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**This Is Your Brain In A Mine Field:
*Diagnosed with PTSD - the Challenge to Be Objective***

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Abstract

This article is written in response to a request by the IJHC to share my personal experience of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and subsequent treatment with Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) and other modalities that involve meditation and music. My experience as a combat medic in Vietnam and as a professional civilian paramedic are given a face to help facilitate this study. Included are issues from my childhood that contributed to my PTSD.

Key words: Vietnam veteran, post traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, emotional freedom techniques, EFT, Ingrid Dinter, PTSD treatment, meditation, veteran addiction.

Early wounds: land mines in later challenging situations

In 1971, shortly after returning home to Los Angeles from a one-year tour in Vietnam as a combat medic, I went body surfing at a local beach. Never having been taught that you should swim parallel to the shore to escape a rip tide, I used up most of my strength swimming against the current. Just as my feet touched the sand and I knew I was safe, two boys and a girl, about eight or nine years old were swept by me in the strong current of the rip. Even though it felt like suicide, I allowed the current to pull me out again as I swam toward the terrified children. I had no idea how to help them and instinctively knew if I started shouting for a lifeguard that they would panic and drown... plus there was no lifeguard within earshot of the pounding surf.

The children stayed calm as I juggled them in my arms trying desperately to move all three toward the shore. After a couple of minutes it was evident that we were making little or no progress. I knew that our best chance would be if I focused on the two younger children and let the older boy who looked the most calm, fend for himself. Without words, my eyes told him, "If you don't stay calm and keep up, you're going to drown." Very slowly all four of us made our way toward the shore in spite of the strong currents and large surf.

To this day, I can only say it was the Grace of God (whomever He, She or It might be), that got us ashore because I felt completely spent when I attempted to rescue them. As we walked onto the beach, no one spoke... they went in one direction and I went in the other. As I lay alone on my towel surrounded by hundreds of people, none of whom apparently witnessed what had happened, I felt nothing but deep shame for abandoning the third child. I knew that they probably would have drowned had I not been there, but as always... It just wasn't enough. All I could see were the eyes of that little boy as I spoke to him with my eyes... I couldn't forgive myself. Even though the three children survived- the best possible outcome - I was programmed, as it were, to always feel as though my efforts in any situation fell short of some perfect standard that I had created in my mind.

This event was iconic in terms of my own psychology for many years to come. Even though I was competent in my practice as a professional civilian paramedic for several years, the psychology of 'not enough' was all-pervasive throughout my professional life, not to mention my 'life' life.

Before I trace the roots of this mindset to my experiences in Vietnam, I would like to take a brief visit to my childhood, which is, at least, partially culpable for the 'not enough' that was me. It's hard to complain about a childhood 'graced' with maids, movie stars, expensive cars and beautiful homes – the result of having a father who was a very successful writer in the music, television and movie industry. But if you can see past the glamour of Academy Award, Emmy and Grammy nominations to the distinctly unglamorous world of alcoholism of both my parents; the many schools that are part and parcel of many 'beautiful' homes; an emasculating mother and a weak father who was very kind but, as are all alcoholics, emotionally unavailable to be anything – in this case, beyond a celebrity to his children – you will see a childhood that looked great but was in psychological terms almost as dangerous as walking through the mine fields in Vietnam (or in my case, riding on the back of an armored personnel carrier with mechanized infantry).

At the tender age of 12, my twin sister and I were, more often than not, terrified of my mother. Forgetting to empty the trash could engender a screaming tirade that would usually continue through dinner, resulting in chronic stomach problems later in my life. In sixth grade she beat me with a belt because I was with a friend who got caught with a Playboy magazine at school. At four years old, after breaking a towel rack, thinking it would support my weight, my mother hit me so hard with a thick plastic brush that it broke in half. How bad does a mother have to feel about herself to treat her children with such malice?

One time, we plotted to kill her by mixing her perfumes together. While obviously our master plan was not a genuine threat to her overbearing existence, it remains in my memory as an indicator of the severity of our distress over her unpredictable and often explosive behaviors.

Although I completely and without reservation forgave my mother before she died, I can sum up her parenting skills in one sentence, "What's the matter with you, is it your pimples?" As trite as it might sound, in forgiveness I could see with absolute clarity that she quite literally had done the best that she could.

Being labeled by the California courts as incorrigible after summoning up enough sanity and courage to run away from home at fifteen, I was sent to a Catholic boy's home by the same court despite being something akin to a pagan Lutheran Protestant. That is to say, my parents got bored with Protestant church after two weeks, and non-Catholics at the boy's home were

sent to a Lutheran church if they were resistant to a Latin mass delivered by an elderly priest who shot birds with a BB gun just outside the chapel after services.

As you might have already surmised with an intelligent guess, the ending of this segment of my story involved sexual abuse. I'm actually quite grateful that the abuse I endured was not physical molestation; I 'merely' had to sit naked with five other boys in group therapy for an otherwise 'normal' talk about sexual responsibility. No irony was intended in the writing of that last sentence. For the record, the clergy/counselor in charge was fully clothed during the session.

There were other incidents as well, such as with the same counselor coming into my bedroom drunk to discuss sex while 'unwittingly' exposing himself to me in his pajamas. The topic, which involved having 'his' boys stand naked in front of the full-length mirror on the wall left me frightened at best, and perpetually distrustful of men in authority at worst.

Within a month or two of one boy in my cottage (six boys) telling the director of the boys' home about more serious sexual misconduct by this same Catholic 'brother,' two of my friends in that same cottage took their own lives: one by jumping in front of a fast moving automobile, and the other by drinking a bottle of rat poison.

Far from receiving counseling after the whistle had been blown for this ongoing abuse, the boy who had the courage to report the truth was sent home – never to be seen again, and the rest of us were told by the director in no uncertain terms that we would not discuss this with our parents or our friends.

Being 'promoted' from the dorms to one of two cottages was considered a valued upgrade in campus prestige in that we could not only carry cash, we were also not limited to four cigarettes a day and had other privileges not afforded to kids in the dorm. Cigarettes were supplied to all the children at the boys' home ranging in age from about eleven to seventeen.

My memory is quite vivid, however, of another staff member (clergy), always standing at the entrance to the shower like a gatekeeper with full view of three naked boys at a time, all of whom, presumably like me, abandoned any and all desire for privacy.

These facts would come out in lawsuits resolved around 2005, which culminated in the much publicized award of 660 million dollars for 500 litigants in Southern California. I was one of those 'lucky' litigants.

During the research for this article, I not only discovered that the same boys' home referenced here is still in operation in Chatsworth, California, I also discovered that the director, who was responsible for the cover-up by intimidation in 1968 (the only surviving clergy staff), is still in charge as of March, 2010, at the age of 79 or 80. He has been in this position for 50 years. Although stunned when I saw the web-site video of this man boasting of his longevity with this boys' home, I credit Grace and 24 years of sobriety and meditation as reasons I didn't become overwhelmed with anger. In spite of what many would attribute to a *lack* of wisdom, I have not only forgiven the man in question, I forgave the perpetrator of this abuse decades ago, feeling actual sympathy for both of them. I had come to understand that anger, hatred and resentment would quite literally hurt me more than it would hurt them. Unchecked anger had the potential to land me in a mental hospital, or worse, in prison. The knot in my stomach was gone within hours of this forgiveness.

Grace may not be a word you commonly use. Here are definitions from the Free Dictionary by Farlex (on-line):

grace *n.*

1. Seemingly effortless beauty or charm of movement, form, or proportion.
2. A characteristic or quality pleasing for its charm or refinement.
3. A sense of fitness or propriety.
 - a. A disposition to be generous or helpful; goodwill.
 - b. Mercy; clemency.
4. A favor rendered by one who need not do so; indulgence.
5. A temporary immunity or exemption; a reprieve.
6. **Graces** *Greek & Roman Mythology* Three sister goddesses, known in Greek mythology as Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia, who dispense charm and beauty.
 - a. Divine love and protection bestowed freely on people.
 - b. The state of being protected or sanctified by the favor of God.
 - c. An excellence or power granted by God.

My personal definition of *Grace*: Freeing the Essence of our Being that has been kept bottled up and seldom available in that which we call, 'I,' 'Me,' 'Myself.'

I can't be bothered with the burden that is a predictable byproduct of blame, but suffice it to say, these incidents and others of a similar nature were psychological land mines in my history as a professional in the medical field, partially reflected in these facts: I had 36 jobs in 32 years, and was fired a dozen times or more for angry outbursts at employers. Threatening to break a chair over a supervisor's head was at one end of the spectrum, and simply walking off the job to imagined greener pastures was at the other end.

Military emotional land mines

Three months after being discharged from the boys' home at 17, I joined the Army. My recruiter, a current resident of Dante's Inferno, told me that I had signed up to be a clinical psychologist. Calling me naïve would be a gross understatement, especially since I had actually signed up to be a combat medic. Before I could buy a meerschaum pipe to go with the couch and white medical jacket I assumed were forthcoming, I was instead taught how to make beds and administer morphine. My entire company of fresh medics graduating from Ft. Sam Houston in Texas were sent to Vietnam except for five of us who were still 17 and too young to die for our country. After five months attached to an artillery unit in Schweinfurt, Germany, I turned 18 and volunteered with a friend for a tour on the other side of the world, in Vietnam.

Once in-country, I was assigned to 23rd Medical Company in Chu Lai. Partly because of my experience in Germany, and partly because a large number of medics were rotating back to the states, I was given the responsibility of ward-master at the ripe old age of 18. I mention this because being in charge of a ward might have gone far to keep me out of the rice paddies, but that same guy who believed he was going to be trained as a clinical psychologist, was the same guy who volunteered to do a tour with H-Troop, 17th Cav out of LZ (landing zone) Bayonet.

As one of my not-so-close friends once quipped, "You got stupid you ain't used yet." Seeing that the friend I volunteered with in Germany, and the entire crew of my track (APC) were all killed lends little credence to any defense I might attempt to put forth. I will say this, however: at

59, I am very grateful for all my experiences insofar as they contributed to my life today being not only exhilarating but also enhanced with compassion to the degree I am capable. In addition, I find that my religion consists of an abiding curiosity which leaves me in the sanctity of church wherever I happen to be at any given moment.

Backing up to 1969, when my religion was fear and getting high, I would like to share an incident involving my first wounded patient in a remote rice paddy near the infamous village of My Lai (where I spent New Years Eve during a ten-day period with the troop that was securing the village for the 'cover-up' investigation). The graphic details are not necessary, but the fact that this young man (actually a boy) died while I worked on him is significant for the following reason: Even though it became clear to me (while training as a civilian paramedic in 1973), that a team of the finest trauma surgeons in the world could not have saved this man from the wounds received from a rocket propelled grenade, I still felt unequivocally that I could have, and should have done more to save this boy's life. This incident and being the only survivor of my track left me with heavy burdens of survival guilt and the feeling of never being enough. These emotions would define my life for decades after leaving South Vietnam.

Navigating social and cultural minefields on my way back into 'normal' society

Even before being discharged from the Army, my use of mood altering chemicals quickly escalated to addiction. In addition to marijuana, speed, barbiturates and LSD, I added intravenous heroin to the menu during my last three months in-country. This landed me in the hepatitis ward at Madigan General Hospital in Ft. Lewis, Washington. This was not exactly a rehab environment, as virtually every patient on the ward got there the same way I did – shooting dope.

After ten months on the ward, while continuously sharing needles with other 'hep' patients, my discharge (barely honorable), was preceded by a short trip to the stockade for expressing my opinion to a 'lifer' (career military), about his lack of civility to a young recruit with whom I wasn't even acquainted. For reasons perhaps best left to the speculation of my readers, I relished being an outcast of society after returning to the States. It was clear almost immediately that *home* was nowhere to be found. No one in my family greeted me at the airport when I flew in from Vietnam to Tacoma, Washington. My twin sister picked me up at the airport with her boyfriend when I arrived in LA.

Arriving home at 19 after a gut-wrenching year in Vietnam, my father was out and my mother was taking a nap. Though not looking for a parade or yellow ribbons, I was expecting slightly more than a family who acted as though I'd been away for the weekend. I was also expecting slightly more from my best childhood friend when I tried to tell him about the friends I had lost overseas. His response was, "I don't think you're more of a man because you went off to war." He didn't have to tell me that! I was moderately conscious of the fact that I was a depressed, paranoid drug addict.

In 1973 I had had the distinction of graduating at the top of my paramedic class... of three... Oh well... and getting caught stealing drugs from the ambulance almost in the same breath. Despite this monumental lack of good judgment, I was allowed to graduate in Palm Springs, California. Later in '74, I became the first paramedic in the country to receive reciprocity from one county to another. I doubt the media would have been so kind to me had they known, in the midst of making emergency medical services history, that I was stoned more than once (with my paramedic duty partner on occasion), in the back of a Mobile Intensive Care Unit.

Not to diminish my own culpability, but the public would be shocked to know the number of medics who, at that time, were using recreational drugs – mostly off duty. 'Mostly' acknowledges the fact that your grandmother or grandfather may have had a paramedic high on pot or cocaine working on them during a heart attack or, God forgive us, a cardiac arrest. Let me emphasize that this type of behavior, high on duty, was very rare from where I sat, but problematic nonetheless.

In 1986 I arrived without fanfare at the end of my rope and was able to get sober by utilizing a 12 Step program. I use the word 'utilize' purposefully because I didn't just go to meetings and whine about my problems (although I did more than my share of that at other times, in other places). Through desperation to have a life beyond my constant desire to escape what was considered 'normal' I actually ended up *working* these 12 steps.

For many whom I've encountered who are struggling with addiction issues, the 12 Steps are much more popular as a topic of discussion than they are a discipline of practice. The teachings include: "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and practice these principals in all our affairs." "Having had" is very bold indeed! The implication is clear: *anyone* can experience this nebulous thing known as a 'spiritual awakening' if they are willing to go through the humbling process of actually taking responsibility for their life, and better yet, sharing the compassion (one of the most important aspects of spiritual awakening) with other sentient beings.

Humility (In my humble opinion): seeing oneself as I am, beyond the fantasies and concepts of the legion of egos that give false definitions of my *self*. To quote myself from my book, "Staying Sober in AA... When Surrounded by Drunks..." (www.stayingsober.com), "On the outside chance that I have any humility, I won't give any up by discussing it."

I was always amused by folks in AA who would get up and speak of their vast humility. It seems to me the two are mutually exclusive. You either have humility, or you get to discuss humility... not both. You might find a chunk of my imagined humility hiding in plain sight between the quotation marks above where I shamelessly plug my book.

If my book can help another alcoholic/addict, I'm willing to endure the shame. The book, published ten years ago, is being re-written under the new title: "Sober Now, Happy Now... The Essence of Recovery." Eventually information will be available about this publication at www.SoberNowHappyNow.com.

Alcoholics Anonymous has a tradition of: "...anonymity at the level of press radio and television," Hence, "Rick A." listed as the author of "Staying Sober..." as opposed to Rick Adair. No longer being a member of AA after 24 years, I feel that I am no longer bound by its traditions, although I still respect them. This statement is a contradiction of sorts, but let me just say that I wholehearted endorse the program of AA, meaning the 12 Steps. However, as evidenced in my book, the success rate of AA has plummeted in areas where rehabs have replaced or lowered the priority of actually working/practicing the Steps with bumper-sticker psychology.

In the spirit of a tradition that I am so wantonly breaking, let me just say that I do not represent, or pretend to represent the program of Alcoholics Anonymous in any way other than to say, working the 12 Steps quite literally saved my life. Step 11: "Sought through prayer and

meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him (Her or It), praying only for knowledge of His (Her) will for us and the power to carry that out.” This step led me to the practice of daily meditation, which has affected the outcome of my PTSD more than any other factor. It is the foundation of a path that is almost wholly responsible for any rare insights I may have tripped over in the past 24 years. It has, without question, led me to what I see as a long and arduous and blissful journey to *this moment...* the only place I’ve ever had even a glancing relationship with Grace.

One of the greatest paradoxes that is inherent in Truth with a capital 'T' is this: if, like a Buddhist for example, I see the inescapable suffering of this silly anomaly we call 'life,' I can paradoxically escape the same suffering. For example: Moving from the West Coast to the East Coast in 1985, I could, and would, whine incessantly about hot, humid days. After 20 years of sobriety and meditation, I headed to the market on one of those very hot and humid days in the town of Hollis, New Hampshire. I commented to the guy behind the deli counter, “Nice day today.” The woman standing next to me was mortified, saying, “What, are you out of your mind? It’s 93 and oppressively humid!”

Of course, she was right... but so was I. Walking out into the hot humid air earlier, I had acknowledged the oppressive heat and let it go. My *perception*, minutes later, was that it was a nice day. We were both talking about the same weather, but it just left different impressions. Or, more precisely, we had the same impression, but I was able through Grace (beginner’s mind, perhaps), to transform that same impression.

In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, in the experts there are few.
– Shunryu Suzuki

How the land mines of 'wounded,' 'scarred' and 'scared' may explode in our relationships

The daily use of marijuana, alcohol and other drugs that allowed me to sleep at night after long shifts on the ambulance, was also the catalyst that brought my first marriage to an end in 1979. Even though my wife was perfectly willing to stand by me through these difficult times; it was my own self-involvement that led me to walk out on a wife and two children for imagined greener pastures. It was much easier to blame my wife for my unhappiness than to accept the fact that I was a drug addict.

In 1982 I married again, an intensive care nurse who understood the stresses of our chosen professions. Our first year together was a whirlwind party of relieving that same stress. Although sober two years when I walked out on this marriage, my action was still rooted in emotional immaturity.

Insight and wisdom clearly eluded me in the realm of relationships of all kinds. Having been sober almost 20 years, I was willing to stick it out with my third wife when she became disgruntled over PTSD symptoms that made a comeback in my early fifties. We were divorced in 2005. In 2009 I was trying to decide between getting a dog for companionship or going on the e-Harmony dating site to find a pen-pal.

The reason I say pen-pal is because I’ve always been attracted to strong, intelligent women. How smart could a woman be who would marry a Vietnam veteran who had three former spouses and four children, including a seven year-old daughter adopted from China who was with me every other weekend and once or twice during the week?

Well, it turns out, to quote my fourth (and final) wife, “God is a bigger dreamer than me.” Four days after meeting Debby, we knew we would spend the rest of our lives together, and I knew unequivocally that I was in the first *non-fiction* relationship of my life. There was no more, ‘filling in the blanks’ with the imagination of a former junkie, whose drug-of-choice was romance disguised as love. I never before knew that love could be calm. I never knew that love didn’t have to be manifested at a pinnacle with no direction to go but down. I found out the meaning of a quote from Samael Aun Weor, “The perfect matrimony is between two beings, one who loves more, and one who loves better.”

Healing the inner land mines within our Being

In the early 90’s, while seeing a psychologist who specializes in helping veterans, I was diagnosed by the Veteran’s Administration (VA) with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and granted a disability award of 30%. The only treatment offered at that time was psychotherapy, which I continued for several years. In 2007 I was awarded the label: 100% Totally and Permanently disabled as a result of PTSD. In spite of what appears to be my high functioning capability, hyper-vigilance, depression, nightmares and flashbacks have regular cameo appearances in this feature-length movie known as my life. Insomnia, on the other hand, often has a feature role, if not a starring role, in this shared comedic/tragedy of life. These symptoms are part of the cluster that define the PTSD diagnosis in The Psychiatric Diagnostic and Statitstical Manual – IV of 1994. (A new DSM is due out soon.)

It's good to know that if I behave strangely enough, society will take full responsibility for me.

– Ashleigh Brilliant

What separates my life today from cameo performances on the Jerry Springer PTSD Show of life in the past seems to be an ability not to identify with my own fading psychological theme song which might be titled, “Lets Have Pity, Compassion and Admiration for the Combat Vet and paramedic Modern Folklore Hero who suffers the endless torment of PTSD.” Think Grace once again!

I’ve worked hard, over many years, at dismantling my dysfunctional attitudes. Observing the existence of such petty ego ruminations gives me the option of feeding the nasty little buggers, or starving them through simple indifference that doesn’t involve judgment or spiritual ambition. Make no mistake about it. PTSD boy does get an occasional ego snack, if not a four-course meal, but, to quote Rumi, when you live in a field “out beyond all notions of right doing and wrong doing,” there is a paradoxical shift where indifference to life allows focused attention on life at that one place where it truly exists... right here, right now. My indifference to life is only present when it comes to my concepts, opinions, beliefs, certainties and agenda... all of which require a past or future. This is a small price to pay for a chance to encounter and dialogue with Grace.

Out beyond all notions of right doing and wrongdoing, there is a field... I'll meet you there.

– Jaluddin Rumi

In 2009 my wife Debby, a professional speaker and writer, introduced me to Ingrid Dinter, who practices Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT). Very resistant to the ‘new-age Hallmarkish’

name, I nevertheless resonated with the compassion and sincerity of this woman who dedicates much of her professional life to helping veterans plagued with that four-letter death sentence: PTSD. 'Death' in the sense of a life filled with intrusive thoughts related to my experiences as a witness to death and maiming in Vietnam, and in approximately 300 calls as a paramedic where death was the immediate outcome, including a dozen or so infants and children.

A few months ago I arrived at Ingrid's office with beginner's mind and a dollop of skepticism as to whether or not I could benefit from her unconventional treatment plan.

EFT involves tapping on acupressure points while speaking affirmations out loud (www.eft4vets.com). Doing this under Ingrid's gentle guidance, within minutes I was shocked to find myself sobbing like a child, recounting the story of my first patient who died in a rice paddy. While tapping and repeating, "... even though I feel as though I didn't do enough for this man, I deeply and completely accept myself," I began to see the actual circumstances of that night. Although it was clear to me that I couldn't have saved this man, the facts did nothing to preclude me from seeing the event through a narrow, self-condemning lens of, 'not enough.' Being a writer with a love of precision in the written word, I have had little use for the word 'miracle' in my vocabulary... and yet, here it comes galloping onto the stage from that refuse pile of the words referred to in the Tao Te Jing as: "The word that can be spoken is not the true word." Brace yourself... the *miracle* happened.

Simply put, as I tapped on acupuncture meridian points and recited the affirmations, the lens widened until I saw the event as it had actually happened: My job that evening was to be with a dying man so that he didn't have to die alone. I not only did that job, I did it well. If he heard my words, he had no idea how petrified I was... He heard me say how lucky he was to be headed to 91st Evac where there were so many beautiful nurses. (Sorry 'gals,' I can't apologize for the hint of misogyny in my dialogue with a dying boy... trust me, for years I told anyone interested that it was ER and ICU nurses who really trained us as paramedics; MD's often launched the lesson plan right over our heads.)

So what, if any, is the relevance of seeing this event through the lens of clarity? First of all, it seems relevant to mention that this 'revelation' was not accompanied by pride. I have little or no use for such things that provide snacks for my legion of egos. But I'm always interested in the Truth, wherever the path of the razor's edge leads.

The false impression of this event had had an emotional charge that tended to short-circuit my emotional or cognitive logic, tools that are obviously most useful when in proper working order. All this 'not enough' business is that 'something extra' that my ego has loved to tout as essential to my identity. More paradox: my identity is actually a hindrance to seeing who I am. What? Grace can only manifest, like every thing, where there is room for IT. If Grace happens to be in the neighborhood and knocks on my door, what a shame it would be to send Her off because the house (my mind), was already full of concepts about my identity. As I used to tell men I sponsored in AA, "My opinion will get you drunk." If that's the case, and it is, why would I invest in any identity, to say anything of one that has the emotional charge of combat?

If someone asked me to describe what other areas in my life might benefit from EFT, my response would be, what area of my life couldn't benefit from safely uninstalling the seemingly endless mental programs that carry negative emotional charges. Charges that have the effect of misinforming my intellect about the nature of my own experiences... and the nature of the Truth.

Here are but a few of countless examples of challenging situations great and small and the affirmations that helped me through them:

- Recently, I was preparing to present a speech at Toastmasters when I began to tap on my nervousness. “Even though I am a bit nervous, I deeply and completely accept myself.” As a result of this tapping, I embraced my nervousness – paradoxically relieving myself of same.
- My wife and I have been dog-sitting with Emma-the-Dilemma, a Golden Labrador Retriever. Her habits of whining constantly and cleaning her butt on our carpeting have driven me many a time to tapping. “Even though Emma makes me irritable, I deeply and completely accept myself.” Emma and I aren’t exactly best friends from the tapping, but it is valid testimony that recently I missed her when she was gone for two days. I could see a direct connection between ‘tapping’ and feeling compassion for this beautiful dog. Imagine the possibilities if your boss or spouse is a ‘dilemma.’
- Tapping on my impatience while waiting in line at the market has allowed me to observe my own self-importance, thus focusing my attention inward where it belongs... where it can be beneficial. The whole of my life is a journey to this moment; any tool, whether it be meditation or tapping or both, are welcome additions to my arsenal of weapons I use in this battle against my own delusions and illusions about the nature of reality.

I’ve noticed an interesting phenomenon since discovering the miracles of EFT. On several occasions I found myself resistant to tapping on an emotional situation that would clearly benefit from release through this technique. What I’ve discovered is this: even though dramatic results from tapping can literally be realized in minutes (results that weren’t forthcoming after ten years of psychotherapy), for someone who has had numerous emotional traumas, the work isn’t done until it’s done. What I’ve observed in my own psyche are a number of egos still screaming the time-worn negative affirmation: “You don’t deserve peace of mind.” Having said that, the Grace that allows me to see my, what the Tibetans refer to as ‘psychic aggregates,’ is the same Grace that will allow me to defeat them through the potent antidote of comprehension, meditation and other modalities such as EFT. To quote one of my greatest teachers, “The only good ego is a dead ego.”

I know there are many experts who would debate the value of dissolving one’s egos, but they would have to find someone else to debate with. I simply don’t debate anything or anyone anymore. Paradoxically, far from being close-minded, this lack of agenda allows my abiding curiosity to truly LOOK at any opinion, theory, belief etc. that someone offers without that legion of self-important egos filtering impressions to ‘their’ liking. Obviously my egos haven’t been dissolved, but that is the master-work of my life... dying to self, moment to moment, in exchange for ever-so-brief glimpses of Grace, Divinity... God?

The following is addressed to our respected scientists who often have an intimate relationship with the word ‘anecdotal’ when considering new techniques like EFT. And why not? It’s a good word. A couple of hours into my first session of EFT, I stood up to go to the bathroom. I explained to Ingrid that my grimace of pain upon standing (7 or 8 on a scale of ‘1’ = light discomfort, ‘10’ = the worst pain I’ve experienced), was from Baker’s cysts behind both knees. I was, in fact, scheduled to be at the orthopedic clinic in a couple of days to deal with it. Over a year prior, I had been given a cortisone injection that was very effective for about a year. Now I was back using a cane on occasion just to stand up.

Before this first four-hour session was over, another miracle enters from stage left. I stood up and the pain had diminished from a 7 or 8 to a 1 or 2. Being, like I said, somewhat skeptical of this EFT stuff, I began at that moment to imagine Rod Serling in the corner of the room saying, "Submitted for your approval." (A 'Twilight Zone' reference for all you youngsters out there: Google it.) I would later find out that studies with EFT patients have shown a significant reduction in blood cortisol levels – a chemical associated with inflammation related to chronic stress. (www.EFT4vets.com)

I know there are many experts out there who lack 'beginner's mind,' who would still be on firm ground saying once again, this information is anecdotal. To them, I apologize for not running to a doctor to have my cortisol levels checked that day. But here you have the facts. I love them as much as you do: I walked into Ingrid's office with painful Baker's cysts having no thoughts, to say anything of expectations, regarding this condition... except, of course, when I stood up in pain. Fact: The pain, brief as it was on standing, had been consistently in the 7 to 8 region for a couple of months. Fact: I cancelled the appointment with the orthopedic surgeon who was looking at the option of draining the offending cysts.

Fact: Almost three months later, the pain behind my knees has increased back to a 4 or 5, but this is most certainly related to my lack of 'tapping on it,' as EFT practitioners refer to. Two days ago, I made time to briefly 'tap,' "Even though the pain is returning in my knees, I completely accept myself... (followed by), I am surprisingly okay with that." The pain dropped to a 2 or 3 the following day. More studies are clearly in order, but, if invited, I will gladly bring my statistical pony to the party.

In conclusion

The reason I feel comfortable using the word 'miracle' in this report is because no one, or no thing can undo the experience of seeing what is real with all the inherent benefits implied. As the fruits of labor are the rewards of labor, the fruit of Truth is simply that: the Truth... *that* which changes from instant to instant.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention, in addition, the role music has played in my dance with PTSD. My love of guitar and drums goes back 50 years and has played an essential role in my ability to escape... me. Although my favorite music is classical, I play jazz because I love to improvise. From my perspective, jazz can be any genre of music where the musicians have heart... whether pop, rock, fusion, bluegrass, country, Latin etc., I try to avoid making music; I prefer to allow it. Here's a new take on an old saying, "It's amazing how much *music* (work) gets done when no one cares who gets the credit." Every time I pick up a guitar I'm forced to make a decision between my desire to be a 'good guitar player,' or having the courage and humility to put my flat pick between the thumb and forefinger of Grace. It's a choice between the elusive pleasure of accolades or an ineffable chill up my spine. A choice between that which is flimsy and transparent and that which is, to contradict 'ineffable'... a sacred download of Grace... or... ineffable.

As previously stated, I have no opinions or beliefs... My religion is curiosity. If you would like to attend my church, simply open your eyes and pay attention... You're already in my sanctuary. Our *self* is the currency with which we *pay* attention... If your life is full of purpose and joy, there is no reason to cash in your *self*. If, on the other hand, you feel the tug of your Being telling you there's a whole lot more beyond the illusions of 'mundane existence' (samsara), then maybe you'll find a quiet room where you can sit and observe that absurd parade of thoughts that we

imagine defines us; that we imagine we can control. Ask your mind to be still and let me know how much control you actually have over your own mind. Are you ready for a revolutionary psychology where Truth trumps the bondage of self, where *true* happiness trumps the endless task of fulfilling the ego's desire for 'more.'

Know thyself and you will know the universe and all its Gods.
- The Oracle of Delphi

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