

Healing and Being Healed

Written by Allen Lawrence, M.D.

One of the oldest professions on earth is that of the healer. Yet, there is presently a good deal of confusion over what healing is and who is a healer. This is one of those situations where a word or action may mean so many different things to so many different people that it can ultimately have little meaning.

Had we lived 200 years or more in the past, the concept of who and what the healer was might have been considerably simpler. In ancient times there were two types of healers, those that lived in and were part of a community and those who traveled. It was often clear to the local residents of a community what a specific healer did. This healer, man or woman, lived and worked in the community. They tended the ill, sat on the tribal council, did surgery, delivered babies, and tended to the work injuries and war injuries of the members of the tribe or group. They were known entities. As people they stood out. They often were greatly respected and everyone knew and trusted them. As practitioners they had their secret ways of healing which was rarely divulged to others. They had secret medication, the combinations of medications they used as part of their trade was known by few as no more than a very few would really even be able to understand what they did. In our studies of Hawaiian medicine this was incredibly clear as the healing discipline was known as Hunā, which translated into English as the “secret.” The knowledge of the Huna master, the kahuna or “keeper of the secret” was so powerful that it had to be guarded as it could be used both for good, to heal and for evil, to kill.

Today, healing is still secret, not because it is for the good and welfare of the community, but for two other reasons: 1) medical practitioners often believe the community is not smart enough to understand what they do and how to they do it, and 2) because of the communities need to maintain the “secret” of what is done so that it is not misused by non-physicians, by people who do not have licences to practice medicine. The goal of government and the medical profession while outwardly pure, to protect the uneducated public, is faulted in that it also acts to cut the consumer, the sick or well person out of taking any real responsibility for their own health care. It also creates another big problem as most physician may understand medicine but at the same time know very little or nothing about healing. Therefore, how can you either talk about or teach that which you do not understand or know?

What Then is Healing?

Today the most common way we think of healing is what we think of when a treatment, action or ritual is used and causes an individual, who was sick, to become well again. We generally think of healing in relationship to the medical profession, but here healing is confined to what happens when an individual who is sick goes to their doctor and they are given medicine or surgical treatment and returned to a state of “wellness.” As we shall see this is often very misleading for as we suggested in our definition of healing section, the end result depends on what your definition of healing, whether the definition you use is narrow or broad.

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In ancient times the healer was often a shaman or medicine man or woman. In order to heal, they also used drugs, generally in the form of herbs or foods, surgery, and even physical therapy. But they went a step or two further as they might also enter into a trance and then go into the spirit world to obtain information regarding the nature of their client/patient's illness. The shaman would then return to this realm and prescribe herbs, potions, use of amulets or other treatments that would expel a foreign spirit or cure the illness. A healer might also work with symptoms or signs as provided by the patient/client or through some other source such as bones, chicken entrails, tea leaves, Tarot cards, astrology or bumps on the face, head or body of the individual. While today the medical profession and many people in our society see this as hocus pocus, magic or just plain chicanery, trickery or dishonesty. Yet, was it really? Could it have been that these "healers" had added another dimension to healing that we today have lost? We will return to this topic in a later article.

Healing versus Treating

For many people in our current society, the concept of shamanism sounds not only primitive, but possibly even absurd. We think that healing should be a scientific process, one performed by trained, responsible physicians, under sterile conditions and with modern techniques and instruments. The fact is, modern medicine, is not really about healing nor even about curing. Rather it is designed to treat and control symptoms so that the "patient" is comfortable and out of risk of danger to their life and well-being. While some illnesses are "cured," and "cure" is often the stated goal, the fact is it is not very common.

Cure most commonly occurs when the illness is minor and will respond to medical treatment. These illnesses in most cases are conditions that usually are self-limiting and heal themselves. What medical treatment accomplishes was only to shorten the period of the illness and allow the sick person to be more comfortable while waiting for the body to heal itself.

There are many other conditions however, such as diabetes, heart disease, atherosclerosis, autoimmune diseases, cancer and arthritis where medical treatment at best only helps to slow down the disease process, make the individual more comfortable and prolongs life, while the disease process itself either continues or progresses more slowly than its normal pattern would be. In many situations all medicine does is to make sure that the symptoms of the illness are controlled while the illness process still persists. In situations such as these, the individual cannot be said to be either cured nor healed, merely static or improved.

In these cases the illness persists but is contained. In most cases, this leaves the door open for the symptoms to relapse or even return in a form worse than the original condition. It often requires that the individual use potent drugs, which actually act as cellular poisons. In this process they alter cellular chemistry and present a risk of significant side effects, even risk of death and secondary chronic diseases. In some cases the consequences of these medications are worse than the original disease process itself.

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Real Healing

Clearly, there is now a large body of impressive evidence showing that many people who have suffered from severe, even life threatening diseases, have spontaneously healed. In such situations, where the individual has suffered from one or another well-documented illness one day and then on the next day (often really over months possibly years) they were “suddenly” completely free from this illness. In many cases, damage which had been done to important organs was also spontaneously healed. Cases of cancers suddenly disappearing, arthritis clearing up leaving normal joints and tissues, non cancerous tumors disappearing and leaving no traces are now plentiful in medical literature.

Often unenlightened medical doctors may deny that healing took place, they may dispute their own diagnosis or that of a valued colleague, suggesting that somewhere, somehow a mistake had been made and that the “healed” person was either never really sick or their tests had been misleading. More enlightened physicians might tell us that what happened was a “miracle” and that they have “no explanation” for it. Or as one patient told me her physician told her when her non-curable illness suddenly went away, “I don’t really know what has happened, but it is clear that something obviously did happen. Your tumor is gone and I don’t understand how or why!”

The most enlightened physicians would tell us that this was not really a miracle nor certainly not a mistaken diagnosis but rather an internal power that all of us have to heal ourselves of any and all illness. The very most enlightened physician would go even further and tell us that the power for each of us to heal ourselves exists all the time and all that is necessary to make it happen is the willingness to find this power and use it.

Healer as Facilitator

In such cases the reasons and methods of healing are many but in all cases it is the individual who heals him or herself. The healer simply acts as a facilitator to instruct and teach them how to find the power to heal themselves and in some cases awaken within them these healing powers.

Whenever spontaneous healing occurs there are generally one or more processes operating. These include a will to live and the capacity to heal. A willingness to accept the illness and recognize the teacher it has been and lesson it is teaching. The willingness to change beliefs, eliminate faulty beliefs, change from living in a destructive lifestyle to living in a healthy lifestyle, creating a more positive state of mind and allowing healing actions, creating positive intentions, and finally, doing what needs to be done to bring healing about. These same principals, interestingly enough, operate when healing is accomplished using modern medical treatment, shamanism, religious healing or spiritual healing.

Finding A Healer

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Most people are never given this information, do not find it on their own, nor even if they are willing, are they taught how to use it. If the individual knows this instinctively, their chance of developing a major life-threatening illness or chronic disease is likely to be very low. If we lived in a society where this information was taught, few if any people would be sick to begin with.

This then brings up the question of whether the sick person should give up on the medical profession and head to their nearest healer. The answer to this question is complex. Most simply, the sick person should find the very best and most enlightened physician, and the very best and most enlightened healer. They should then put them both to work to teach, instruct and support their healing process.

There are many people who call themselves healers or physicians (in either allopathic-Western medicine or alternative medicine) who are fully capable of facilitating healing or helping to control simple or self-limited conditions but do not have the skill to heal the more severe conditions, chronic diseases or life-threatening diseases. If you are really sick, you should not be going to any individual who is not a skilled healer. If your physician or alternative practitioner is not a skilled healer, then you should also be working with a more sophisticated and enlightened healer who can help you reverse your illness, (that is, find the real underlying conflict that has triggered and maintains your illness and its effect on you) and who can help you completely heal yourself and be free you from all illness.

What is Intuitive Healing?, [click here](#).