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Skating in Brooklyn

"It's taken me all my life
to learn what not to play."
- Dizzy Gillespie

"My son just moved to Brooklyn," I told my friend as we were having breakfast in a Woodstock café. "It's a great place to live these days." Brooklyn is where my friend spent his childhood as I did in the early 1960's. We spoke of ices, stoop ball, egg creams and President Kennedy. And then he told me something that really caught my attention.

"I knew every crack in the concrete sidewalk," he told me, "the places that were smooth and the places that were rough, the bumps and dips. Some sections tilted slightly this way and that depending on which part of the street you were on." He felt all this through the

wheels of his roller skates as the sidewalk conveyed it's changing nature up through the skates, into his feet and somehow made it into my friend's nerve system and cells, recording the details of the sidewalk with every spin of the skate's wheels. "And when I fell," he said, "my hands hit the sidewalk, and then my body crashed down. I remember what it felt like: I would see the scrapes on my arm, lines etched into my white skin. I'd feel nothing for a few seconds and then the cuts would sting, the lines becoming red, leaking fresh blood."

Presence. A boy attuned to the experience of skating and nothing else. All else was tuned out. The feel of the skates, the sidewalk, the pleasure of the breeze in his hair, the sting of the cuts on his arm - all of it captured his imagination. It all spoke to him. The experience of being in the moment played it's melody and he listened.

This is what our innate intelligence was designed for. To interact with the experience of life as it is, and as it changes in every moment. The beauty that emerged from Dizzy Gillespie's trumpet

when he learned "what not to play" spoke to him by listening to the silence in between the notes.

Our bodies function perfectly in this way: the free flow of nerve impulses, fluids and energies in the body exists in the absence of what obstructs it. "The intelligence of the body is infinitely resourceful," says the Vedanta scholar Madan Bali, Ph.D. "It is self-sufficient with it's own inner pharmacy and automated technology." My work as a chiropractor is exciting because it helps remove the blocks and restrictions that interfere with the free expression and experience of life and health. By removing what obstructs our true nature, we become more fully who we are.

It is a mistake to think that we can alleviate our suffering with more ideas, more drugs, more ways to get what we like and avoid what we don't like. In the process letting go of all this we find that what is left in the silence is our inherent contentment, happiness and love. In the words of the Buddhist teacher Ajahn Chah, "You should not take anything - the body in good or bad health, the mind in elation or depression - as being too real." In the process of letting go we can connect with the great mystery of life as it unfolds in each moment. By learning what not to play we can be invited to hear something else - a sound far more beautiful than anything we could have imagined.