with the self is not an easy one either.

Here is the last point that I want to make is about forgiveness in relation to working with self and other. We forgive for two reasons. The primary reason that we forgive is for ourselves. One part is for ourselves today and only the second part of forgiveness is for the self tomorrow. When we say that we forgive for ourselves today, it is part of the acknowledgement of our own vulnerability of who we are, and about our own need to become whole people. I cannot become a person when I hold all of these things against another group or against another society. I cannot reflect and dream, imagine possibilities of what I could possibly become for as long as I am wrapped up in the crimes that you have committed against me. And so it's about who I want to be today. It's about the liberating possibilities of becoming, even as I exist in a relationship of being subjugated by the other.

Victor Frankl, a survivor of the Holocaust, speaks about one of the things that he saw in the year in Auschwitz. One of his companions who is taken off to the gas chambers has a dry piece of bread in his hand and as he goes, he hands this piece of bread over to somebody else. He doesn't know that he is walking towards certain death. Victor Frankl says that this is the last and perhaps the only freedom that human beings have—to be in control of their responses however limited it may be, in any given situation. In this man's march towards death he was in control of his own humanity, manifested in the simple act of passing his last piece of bread onto another person.

We relate to others not because we are doing others a favor, but because we owe it to ourselves. Part of our own becoming is about today, but we also forgive for tomorrow. We carry vulnerability within us. We never know, brothers and sisters, where we'll be tomorrow. We never know how desperate we will be for the grace and the forgiveness of others. I've been to Buckingham Palace once. I stayed at Windsor Castle a couple of times. Whenever I feel like being awed by Windsor Castle and the royalty and the pomp surrounding them, I think about Her Majesty having constipation. And I often think about life like that. Can you imagine between this rather pathetic figure constipated on the one hand and on the other hand this human being?

For me as a Muslim, the Day of Judgment is utterly dependent on the grace of God. On that day, when there will be no shade except the shade of God. Who am I to not forgive—caught between the toilet bowl and God's grace? How do I walk over other people? How do I not care? How do I become hard? How do I say I cannot do it for you, my brother, I cannot forgive you, my sister? And so it is part of just recognizing my own vulnerability tomorrow, my own need of being in grace that I need to forgive.

Two quick ones:

Who owns forgiveness despite all of this? I don't think that we can ever own forgiveness entirely. Forgiveness always in large measure belongs to the person that is being wronged. So we need to be careful when we talk about Palestinians, when we talk about Israelis,

when we talk about Black people, when we talk about women. We need to be careful about who are we in relation to those categories that we are talking about, to assign the need to forgive to those people. We also need to make sure that those victims, wherever those victims may be, never lose the right to say yes or no. How do we work with them to get to that position, yes, but ownership of forgiveness never moves from those who are hurt to those who are doing the hurt.

We only ever work towards forgiveness. I don't know if there is ever a stage where you say I have been forgiven completely. In the religious discourse this may be a different thing when you say you have been cleansed by the blood of the lamb but with due respect to all of those beliefs that people may have, I think it's an ongoing process. As you are discovering the different dimensions of Pharaoh out there, as you are discovering the different dimensions of Pharaoh inside here, there are always new discoveries. For example, how do we know today, (after hundreds and hundreds of years, we are beginning to understand) that women have souls, that women are really equal to men. Not in real terms but we know that that it is how it should be, and we are beginning to understand. For many, many years people didn't think of women as having souls. For many, many years, people didn't think of human beings that are owned by them, as slaves, as having feelings. Is it possible that in another couple of hundred years that we will arrive at a stage where we recognize other sentient beings that inhabit this world with us as also capable of feeling, as also having a right to life. That it was in fact wrong of us to kill animals and to eat them. Is that possible? Perhaps. I am saying that we have been creating all the time, a deeper and deeper understanding of what it means to be. For now, we are understanding what it means to be a human being, but in the future, we will understand what it means to be a sentient being in a larger cosmos, part of a larger creative force. We will understand what it means to be created on an ongoing basis by a larger transcendent force.

One last story. In the middle of all of these, when I look at the program and see the immensity of all of the issues that we are facing—we have Tibet on the agenda and there is Palestine on the agenda and it is this and it is that. Then it is global warming again... and when do we start the withdrawal of the troops from Iraq... and did you see last night in the papers again the United States administration is now petitioning the courts to stop the detainees in Guantanamo Bay from having any kind of decent access to their attorneys and so on. It is all so complex—the Jews, the Palestinians. I did go and watch that Al Gore movie, you know, but it is just too much. Let me walk away from it all.

Two things, people. In this walking away from it all we really become complacent in the crimes that we are witnessing around us. You only say that you are walking away from the problem. The reality is that you are embracing the problem as a part of the problem. All indifference is co-optation. All indifference is a part of criminality. But we embrace problems not so much because we're going to overcome them but as a part of what we owe to ourselves.

There this story in the Qur'an of Joseph. We share this story with our other religions, of Joseph being sold on the market as a slave. (Though this part of the story isn't in the Qur'an, it's in some Hadith literature.) So Joseph is being sold on the market as a slave and an

elderly woman is seen going towards the market. The news had traveled around the city that this man was on the market, he was this really handsome slave. This woman had had a dream that Joseph was God's servant and she was on her way to the market. She was met by somebody else. "Where are you off to?" "I'm going off to the auction, had this dream that this man was there." And this rather pathetic looking woman had nothing except a small pail of water. "With which fortune are planning to free – to buy – this man?" And she says, "Me and this pail of water. Let it not be said that on the Day of Judgment that I understood that God's servant was being sold on the market and I did not do what I could with what I have to buy him and set him free." This woman had the vision of Joseph being free. She imagined Joseph being free. It was that imagining on her part that drove her. It wasn't the context of her own poverty. It wasn't the context of her own inadequacy. At the end of the day we only have our dreams that drive us, not the reality, and it is our dreams, and the extent to which we work to make them true, that define who we are, not our dreams really becoming true.

Thank you very much and God bless you all.

Question and Answer Session:

Dr. Susan Gere: Dr. Esack is happy to take questions and I invite your engagement with Dr. Esack.

Member of the audience: When did you start publishing books and what motivated you to do so?

I was always confronted by this question, "You guys are working with these non-Muslims. Doesn't the Qur'an say...?" I am a Muslim of course, deeply committed to Islam but I was troubled by many verses in the Qur'an. So it was at one of my retreats when I was just fed up with these Muslims raising endless questions with our working with non-Muslims that I decided to sit down and look carefully at what the Qur'an says. I took three weeks off from work and I wrote an essay titled Side by Side with Non Muslims. After I wrote it I thought it looks good, man, looks good, and that's what first got me going. At the moment I am using another book of mine in an Introduction to the Qur'an course, it is called An Introduction to the Qur'an. When I was thinking about which book I should assign for this course, I didn't kind of think I should be using this Intro to the Qur'an course. And whenever I hear someone using this course I keep on thinking, "Oh why would anyone use this book?" Sometimes I get caught between "I don't think there's anything really useful in here" and "Oh gosh, this is really awesome, man. Did you write this?" But part of writing, I think, it is to give voice and, increasingly, I'm realizing the value of telling stories. And so it's not always kind of, you know, when you are with the big boys in the academy... Often at a place like Harvard and so on, you need to be careful about how you tell these stories because people sit in your audience and they laugh at your stories. 'But bloody hell', they think, 'why is he so short on theory? And why he's not citing Foucault or Gardamer? Sometimes part of being in the big league you think, "Wait, I must write something academic now" but at other times you think 'bloody hell, Farid, it's not about showing these other big boys, you know... I'm also big boy, you know...' It's about the

fact that you have something to say. Tell stories, speak to people. You are not writing for a dissertation committee. These are some of the tensions that I have as a writer.

Member of the audience: I am interested in how the view of forgiveness presents itself in the South African culture, in the Muslim culture and ... your own personal experience.

Is that the topic for the next conference? I think in South Africa we are grateful. We are grateful for the political leadership that our country had. We are grateful for the religious leadership that our country had. I think that despite the fact that I didn't want to... I don't want to feed into this idea where we eulogize individuals... people like Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela and many, many others. I think in all of these people we've had remarkably visionary leadership, people that helped us to in many ways begin to forgive, but we also see the inadequacy of the forgiveness discourse in South Africa. We had The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, yes. The TRC made a number of recommendations—by the way, just a month ago the TRC celebrated its tenth year. Now we see how power political need has made it expedient to ignore (many of) the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

So while there was this enormous capacity on the part of people to forgive, the understanding was that society would work out its way to also undo the damage of the past and many of the leaders in our liberation struggle would become just boring. At the moment, though, many South Africans are beginning to wonder about these folks. Are much of the leadership of our country just occupying now the spaces that other white people had occupied before, repeating the same patterns of exploitation and so on? Were we taken for a ride? I had criticized the TRC from a religious angle. I really thought that what was happening in South Africa was a deep Christianization of the forgiveness and reconciliation process. Muslims and Jews are tiny minorities in South Africa. Both of our communities have always played important roles inside the South African community. Sadly, neither Muslims as a community nor Jews as a community made any significant contribution to the forgiveness discourse. I don't know if I'm really able to separate my personal forgiveness issues from my identity as a Muslim and my South Africaness. All of these are really just overlapping things for me, but in some ways this reflects in the way in which I've told my larger story.

Member of the audience: Can you speak about...rigidity within our own cultural groups.

It is enormously difficult. As you are reaching out, you need to hold on. You are reaching out as a Jew to these Christians, to these Muslims, and then when you look back your own synagogue has said bye-bye to you. Get out, get lost. Who's he? He's not speaking for us. So the tension is to always look back; do I have my community with me? For me as a Muslim it was an enormous challenge. You know, I was a part of the religious leadership of the Muslim community. I would sit with the rest of the ulama for hours and hours discussing the correct way of slaughtering beef, cow, and whether these particular outlets, you know—supermarkets—are really halal or not. Whether the rennet was halal or not (Rennet is an ingredient in cheese) for hours. Meanwhile our kids are being slaughtered on the streets, and you are talking about the rennet. But I found this clergy enormously challenging. I don't know how. I often found that how I carry myself personally, how I

carry myself with humor, how I empathize with them as human beings, those things really help. Sometimes (it helped just) avoiding theological issues, just talking to them as a person. Relating to people as people.

I often find that behind these images of doctrinaire-hardened individuals, they are also broken people. Orthodoxy hides a lot of brokenness. Orthodoxy or fundamentalism is often the way in which communities and individuals hide. It's a way of (covering) an inability to deal with their brokenness. Those of us committed to pluralism, have the strength to reach out to other communities often because we are so strong that we can do it. And so when we recognize the brokenness that hides behind the façade of those rules and regulations and orthodoxy then we begin to relate to them as human beings. I often find that we in our own open mindedness and our own pluralism often become deeply contemptuous of backward communities, of reactionary individuals. I don't want to say that we are digging graves for ourselves but (we often become contemptuous) in the way in which we relate to our own communities. They don't like the contempt and they don't like the arrogance with which they see us dealing. Those are some of the insights that I have. Look, I don't want to say it's only our problem. When our community rejects us, it's also our community's problem, it's also a problem of orthodoxy. But I think we have the responsibility to recognize the brokenness that often lies behind the hardened rhetoric.

Member of the audience: We made a visit to South Africa shortly at the end of the TRC time. There were a lot of people and a comment was made that the blacks have more willingness to forgive even in the absence of apology than the whites. And there was something about the South Africans themselves who were oppressed and were willing to sort of forgive because they didn't want to hate, they want to be unburdened of going around hating their enemy, so to speak. I don't know if that phenomenon is true but I think Tutu sort of said it, that blacks are much more willing than the whites to acknowledge.

Yeah, this is one of the really sad things in many ways. Those who know anything about the TRC will know that wasn't the white thing. Whites didn't come. Whites turned off their TV screens. Whites heard about this thing that was happening there. Occasionally TRC hearings took place in white areas. There was the rare white person that came and said I'm sorry. Whites who did come to the TRC came because this was a quid pro quid. I needed to come or I'd be in trouble. I needed to come because I need amnesty. I don't know which way this government is going to go. It's like sorry... It's like saying sorry, you know, you're caught with your hands in the cookie jar. You're not sorry because your hands were in the cookie jar, you're sorry because someone then would slap it if you don't say sorry. So even those who said sorry it wasn't... And so the amazing thing about this forgiveness thing there was no request for forgiveness. You may know that part of the TRC process was that people didn't have to say sorry. People didn't have to ask for forgiveness. They own up to the fact that they did it. So it's an inadequate process on the one end but also remarkable on the other. This forgiveness occurred, as you said, without people asking for it. In some ways, I'm caught still between the idea that all of this was a miracle. It was. And at the same time people also know the many, many unhealed wounds that there are. And that it is difficult, you know, when you don't have food in your house to hear that your forgiveness has been interpreted in such a way that your killer can continue living off on

this huge state pension that he had. And you still don't have food in your house. This is one of the things that I meant when I said about forgiveness being an ongoing thing. When you forgave you thought it would also imply food in my house. Especially if you are forgiving for the crime of injustice, you are entitled to then think that it implied food on my table. And this man is still getting away with this huge pension. He asked for it. Founders keepers, losers weepers. It is possible to forgive the one moment and after some years think that I was wrong and for you to become all hardened again. But you are right, it was very much a one way thing that also shows the wonderful ability of people to forgive without being asked to forgive. I think it's great.

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Suffering, Art, and Healing

John Woodall

***Editor's Note:** In this article, Dr. Woodall discusses the effect of trauma on the human identity. He focuses on three aspects of the many effects of trauma on identity; The Rigid Identity, The Shattered Identity, and the Compassionate Identity. The Compassionate Identity, is the desired one. Woodall says “ this third identity is purely a result of ethical choice. . . It rests in a fully conscious assessment of the implications of freedom... It requires a choice to live by a standard of human dignity that is at once highly personal and universal.” He describes the five stages involved in the process of acquiring a compassionate identity, and concludes that art therapy plays a great role in creating experiences that “expand the human heart to compassion.”*

We know from the neurosciences and developmental psychology that our earliest emotional experiences set the tone for much of our cognitive processing. These earliest emotions become a kind of filter that colors our perception and cognition. So, our early emotional environment is important. How different the world would look if we all had been raised in such an atmosphere of love by our parents and teachers that we were made to “tremble with joy”¹ as the Baha’i writings suggest. But we don’t live in that world, at least not yet. We live in a world in which much of our emotional life is colored by the experience of anguish, fear and anger. That being the case, to make peace with ourselves and our experience in the world, we need to have a way to understand our pain. The arts are far more central to this process than we often consider.

The effects of trauma on the mind and soul of an individual are many. The effect of trauma on our sense of identity in particular is what I’d like to consider in this discussion about the arts and healing. The first reason that identity is important is because it defines our sense of what is fair, our sense of justice. Sometimes life hands you a perfect example. So, to illustrate what I mean, here is a little story. Many years ago, a colleague and I were in Israel at a conference on political psychology. As we boarded a tour bus and sat in our seats, I mentioned to my friend that our sense of justice is determined by our identity. She gave me a puzzled look as if asking me to explain. Just then, another attendee of the conference was attempting to hang up his coat on the hook in front of his window opposite us but, noticed he couldn’t see out his window with his coat in the way. So, he reached across the aisle, bent in front of us, said, ‘excuse me,’ and hung his coat up on our hook! Now, we couldn’t see out our window! “See, he doesn’t consider us part of his identity. So, to him, hanging his coat in front of us isn’t unfair.” I continued, “If we complain to him about his act being unfair, he might say to himself, ‘What’s their problem! I said, ‘excuse me!’”

And so it goes. Here is an important principle in all matters of conflict resolution: we often see our acts, which are based on our own perspective, our own identity, as always being virtuous, as fair. We don’t see the other person’s view as being virtuous or fair, because we don’t completely identify with them. Their demands seem selfish and petty. To really

begin a dialogue about what is fair, we need to first establish a way to more completely identify with the other. In that way, our standard of fairness will be more inclusive and the solutions we arrive at will be more acceptable, comprehensive and truly able to resolve conflict. Finding ways to explore, establish and reinforce a sense of our common humanity, our common identity, is the first step in any process of conflict resolution. This is because a sense of our common humanity will set a standard of fairness that is inclusive. The arts can be used to explore, establish and reinforce this sense.

Here is another quick example. I was on the island of Cyprus several times in the 1980's working on this theory of justice and identity in trying to work toward a solution to the problems between Greeks and Turks there. I asked a Greek woman what it was that the Greeks felt was the most basic issue, what was it, in the final analysis, that the Greeks wanted? After a pause, she said, "What we want is peace. But, peace with justice!" She then described to me the needs that had to be dealt with for there to be 'justice:' respect for property, human rights, equal voice, etc. I then went across the ominous Green Line that divided the two sides by walls, barbed wire and layers of armed guards. On the Turk side, I asked a Turkish woman what was the most basic issue, what was it, in the final analysis, that the Turks wanted? She paused, and said, "What we want is peace. But, peace with justice!"

Both women said they wanted exactly the same thing. Peace, but peace with justice. How they defined justice was determined by their identity group. Whether it is in the relations between a couple in a marriage, employees at a job, neighbors or countries, people want to live in peace. But they also want their rights and needs honored and protected. They want fairness. They want justice. But, to have inclusive justice, we need to be able to identify in inclusive ways. To expand the reach of justice, we need to first expand the reach of our identity. We need to see the humanity of others in more inclusive ways if we are to have justice and then peace. This is the problem that trauma presents us with, the effects of trauma and suffering on identity. This is the dilemma that the arts have a particular value in addressing.

To build to the role of the arts, let's consider the second aspect of identity. That is, how trauma affects identity. Of the many effects of trauma on identity, I'd like to consider three of them. The first two seem to be automatic responses not entirely subject to conscious control, but rather related to personality styles, perhaps temperament. I call these responses the "Rigid Identity" and the "Shattered Identity." They sit at opposite ends of a spectrum. For those who develop a Rigid Identity after a trauma, you see a process of condensation or narrowing of a sense of allegiance to one identity over all others. Before, let's say, 9/11, a person may have considered themselves many things: a Democrat or Republican, white or black, a Rotarian, an American, a Methodist or Jew. But after 9/11, the fear, anguish and anger become very difficult to contain. These strong emotional forces exert a kind of pull on the identity. We might find that one of these identities becomes the repository of all of our emotional allegiances. In psychological terms, we might say that our anguish, fear and anger are displaced to an over identification with one identity over all others. We become a hyper-Democrat or a hyper- Republican, hyper-Methodist or Baptist, or Jew or whatever, hyper-black, hyper-white, etc. If we were to liken it to a roulette wheel, it is as if all of our

emotional “chips” are placed on the ‘red nine,’ that one identity that we come to value over all others. We tend to not be as anxious as a result. We tend to not be as anguished and fearful. But, not so with anger. This Rigid Identity seems to be the identity choice that allows one primal emotion to flourish over others. Our anger takes a front seat while our ability to grieve, to feel the anxiety of uncertainty, to sit with the fear of unknown threats are all quieted. With a Rigid Identity, we see our identity group as all good and other identities as all bad, or at least not as good as we are. The problems arise in the process of trying to resolve conflict. Without an inclusive sense of identity, the standards used to define what is just are defined by the Rigid Identity as what is fair for those belonging to that identity only. Others are simply considered evil, wrong or just don’t register as relevant. Problem solving is then extremely difficult as the solutions that are considered are imbalanced and tend to create more problems, spinning the cycle of conflict to more rounds.

The next effect of trauma on identity is what I call the “Shattered Identity.” With a Shattered Identity, any sense of identity at all is difficult to maintain. If you are the survivor of some terrible atrocity or if you were the perpetrator of an atrocity, your sense of the good is shattered. How can it be that this happened to me? How can it be that I can be the agent of any good in the world if this has happened? If I have seen my family blown up, if I have been forced to commit atrocities against a loved one so that soldiers do not kill my mother, how can there be good in the world? How can I be repaired? How can fairness happen? How can I regain my sense of wholeness? The overwhelming nature of extreme trauma can far outweigh the mental constructs we hold about good in the world and our hope to be good. The effect can be a shattering of our sense of self. Anguish, fear and anxiety become so overwhelming as to dissolve any stable sense of self. Whereas with a Rigid Identity, anger is the predominant emotion to the suppression of anguish, fear and anxiety, with a Shattered Identity, anger is suppressed and anguish, fear and anxiety come to the fore causing a dilution of a sense of self.

Our third aspect of identity is how identity affects motivation. With both a Shattered Identity and a Rigid Identity, there is an effect on our sense of motivation. Ordinarily, we are motivated to work toward what we perceive to be good for us and our loved ones. But what if our sense of the good is shattered by some overwhelming event? What if the center of our being has been uprooted by horror? As W.B. Yeats beautifully described after the horrors of World War I,

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst are
Are full of passionate intensity...*

Those dominated by anguish, fear and anxiety, with Shattered Identities, lack all conviction. While those filled with anger, Rigid Identities, are filled with passionate

intensity. I wouldn't, however, describe them as best and worst as Yeats does. They both have best and worst elements. The point here is that these identities also define how a person will be motivated. A person dominated by a Rigid Identity will tend to feel highly motivated. A person with a Shattered Identity will tend to be in a state of internal paralysis, unable to motivate themselves at all. You can see the problem. Those rigid and highly motivated identities will tend to ride roughshod over the shattered and poorly motivated. Or at a minimum, groups of highly motivated rigid identities: left and right, Democrat and Republican, black and white, Shiite and Sunni, husband and wife, will battle each other for what they consider to be the only version of what is just with the shattered caught in the middle. Worse, new generations of shattered and rigid are created.

Suffering, therefore, has a central effect on how we identify ourselves, how we decide what is and isn't just and how we are motivated. Suffering defines what we will hope for. We define ourselves by our suffering. Communities define themselves, in part, by their shared history of suffering. We are known by our response to our suffering. It is not lost on others if we adopt a Rigid or Shattered identity as a result of our suffering. Our responses to our suffering define our character.

One can imagine a kind of centripetal pull our suffering has on our identity. It tends to pull us into a definition of ourselves we might not have otherwise chosen. How do we escape the gravitational pull of our suffering? Are we destined to be the victims of external events, to lose our sense of freedom over our own destiny, to wallow in anger, anguish, fear and anxiety? What does art have to offer us in this inquiry?

History shows us that there is a third identity, another way. This third type of identity response to suffering is qualitatively different from a Rigid or a Shattered Identity. Whereas Rigid and Shattered Identities seem to be the result of natural, even instinctual responses to trauma and suffering, this third identity is purely a result of ethical choice. It is therefore not unconscious. It is not determined by external factors. It rests in a fully conscious assessment of the implications of freedom. It requires a choice to live by a standard of human dignity that is at once highly personal and universal. It is, therefore, highly resistant to external manipulation. I call it the "Compassionate Identity."

A person with a Compassionate Identity is able to accept the anguish, fear, anxiety and anger that severe suffering cause, but still choose to see the common humanity of all parties. A person with a Compassionate Identity sees that the response to suffering is, at a fundamental level, a choice. Without minimizing the loss, the pain, the tragedy of suffering, a person with a compassionate identity is able to place the experience of suffering into a kind of ethical cost/benefit equation, to see the human condition of suffering with a compassionate eye.

A Compassionate Identity will see the anguish, fear, anxiety and anger of suffering as possible choices. They will not deny these feelings. But a compassionate identity will not see these emotions as destiny. We are not destined to have these emotions be what defines us. Our response to suffering can be one of an embrace of what is noble in the human soul, despite our suffering. We come to understand that there is an imperative to see our common humanity made clear by our suffering. Suffering, then, fuels our compassion, and not our

anger, fear, anguish and anxiety. Healing is then possible because our expanded sense of identity includes those with whom we are in conflict. The possibility exists for inclusive problem solving and to escape the morass of cycles of mutual violence. Surely one of the great values of the arts in times of crisis and trauma is to creatively explore this choice: the choice between Rigid and Shattered Identities on the one hand, and a Compassionate Identity on the other. To remain stuck in our pain, or to use it creatively for healing.

Chuck Willie is a wonderful man. Among many distinguished honors, he is a retired sociologist, educator, minister, activist and Harvard Professor. He was Martin Luther King, Jr.'s roommate at Boston University. He studied Doctor King's methods of social activism. He told me about Dr. King's method of organizing the Birmingham bus boycott.

The African-American community of Birmingham was highly motivated. Each Monday night, regardless of church affiliation, they would meet at Dr. King's church. There, they would explore through common worship, sermons and speeches the values that would guide them. They would review the reality of the history of pain they had suffered, the reality of the threat posed to them by participating in the boycott: dogs might be set on them, hoses fired at them, they could be shot, they or their loved ones lynched. They would clearly lay out the pros and the cons, the values they wanted to advance and the costs in doing so, the expression of dignity and the reality of suffering. With this clear eyed clarification of the pros and cons, the costs and benefits, each individual could make their own ethical decision. Chuck said that by the time they were finished with this process, each participant in the marches was themselves a Dr. King. They did not need a leader to motivate them. They all had made a deeply personal choice based on an assessment of the real costs in terms of suffering, and the ennobling principles they preferred to live by despite their suffering. That is what is meant by a Compassionate Identity.

The arts can be used to explore the nature of our pain, to understand its sources, to define for ourselves our anger, anguish, fear and anxiety, to name the central emotions involved. But, to be healing, a point of connection must be made, a type of connection that allows for moving the identity respectfully and consciously to a "blessed community," as the civil rights movement called the grouping of the universally minded, a compassionate identification with at least the therapist, the compassionate ideal and then with a compassionate community. Once this is done, larger principles of compassion and understanding need to be explored so that a choice can be made. Perhaps repeatedly over the course of a lifetime this choice must be made in the face of our pain revisiting us uninvited. The arts can be used in each step of this process.

There are important strengths that emerge from this type of compassionate decision making. First, it mobilizes our latent capacities, but in an inclusive way, not in ways that can be used to dominate others, but towards mutually beneficial goals. It establishes the inclusive standards of justice which are required for comprehensive problem solving. The arts can be used to identify and harness these strengths.

How do we facilitate the desire to make this compassionate choice in the face of our pain which screams at us to form a Rigid Identity against those who harm us or to become paralyzed by the anguish, fear and anxiety that characterize a Shattered Identity? What

fuels compassion? What allows us to escape the centripetal pull that pain has on our identity?

If we are talking about moving to a larger identity for ourselves, we are talking about functions of the transcendent. Not merely a national, ethnic, racial, partisan identity, but a human identity. Not an ideological identity, but one that viscerally sees the human condition and is moved to compassion by it, the suffering of ourselves and of others. This transcendent understanding needs to be experienced, cultivated.

Our responses in this way to suffering, in fact all sincere attempts to work through suffering, represent a form of the beauty of human nature. As the Persian mystics say, love is the natural outgrowth of beauty. We are attracted in love to beauty. Beauty generates love. If we elicit the beautiful in human character, we elicit love and attraction. This language is quite useful. If our focus with those who suffer is on the beauty of the sincerity of responses to come to terms with pain, we have a language that can reach across identities. We have a universal language of the nobility of the human soul. We have a means to attract and bind together, and by doing so, to heal. The experience of the aesthetic in human character is a powerful means, then, of healing.

The ancient Greeks knew this when they described the goddess Athena as the ruler of war and of creative artistic civilization. Civilization comes out of the pain of destruction. Our humanity is born of our suffering. Pain generates the beauty of noble responses of character. These beautiful noble responses generate love. This love is the foundation of civilization, the social contract, our obligations and responsibilities to each other. The aesthetic, then, is the central organizing impulse of civilization. To not delve into this exploration of human nobility in response to our pain is the opposite of an aesthetic experience. It is anesthetic.

How might this work today? Consider a racial divide in a town in Mississippi. Blacks want to be included in the town's historic archives. Many whites in the town resist, thinking this is a recipe for social unrest since some of that history involves lynching, secret graves and persistent racial oppression. Instead of focusing on a recitation of the raw historic events, an approach consistent with our discussion would be to focus on the character strengths exhibited by individuals on both sides that were the response to the pain of those events. The idea would be to not avoid the story of loss and suffering, but to focus on the universal human nobility in the responses to suffering that are shared across cultural, racial, national and partisan divides. This is a way to develop a basis for compassionate identity in the face of a shared history of pain and oppression. In this way, people can identify across historic divides by seeing the common human strengths, for example, the patience, tenacity and the courage in the face of adversity that arise from suffering. These universal virtues become the basis for a shared human identity, for a shared language of dignity, standards of justice that are inclusive and, therefore, healing.

How might the arts play a role in this type of healing process, or for any process that requires the transformation of pain into a level of meaning that can be healing and uniting? We might consider the process of making the ethical choice of a compassionate identity as having five stages.

First, the person must have the experience of a personal strength. They must live the experience of their own sincerity, compassion, love, courage, patience, fidelity, trustworthiness, etc. in the face of their own pain. The arts can be used to elicit this lived experience of both suffering and the strength demonstrated in response to it.

Second, that strength needs to be rendered symbolically by the person. This can be in the form of words, visual representation, music or movement. The point is that we need an internal representation of our strengths in order to be able to conceptualize it. We need an internal scaffolding of words and symbols to be able to manipulate a concept. We need to symbolize the strength, to name it, so it can have an internal representation that is available to thought and reflection. This can be done in the context of a parallel representation of the pain that elicits the strength so the two can be symbolized. The arts can be used to symbolize our experience to ourselves even before language is available to us.

Third, we need to be able to assess the value of the strength over other choices. We need to be able to compare the value of this strength in relation to the cost of our suffering. How has our pain influenced our identity? What features of a Rigid or Shattered Identity are operating in our response to our pain? How might our strengths be seen as an option that can be chosen in spite of our pain? How might a Compassionate Identity influence the way we see our pain and allow us to give meaning to it?

Fourth, is the very personal and fundamental human act of choosing. What is required for us to move toward a choice to create a compassionate meaning of our pain? The multifaceted elements of the moment of decision are ripe topics for artistic exploration.

Fifth, is the ability to act based on our ethical choice. To act in ways that are not determined by unresolved anger, fear, anguish or anxiety, but rather to act in ways that allow us to heal our own pain by giving it compassionate meaning, to assist others in the alleviation of their pain, in the facilitation of their compassionate choice. This is real freedom and nobility in the face of pain.

We see then, that this form of aesthetic choice is fundamentally moral choice. Our ability to respond in compassion to the human condition of suffering is what elicits the beautiful in human character. It is this form of aesthetics that undergirds our moral sense, our ability to expand our circle of identity to include others, even those who have harmed us. It becomes a calling, then, for the art therapist to create these experiences of human beauty and, therefore, love; to do so in ways that expand the human heart to compassion when our pain would pull us toward rigidity and intolerance, to a shattered self and paralysis. In so doing, we increase the experience of justice in the world, the possibility of peace and the hope of healing ourselves and the world.

References

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