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CLEARING THE VESSEL THROUGH WHICH HEALING POURS

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Introduction

We are both physical beings and energetic beings, living demonstrations of Einstein's equation, $E = mc^2$. Einstein pointed out early in the last century that matter and energy are two sides of the same coin, and quantum physics has amply confirmed this.

Conventional, Newtonian medicine has been very slow to absorb this fact. Whether we perceive an object as material or as energy depends simply on how we examine it. This is as true of a living organism such as a tree, a bacterium, or a human being as it is of a lump of lead, a cloud or a subatomic particle (Benor 1990).

Many complementary/ alternative medicine (CAM) practitioners – represented by spiritual healers, acupuncturists, homeopaths, and medical intuitives – have been saying all along that they address the energy body of their clients, while the conventional caregivers address the physical body.

My personal passion for 25 years has been the study of spiritual healing and energy medicine. Let me offer several definitions:

Spiritual healing is a systematic, purposeful intervention by one or more persons aiming to help another living being (person, animal, plant or other living system) to improve their condition by means of focused intention, hand contact, or movements of the hands around the body without touching it. Spiritual healing is brought about without the use of conventional energetic, mechanical, or chemical interventions.

Some healers attribute spiritual healing to God, Christ, other 'higher powers,' spirits, universal or cosmic forces or energies; biological healing energies or forces residing in the healer; psychokinesis (mind over matter); or self-healing powers or energies latent in the healee. Psychological interventions and self-healing are inevitably part of spiritual healing, but spiritual healing adds many dimensions to interpersonal factors. (Benor 2001a; 2001b)

Energy medicine includes a broad variety of complementary/ alternative medicine (CAM) therapies, such as acupuncture, kinesiology, meditation, yoga, and spiritual healing. The term "energy medicine" derives from the perceptions and beliefs of therapists and patients that there are subtle, biological energies that surround and permeate the body. Recent research is confirming that these therapies can be helpful in treating many problems for which conventional medicine may have no cures. Growing numbers of doctors are integrating these therapies in their practices. (Benor, 2002)

Our states of health and illness depend both on physical and bioenergy factors. The latter will be the primary focus of this discussion. The complex interplays of physical factors contributing to our health (genetic, metabolic, infectious, toxic, traumatic, allergic, neoplastic, degenerative) will not be elaborated upon here. This is not to imply in any way that they are unimportant, but rather to acknowledge that they are adequately considered elsewhere.

Bioenergies

Biological energies surround and interpenetrate the body. You can feel some of these with your hands, and this is one of the ways that healers 'read' a person's problems. Various bioenergy fields reflect the wholistic states of a person, including the body, emotions, mind, relationships (with other people and the environment) and spirit (Benor 2004; 2005; Brennan 1987).

Spiritual healers can identify symptoms and illnesses that may be the result of bioenergy blocks or excesses by passing their hands around the body, using very light touch or holding their hands near to but not touching the body. They can also identify physical and emotional traumas that may have contributed to the problems. They may interact with the biofield to correct imbalances and release 'energy cysts' that are created by traumas.

Many other CAM therapies address bioenergy imbalances. Acupuncture focuses on specific energy lines (*meridians*) that run through the body, with acupuncture points along these lines. Derivatives of acupuncture such as acupressure, applied kinesiology, reflexology and shiatsu address various aspects of meridian functions. Homeopathy and flower essences provide what is presumed to be therapeutic bioenergy patterning in water to correct bioenergy imbalances (Benor 2004; 2005).

Clear intent

Bioenergies respond to the psychological states and intents of the healer and healee. On the one hand, this leave healees and healers vulnerable to distortions and disruptions of their energy fields when their mental or emotional states are unsettled. On the other hand, this allows both healers and healees to alter the biofields through mental intent.

The more clear and focused the intent, the more likely there will be a positive result. Where intent is unclear, unfocused or mixed, the results are less likely to be positive.

Many factors can influence the clarity of healers' and/or healees' intents:

Clarity of focus may be shaped by the use of mental imagery to achieve desired results. Imagery may include projecting white light or colors (Krieger 1979), or picturing the healee as whole and well. Regardless of the content of the imagery, joining with the healee through the use of imagery may contribute to the healing (LeShan 1974a)

Steadiness of focus is influenced by the ability to hold a constant intent, undistracted by internal or external "noise." Meditation can be a great help in enhancing this steadiness (Leshan 1974b).

Needs and desires of the healee for healing may open doorways to change.

Needs of the healee (often unconscious) for holding on to symptoms and illnesses may maintain the biofield pattern of illness and impede healing and changes. For example, a headache may be painful but may also be helpful in gaining attention or providing an excuse for not doing certain things (Benor 2004; 2005).

Ego involvement of the healer may lead to unhealthy pressure upon the healee to change too quickly. Healers may want to prove how great they are, ignoring healees' underlying psychological and social issues that may need to be resolved before a complete healing will take place.

Anxieties and fears of healers may impede healing. If a healer suffers from depression, anxieties or fears, she may not want her own depression, anxieties or fears to surface, and may therefore unconsciously block awareness of the healee's depression, anxieties or fears. If a healer has suffered a trauma similar to the healee's, he may not want to reawaken his own unresolved pain or grief and may therefore block awareness of the healee's trauma – which could be the underlying cause of a symptom or illness.

Discomfort with death and dying may lead a healer to push for physical improvements in terminal conditions, attempting to fight against death – when the healee is actually using the vehicle of the illness to cross the Styx into the next dimension of existence.

While this discussion is focused on factors that may influence bioenergy healing, many of these same issues around clarity (or lack thereof) could arise between any caregivers – whether they are conventional or CAM therapy providers – and their patients.

Clearing the vessel through which healing pours

Many and varied are the approaches that have been developed to help clear the dross that could get in the way of a caregiver in listening to careseekers and responding to their needs. I share with you here a few of the various approaches I've found that help to release anxieties, fears and old hurts that can get in the way of clear healing. (All of these are described and discussed in greater detail in Benor 2005.)

Common sense approaches are a first step. When we are stressed, our feelings interfere with our focus and thinking. It is difficult to be a clear channel when there is a buzz of distracting worries and thoughts going through our minds. Before we explore stress management techniques we should do whatever is possible to reduce the stressors or our exposure to them. If the pot is boiling over, it is often easier to turn the fire down under the pot than to sort out the hot water.

When common sense sorting of issues and conflicts is insufficient to clear the vessel of stressors, you could consider any of the following approaches.

Grounding ourselves by connecting energetically to the earth will often help to stabilize us and discharge excess or negative energies.

Centering helps us to be calm and focused. Centering can be as simple as taking a practiced deep breath, grounding, meditating or using visualizations.

Muscle relaxation reduces and dissipates the physical component of stress and provides a centering mental focus.

Meditation is a mental discipline in which we focus the mind where we choose rather than letting it wander where it will. Focused meditations keep our concentration on a chosen physical or mental subject. Consciousness meditations focus our attention on the thoughts that pass through our awareness.

Breathing clears the vessel as a meditation and as an imagery vehicle for releasing negativity. (More on imagery below)

When inner psychological issues from current stresses or past traumas intrude in our lives, it may be hard to stay centered. A variety of approaches help to release the emotional load that can often interfere with centering and make it hard to maintain a clear healing vessel.

Journaling, Storytelling telling our story, even when just to ourselves in our diary, can help to reorganize our perceptions and release troublesome feelings.

Imagery provides a vehicle for transforming negativity. Imagery can form a visual metaphor for troublesome issues. By transforming the imagery, the emotions and conflicts attached to the issue are also transformed – often in profound ways that only our unconscious mind can devise.

WHEE is the most rapid and potent self-healing method that I've found. This is the **Wholisitic Hybrid** of **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing** (EMDR –: www.emdr.org) and **Emotional Freedom Technique** (EFT – of Gary Craig www.emofree.com).

With EMDR a person alternates stimulating the right and left sides of the body (visually, auditorily or tactilely), while focusing the mind on a problem. Within minutes, the intensity of the negative feelings associated with the problem are reduced. With repeated rounds of EMDR, these can often be brought down to a point that they are no longer felt. Then it is possible to install positive feelings to replace the negative ones that have been released (Shapiro).

The one problem with EMDR is that it works so potently and rapidly that there can be intense emotional releases as residues of traumas are cleared. For this reason, the originator of this approach, Francine Shapiro, recommends that it should be used only in the presence of the therapist, who can help if a person feels overwhelmed by the intensity of the emotional releases.

In EFT you tap or press a finger at a series of acupuncture points on your face, chest and hand, while reciting an affirmation. Because it works more rapidly than EMDR and does not evoke intense emotional releases, it can be used as self-healing.

WHEE has been hugely successful for several reasons.

- It takes a fraction of the time that EFT requires.
- It allows for much greater flexibility in working on target problems within the session because it is so rapid. If the child is successful but the parent is not, or vice versa, there is plenty of time to explore alternative target symptoms or alternative methods of addressing these.
- It is better accepted and the compliance outside the therapy room is much higher because of this simplicity.
- It works marvelously well and rapidly on pains, and is excellent for allergies, though it may take several days to be effective for the latter.
- It is tremendously empowering, as it is so simple and so rapidly effective in self-healing.
- It taps into (pardon the pun) the excellent research database of EMDR, providing greater confidence to professional colleagues when I explain what I am doing with clients. (Benor 2005)

Signposts and lessons for continued clearing

*If you wonder whether your job in life is finished, check whether you're still alive.
If you are, then it isn't.*

– Richard Bach

My clients are among my best teachers. I very often find messages for myself in the problems they bring to me for help. These are invitations for me to do more clearing of my own vessel, in whatever ways I resonate with my clients' issues.

As I work with my clients, when they are using WHEE, I have many opportunities to use it myself to clear my vessel of further dross.

Now the unconscious mind, which was programmed by a child, tends to defend us against becoming aware of the skeletons it is hiding in the closets of our minds. But our unconscious mind also wants to unburden itself of the tedious task of guarding those closets from our conscious awareness. So it gives us clues. These could be in the form of dreams, slips of the tongue, or excessive emotional responses to apparently benign images, words, and experiences.

As we become comfortable with clearing our vessel, this will happen more and more often. It is rather like taking a dust cloth to clean a neglected room, and finding more and more places that need dusting. WHEE gives us a vacuum cleaner which allows us to clear whatever we wish.

More on WHEE at <http://www.WholisticHealingResearch.com/Articles/Selfheal.htm>

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In this issue of *IJHC*

Melinda Connor, PhD, brings her personal experiences of working as a bioenergy healer to the laboratory, where she researches bioenergy healing. She advocates for caution in exploring and using bioenergy interventions – noting that if physical changes are produced through healing, we cannot assume that there will be no negative effects of healing.

Judith Orloff, MD, discusses many of the ways in which she combines her gifts of medical intuition with her practice of psychiatry. She finds that bioenergies are vehicles for information that helps her to help her clients to understand their problems and to change. See also Orloff's book, *Positive Energy*, which is reviewed in this issue of *IJHC*.

Eve Wood, MD, another psychiatrist, brings her love, caring and spiritual awarenesses to her work with severely disturbed people. She looks for the divine within each person, finding in that essence the inspiration for healing. Wood's book, *Medicine Mind and Meaning, A psychiatrist's guide to treating body, mind and spirit*, is also reviewed in this issue of *IJHC*.

Jack Manno, Adjunct Assistant Professor at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, with Ana Jamboric, discusses how the industrial world has come to use resources in a profligate way, assuming they are going to be endlessly available and that having ever more material possessions will bring us greater health, wealth and happiness. For instance, Manno and Jamboric point out that the US has a per capita annual health care expenditure of \$1967 more than Norway but that the life expectancy in the U.S. is 1.8 years lower than the life expectancy in Norway. Manno and Jamboric present many more facts and figures to show that it is possible to bring healing to our planet with better planning and distribution of resources.

Andrew Levitt, who teaches design at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture and has a in private psychotherapy practice in Toronto, suggests that our inner world can in-form (i.e. shape) our outer world. This article is a fascinating window into the blending of Levitt's two passions.

Tiffany Snow, DD, is a marvelous healer with great gifts of common sense and writing skills. She came into her healing powers after a near-death experience when she was struck by lightning. Snow has gone on to create a healing ministry. She finds that some of the many people she treats have immediate, dramatic responses to her healing – sometimes with the loss of consciousness commonly known as 'slaying in the spirit.' Snow also shares reports about people with a fracture, pneumonia and pancreatitis who responded dramatically to her healing. Her books, reviewed in this issue of *IJHC*, offer a rich harvest of healing anecdotes, astute observations on human nature, and common sense.

Ron Staley is a healer in Staffordshire, England, who developed his gifts in the Spiritualist church. His healing is unusual, in that people spontaneously move their bodies and limbs into postures that are self-healing. Staley does not tell them to do this. Their inner, intuitive wisdom leads them to move in these ways. I have seen videotapes of Staley's healings and am impressed that there are important clues to aspects of healing to be learned from his methods of healing. Included in his article is a report on a young girl with congenital abnormalities who was dramatically helped by his healing, along with medical testimony corroborating the improvements.

Carol Edmonston tells of her unusual doorway into healing – through doodling. She found this art form to be her doorway into connecting with her inner wellsprings of creativity. She now helps others to develop their healing through doodling.

Larry Lachman, PhD, provides his monthly summaries of interesting wholistic healing news reviews, including items on physicians' views of prayer and medical miracles, and depression as a contributor to coronary artery disease.

Last, but by no means least, Ric Masten joins the IJHC as a regular contributor of poetry, art and humor as healing. In this issue he offers us healing through his own poetically expressed humility – apologizing for an error he made; points out how doctors sentence patients to death through their pessimistic approaches to cancer; and helps us to laugh at the awkward moment of needing to cough during a public performance. Masten's one-line drawings, as always, delightfully counterpoint his written words.

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