

The Medicine of Joy

As a chiropractor I am forever intrigued by questions about health and healing. My craft has developed and been refined by schooling and dedicated practice as much as by unlooked for, passing acts of grace that arrived seemingly out of nowhere.

One such act of grace showed up last week in the form of teachings by the anthropologist Angelis Arrien, Ph.D. Optimum health, she says in her book *The Four-Fold Way*, is the equal expression of four archetypes. In introducing *The Healer* archetype, she begins with a poem by Antonio Machado:

Last night, as I was sleeping

I dreamt - marvelous error -

that I had a beehive

here inside my heart.

And the golden bees

were making white combs

and sweet honey

from my old failures.

Something softens inside me when I read this.

It is perhaps this softening that every healing process seeks to encourage. The Healer archetype, writes Angelis, "supports the principle of paying attention to what has heart and meaning."

Dr. Arrien points out in a recent TED talk that in the healing traditions of indigenous peoples worldwide, if you were to go to a shaman or

medicine man with feelings of being disheartened, dispirited, or depressed, he would ask you one of four questions:

- When in your life did you stop singing?
- When in your life did you stop dancing (or moving in your body)?
- When in your life did you stop being enchanted by stories (particularly your own life story)?
- When in your life did you stop being comforted by the sweet territory of silence?

A proper relationship with these questions brings health back into balance and also fosters the emergence of joy in life. The poet David Whyte speaks of joy as "dance, laughter, affection, skin touching skin, singing in the car, music in the kitchen, the quiet irreplaceable and companionable presence of a daughter: the sheer intoxicating beauty of the world..."

At the same time, in Whyte's rendering, joy includes all things:

"If joy is a deep form of love, it is also the raw engagement with the passing seasonality of existence, the fleeting presence of those we love understood as a gift, going in and out of our lives...the last breath of a dying parent (creating) a rare, beautiful frontier between loving presence and a new and blossoming absence."

The dance, the song, the stories and the sweet territory of silence are living expressions of the fleeting existence of our own lives, a life that deeply connects with the soul, which in the view of indigenous peoples is the source of all healing, presence, truth, wisdom and heart.

So the next time you're contemplating what ails you, give it a try. Recall what was lost or cast out in the innocent and beautiful expression of your unique life story, and take the first step in bringing your amazing, mysterious and originally wonderful life back into the existence it has always known - simply, directly and intimately.

And if you need some encouragement and help here, the tools I use - Neuro-Emotional technique, Cranio-Sacral therapy, and the Chiropractic adjustment - are excellent modalities for removing the blocks to the expression of health and vitality.

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